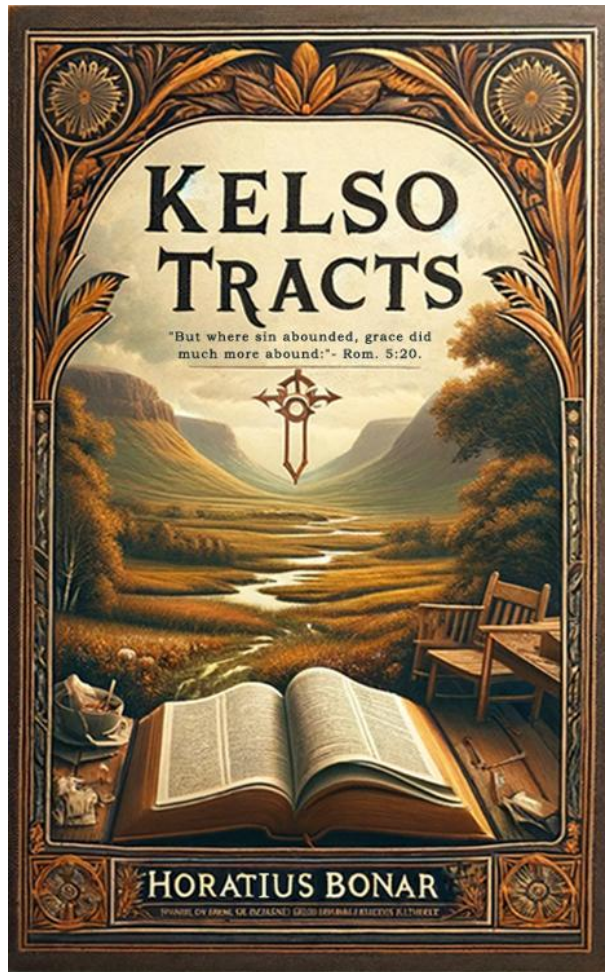


"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:"- Rom. 5:20.



HORATIUS BONAR

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Kelso Tracts

by Horatius Bonar

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5:20.

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PREFACE

THESE Tracts were originally designed solely for the benefit of the Author's congregation, and for his own use in general distribution. He had no idea of the extent which their circulation was to reach. He sought merely to teach his own people by them; nor had he any ambitious aim of writing for a wider circle. He thought of them only as helps to his own pastoral work, and commenced them as such. He

meant them but as words of instruction to his flock, words which should speak when his voice was silent, words which should tell the infinite tale of grace in the quiet dwellings of his people, perpetuating, not superseding, the public ministry of the Word, carrying on at home the work of the pulpit, or the prayer-meeting, or the class, both in the closet and in the family. God has been pleased to own them in many ways, and to give them a much wider circle to traverse than was reckoned on, or aimed at. To Him be the glory and the blessing throughout eternity.

They are rather miscellaneous in their contents, and immethodical in respect of order and connection. This arose from the way in which they commenced, as just stated. No outline was sketched, no special plan adopted, because no intention was entertained, at the time, of extending the series to above five or six numbers. Having once begun without a plan, it became a matter of difficulty, or rather of impossibility, to strike out, or follow one afterwards. Besides, the desultory method had some advantages of its own, inasmuch as it left the author unfettered in reference to subjects. He could more readily take advantage of passing circumstances, and direct attention to peculiar topics of importance, without being obliged to smooth them down into a consecutiveness which did not belong to them. Had he been writing a treatise, nothing would have been more preposterous; but as he was merely throwing out casual fragments of instruction, there was nothing unsuitable or awkward about the plan. It suited himself best; and upon the whole, he believes it was most suitable for his people. It may be well for the reader of this volume to keep this in mind, lest he should commence its perusal under the idea that he is to find in it a regular and consecutive series of treatises and expositions.

But, though these Tracts are not at all arranged in connection, or after a system, yet they do in some measure hang the one upon the other, being knit together by oneness of sentiment and thought, if not by regular coherence of plan. There may be among a hundred fragments, the unity of a pervading thought, which is to be found in each of them, though not one of the pieces may properly fit into, or link on closely with the other. So we think it will be seen. There is a leading idea throughout, as any careful reader will soon discover, and, by observing it, he may not only derive more profit from the Tracts, but be saved, perhaps, from mis-apprehending and mis-judging the author.

The leading object of the whole Series may be said to be, to endeavour to bring out with some fulness, perhaps with some repetition, the Work of Christ, and the Work of the Holy Spirit, in reference to the wants of sinners. There are not a few other points touched, more or less largely, but this may be said to be the prominent and ever-recurring theme, set forth under many various aspects, and embodied in innumerable passages of the Word of God.

It was found, in conversation with the troubled and doubting, that much confusion prevailed in their minds, as to both of these points, the Work of Christ, and the Work of the Spirit. There seemed a continual tendency to intermingle these two things, and so to subvert both; to build for eternity, partly on the one, and partly on the other, and so to come short of any true and sure establishment of the soul in grace. Many seemed most perversely bent on taking these two works as if they were one compounded work, trying to build their peace, their forgiveness, their salvation, upon a mysterious mixture of the two. The external and the internal were not kept distinct; the objective and the subjective were confusedly tangled together, so that neither was understood aright, and both were misapplied. It was not

CHRIST FOR US, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN US, but it was Christ and the Holy Spirit together, both for us and in us. Thus, all was vagueness and indistinctness in reference to what Christ had done, and in reference to what the Holy Spirit had been sent down to do. Hence, all was darkness in the soul. There was no peace, for the ground of peace was not rightly seen; there was no holiness, for the source of holiness was but imperfectly apprehended. This Popish mixture of these two things—"Christ for us, and the Spirit in us," required to be exposed to view, its unscripturalness condemned, and its evil influence neutralized.

It is CHRIST FOR US, that is our peace. It is THE HOLY SPIRIT IN US, that is our regeneration and holiness. Woe be to the soul that intermingles these two, and seeks to rest his peace and hope, partly on what Christ had done for him, and partly on what the Spirit is doing in him.*

In consequence of this attempt to separate what had been so sadly confused and mixed together in the minds of many with whom he conversed, the Author's meaning has been exposed to much misconstruction, and a sense put upon one of his Tracts, against which he most strongly protests,—a sense which he cannot help calling a most unfair one,—a sense which, when he wrote the Tract, he never so much as dreamt of,—a sense, which is not only contradicted in the body of the Tract itself, but most explicitly and repeatedly set aside in other numbers of the Series. It was written before certain new doctrines arose, with which it has been supposed to coincide, when larger liberty of speech was allowable, because not liable to misinterpretation. Subsequent controversies may have led some to put a less favourable construction upon it. But, is this just or charitable? What work almost is there, written anterior to an age of controversy, that will stand the rigid test of a terminology, framed to

meet the exigencies of subsequent discussion, and to oppose errors, which were not till then in existence? Besides, is it right to tear off a single leaf from a man's book,—a book of more than three hundred pages,—and to hold it up to view as a full statement of all that he believes on a particular point, regardless of the most distinct explanations in a hundred other parts,—more especially, when one of his chief designs was to isolate each topic as much as possible, not in order to disjoin them in reality, but merely for the sake of clearness and explicitness, to present them separately to the reader?

It is only, then, by setting distinctly forth the Work of Christ for us, and the Work of the Spirit in us, that we can really present the sinner with what he needs. As absolutely helpless and unholy, he needs an Almighty Spirit to new-create him. As condemned and accursed, he needs a Divine substitute and peace-maker. And in making known the latter, we preach the Gospel. For the Gospel is the good news of what another has done for us; It is not sent to tell me what to do, but to tell me what God has done. If it only made known what I had to do or to feel, it would be no Gospel to me, for there would still remain a vast gulf between it and me; but it comes to make known to me what God has done,—has done, so completely, that he has left nothing for me to do, but merely to take possession of a purchased gift.

And in setting forth the work of the Spirit, we are called upon to be careful, on the one hand, to show the necessity for the direct and special operation of His power; and on the other, to guard the sinner against resting upon the Spirit's work, as if it were part of the foundation on which he builds for heaven. The work in us, however deep and decisive, can never pacify our consciences or reconcile us to God. It can never make, or maintain, our peace. It cannot be our resting place, or our Saviour. Convictions, feelings, prayers, repentance, duties, can never be our peace. No fruits of the Spirit,

however precious, can ever make us acceptable before God. Nor, as too many seem to suppose, is it our faith that is our peace or our salvation. Neither as an act of our own, nor as a fruit of the Spirit, can our faith be our Saviour. It is said to save us, simply because it is a giving ourselves up to Christ to be saved by him. It excludes not only works, but its own self, in the matter of salvation. It is what we believe, not our act of believing, that saves us. On this point an old writer thus speaks:—"Faith, as we have often heard, rests upon Christ alone. It in effect excludes itself as a work, in the matter of justification. It is not a thing upon which a sinner rests: it is his resting on the Surety. Therefore, that man who would bring in his faith, as part of his justifying righteousness before God, thereby proves that he has no faith in Jesus Christ. He comes as with a lie in his right hand; for such is the absurdity, that he trusts in the act of his faith, and not in its object, i.e., he believes in his faith, not in Jesus Christ. Having taken Christ, as he pretends, he would have that very act whereby he received him, sustained at the Divine tribunal, as his righteousness. Thus Christ is bid to stand at a distance, and the sinner's own act is by himself bid to come near, in the case of justification. This is nothing else but works under another name. It is not faith; for that necessarily establishes grace. This being a matter of the utmost importance, we cannot be too plain or precise upon it. The proud deceitful heart of man has a diabolical dexterity, so to speak, in destroying the doctrine of grace, and therewith himself. The sinner will seek a thousand lurking holes at the foot of Sinai, burning as it is, rather than repair to Mount Zion. Men may dispute with others, and deceive themselves as they will, but as Christ's surety-righteousness only would be sustained as satisfactory to law and justice, so nothing but it can support a sinner at a dying hour. Everything else will then be swept away as a refuge of lies, and the sinner, not in Christ, exposed to one eternal storm."*

It is of the utmost moment that these things be attended to, otherwise we shall never present the Gospel in any really tangible shape. Nay, we shall so confound things that differ, that they to whom it is preached shall not be able to see in it any glad tidings at all. With much that is evangelical, both in phrase and sentiment, in our statements, we may yet miss the real point and burden of the Gospel, and so leave men nearly as much in the dark as if we had set them upon providing a righteousness for themselves. And as, in these last days, there are so many refuges of lies, within which sinners have entrenched themselves, it becomes all the more necessary to let men see what the real refuge is, and how secure a hiding-place from the storm it affords to any sinner that will only avail himself of its divinely-erected shelter.

For thus only it is that anything like true religion can exist. A man may be anxious, solemn, earnest, and yet have nothing of what God can recognise as religion. So long as he is mistaking the way of acceptance, he cannot have what God calls religion. For he has not yet got upon the foundation, he does not as yet know the way of approaching God, the only way in which God will receive him. Therefore his worship cannot be acceptable, for he himself is not yet accepted. And how can there be true religion, where the worshipper and the worship are alike unacceptable? The idea which many have of religion is, that it is a most necessary and becoming thing, by means of which they hope, in course of time, to work themselves into God's favour, and so to obtain forgiveness before they die. But this is man's religion, not God's. It has no resemblance to that in which God delights, and which alone he will accept. Its chief feature is a direct contradiction to that which the Bible presents to us. It is an entire inversion of God's order. It ends with securing forgiveness, whereas God's religion begins with securing it. Man's religion is just a series of solemn efforts to recommend himself to the favour of God, in

which efforts the only recommendation which God will acknowledge, that is, the Work of His own Son, is lost sight of. God's religion, on the other hand, is the holy, self-sacrificing life of one who, having secured forgiveness and favour at the very outset, simply in believing the record which God has given of his Son, is walking with Him in the calm consciousness of being entirely accepted, and working for Him all the day long, with the delighted eagerness of one whose only reward for toil is the smile of love; who, having been much forgiven, loveth much, and is seeking to show forth by a lifetime's untiring service, how much he feels himself a debtor to the grace of a redeeming God.

KELSO, October 1846.

THE DOOR OF SALVATION OPENED

The everlasting Door of Mercy and Salvation Opened; or a loud and shrill voice from heaven to unregenerate sinners on earth. Plainly showing the necessity of opening your hearts that the King of Glory may enter in; for He is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Behold I stand at the door and knock!"—REV. 3:20.

IT has pleased the most wise Disposer of all things, out of the riches of his free grace, to offer Jesus Christ to poor, lost, and undone sinners; and also it has pleased the Lord Jesus, not only to die for

sinners, that He might open up a way for them to return to God, but to stand knocking at the door of their hearts, to intreat them to be reconciled to God. Therefore, as you love your souls, as you love your bodies, as you would not bring damnation on yourselves, hear and fear, and do no more wickedly, but open your hard and stony hearts, that the King of Glory may come in! O sinner! Christ is now standing and calling to thy soul, "If thou wilt hear and open, I will come in unto you!" Now Christ is saying, "I know thy works;" I know well enough that thou hast been a blasphemer, or a drunkard, or unclean, or a thief, or a swearer, or a Sabbath-breaker, or a scorner, yet I stand at thy door this day and knock! I will receive thee to mercy, I will forgive all thy sins, I will accept, I will heal, I will save thy soul, if thou wilt open thy heart this day unto me and let me in! O brethren, for Christ's sake, refuse not Christ, neglect not so great a salvation, lest ye perish!

1. Consider your need of Christ. "Give me Christ, or I perish for ever." Can you be saved without Christ? O! if you may have Christ but for opening the door, then, while it is called to-day, hear and open to him. 2. Consider what answer thou wilt be able to make at the great day, if thou wilt harden thy heart and not open. What wilt thou, what canst thou, plead for thyself at the day of judgment? Wilt thou say that the gospel never offered thee Christ? Why, thou hast heard it this day, "If any man will hear and open, I will come in to him and will sup with him." Wilt thou say, I would have opened my heart had it not been for the love of sin, or friends, or companions! O how will men and angels hiss at thee! This is the man who for his lusts forsook his mercies, who, for a little vanity, neglected his own salvation. O how wilt thou curse thyself, to think that for nothing, yea, for what is worse than nothing, thou hast put off Christ and his salvation! Therefore, men, brethren, and fathers, hearken unto me, I this day

propose to you blessing and cursing, life and death!—salvation if you open unto Christ, damnation if you refuse Christ.

For the Lord's sake, choose not cursing but blessing; choose not death but life; choose not hell but heaven; choose not sin but Christ. Though you have formerly slighted him, yet if you will now regard him, if yet you will yield, if yet you will consent, if yet you will become willing to open unto Christ—Christ will be yours, mercy will be yours, salvation will be yours! And what would you have more? Will not all this do? Will not love constrain you? In love and mercy, let me beg of thee to ask thy soul this question, how long will this life and its comforts last? Is the world's happiness everlasting? No, surely. Thy money and thy corn and thy land will do thee no good in the great day. O what hast thou laid up for the world to come? Is the door of thy heart open to Christ? Alas! alas! is thy poor soul unconverted all this while?—what will become of thee when this life and all its comforts are gone? O hard-hearted sinner! this broad way in which thou walkest will never bring thee to the promised land. Thy gold and silver key will never open heaven's gate for thee. Thy care about this world's good will not plead for thee before the Judge. All thy friends and acquaintance with whom thou hast spent many joyful hours—their good words will stand thee in no stead. Then thou wilt be ready to cry, O where is the Christ that I have despised? O where is the Jesus that I have resisted? Will he plead for me? No surely. Go to the gods whom thou hast chosen. O what will become of me—of my lost soul? Must I not die; and whither will death carry me? Into the land of light or of darkness? To which of them am I travelling? Surely the way of pleasure, the broad way of the world, is not the way to heaven and everlasting happiness. Say then, O sinner, to thy soul, thy poor lost dying soul, What! must I be taken from all my glory and greatness, from all my delights and pleasures, and be thrown, like Lucifer, son of the morning, from all my brightness, into blackness

and darkness for ever? When death hath closed my eyes, must I awake in everlasting flames? Yes, sinner, thou shalt; and that without remedy, unless thou open thy heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask thy soul on which hand thou art likely to stand in the day of judgment; on the right among the sheep, or on the left among the goats? What will be the end of those joys which now make so glad thy heart? Thou art now in the broad way to destruction and utter separation from God's presence for ever! Thy pleasures here we may judge of; but O who can tell the thousandth part of those fiery torments to which thou art liable in the other world! When thou diest thou shalt be a damned creature; while thou livest thou art fed like a beast by common Providence; thou art an utter stranger to feeding promises. If thou lookest upwards, God is frowning, and his wrath is revealed from heaven against thee. The heavens and their host are ready every moment to discharge God's curses like thunderbolts against thee. If thou lookest downward, thou mayest see hell opening its mouth to swallow thee up quick; many dangers attending thee every day, many miseries every moment. Legions of devils stand watching thee, and waiting only for the leave of God to drag thy soul into the lake of fire. As long as thou refusest to hear Christ's voice, thou hast a hell upon earth. It is not the multitude of thy companions that shall lessen thy torments; but they shall rather increase them. Thy life that hath been full of worldly joy shall end in deadly woe!

All you into whose hands this little book shall come, O let me beg you to consider how your hearts can endure to think of being shut out of heaven, out of blessedness for ever! Ask your heart these questions. Can I burn? Can I endure the vengeance of eternal fire? Will a glowing oven, a scorching furnace, be an easy lodging for me? O why, my soul, wilt thou not be persuaded to repent? Is there too much pain in that? Talk to thee of crucifying the flesh, or parting with thy

worldly companions, of entering in at the strait gate; O these are hard sayings, who can bear them? But how wilt thou dwell with devouring fire? How wilt thou dwell with everlasting burnings? Think on hell, O poor soul, and then think on Christ; and consider if a Redeemer from such misery be not worth the accepting of. Think on hell, and then think on sin, and carnal pleasures; consider how thou wilt relish them in the everlasting fire! Are these the price for which thou sellest thy soul to hell? O bid these lusts and pleasures be gone! bid your companion-sins be gone! and though you loved them well, and have spent your time sinfully with them, yet tell them you must not burn for them: that you will not damn your soul to please your flesh.

O poor soul! Hast thou kept Christ out a long time, and art thou not yet resolved to open thy heart to him? What shall I say to thee? Let me say this—Christ waits still for thee; Christ is still willing to receive thee! Why, then, wilt thou undo thyself by neglecting so great a salvation? Think what message he sends to thee, what errand he comes on; it is no dismal message, it is no dreadful errand. If Christ had come to destroy thy soul, could he have had less welcome than thou hast given him? O for thy soul's sake receive him! O ye fools, when will ye be wise? Come unto Jesus, and he will have mercy on you, and heal all your backslidings, and love you freely.

But, some poor soul will say, I have a desire to come to Christ, but I am afraid Christ will never receive such a wretched sinner as I am, who have stood out so long against him.

Ah poor soul, art thou willing to come to Christ? Then will Christ in no wise cast thee out, if thou comest to him poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. O sinner, come not to him in thine own strength! but come thou and say, O Lord, here is a poor soul not worth any

thing, O Lord, make me rich in faith! here is a miserable soul, O Lord, have mercy on me! here is a poor blind soul, O Lord, enlighten me from above! here is a poor naked wretch, O Lord, save me, lest I perish, for I cannot help myself.

Come to Christ by believing in him. Yes, when thy poor soul is sinking into hell, and sees no way to escape the fearful wrath of God, O then at such a time seize fast hold on Christ! Come and grasp him in the arms of thy faith, and say, I believe in thee, Lord; help my unbelief. And the answer which thy Lord will give thee, will be this—Be it unto thee according as thou wilt. Let Christ be in your hand, and the promise in your eye, and no doubt, though thou hast been a rebel and a traitor, yet Jesus Christ, having received gifts for the rebellious, will show mercy to thee, and receive thee.—Samuel Rutherford.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish."—JOHN 3:16.

HERE God, who is infinite and unspeakable, gives after such a manner as passes all things. For that which he gives, he gives not as the wages of desert, but of mere love. This ought to encourage our hearts, and to abolish all sorrow, when this exceeding love of God comes in mind, that we might trust thereto and believe steadfastly, that God is that bountiful and great Giver, and that this gift of his proceeds of that great virtue of love. This sort of giving, which has its spring of love, makes this gift more excellent and precious. And the words of Christ are plain, that God loveth us. Wherefore, for this

love's sake we ought greatly to esteem all things that he gives us. And as God, the giver, is exceedingly great, so is the gift that he giveth, which is his only Son.

But here unbelief troubles us, and also incredible darkness and ignorance, so that when we hear of this so great a gift we do not believe it. When it is told us that God hath given unto us his Son out of mere love, we are without any desire to receive it. We care not for the promise of this gift, but bestow all our cares on worldly things. Yet nothing is asked, save that thou shouldst joyfully embrace it! But alas! what an unworthy thing is this, that there be neither hearts nor hands to receive this gift! And yet God asks nothing else of us, but just to take it as our own. But this is our madness, that though we are mere beggars, we scorn to be provided for. Judge then what a grievous sin is unbelief!

Hence, also, it appears how mad the world is, that it has no joy in the gift of God. For so little does the world deserve this love and gift of God, that nothing can be more against God or nearer to the devil than the world is. And yet this is the true testimony of Christ, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. But because of these sins, and this misery with which we sinners are burdened, and so burdened that we could never escape without the help of God, God doth put forth this love, and bestows this gift freely upon us. Is not the merciful Lord, therefore, worthy to be loved again? And ought we not to put our whole confidence in him? Let us, then, understand that God is not here said to be angry with the world, but to love it, in that he gave his Son for it. God is merciful to us and loveth us, and of very love gave his Son unto us, that we should not perish, but have everlasting life. And as God giveth by love and mercy, so do we take and receive by faith, and no otherwise.

Faith only—that is, trust in the grace and mercy of God, is the very hand by which we take this gift.

This gift is given to make us safe from death and sin. For even as a great flame is in comparison with a drop of water, so is Christ in comparison with the sins of the world. As soon as they touch Christ, and as soon as the gift is received by faith, our sins are quite consumed and abolished, even as a dry stalk is by a hot fire. These, then, are excellent words, and words of life: God grant us his grace to print them in our hearts. For he that hath these words surely fixed in his heart, can neither be afraid of the devil, nor of sin, nor of hell, but will be of a quiet heart, and say, "I am without all fear;" for I have with me the Son of God, whom God hath given unto me by his love, and by the gospel which assures me of it. And thy word, O Lord, and thy Son, Jesus, will not deceive me, in whom alone I put my trust. If I be weak in faith, grant me grace that I may believe more steadfastly. For besides this I have no other help in this evident gift and love of God, but that we should all, by a little, and a little, believe more and more in this gift. And the stronger faith is, the greater is the joy, pleasure, and security that is felt rising in the mind, so that we are ready to do and suffer all that God requires of us, knowing that he is loving, and uses nothing but love toward us.

But thou wilt say, If I were as Peter, Paul, and Mary, were, this gift would be comfortable unto me. For they are saints, and doubtless this saying pertains but unto them. How should I, who am a sinner, by any means understand that it pertains unto me, who have so often offended God by my sins, and have made him my enemy? But such thoughts are nothing but mere incredulity and unbelief, which goeth about to withdraw us from this sweet gospel. And truly unbelief can be overcome by no other means than by the word of God. Of this Christ spake, that we should not doubt of this word; saying, that his

Father, the true and eternal God in heaven, did so love the world, that he delivered his only begotten Son. And this is sure, that the world here does not signify Mary, Peter, and Paul only, but the world signifies all mankind. Therefore if thou takest thyself to be of mankind, or if thou dost not believe that, compare thyself with other mortal men, that thou mayest understand that thou art a man. For why shouldest thou not suffer thyself to be of this name, seeing that Christ with plain words saith, that God gave not his Son only for Mary, Peter, and Paul, but for the world, that all should receive him that are the sons of men. Then if thou or I would not receive him, as though he did not appertain unto us, truly it would consequently follow, that Christ's words are not true, whereas he saith he was given and delivered for the world. Wherefore hereof appears that the contrary thereto is most assuredly true, that this gift belongs as well unto thee as to Peter and Paul, forasmuch as thou also art a man as they were, and a portion of the world; that God may not be judged in his word, and this thought rise in our heart, thinking on this wise, Who knoweth whether I am also of their number, to whom the Son of God is given, and eternal life promised. For that is as much as to make God untrue to his promise. Wherefore when this thought comes upon thee, suspect it, as thou would suspect the devil, lest thou be therewith deceived. And say thou, What is that to me, that I am neither Peter nor Paul? If God would have given this gift to them only that should have been found worthy, he would have given it to the angels, to the sun, and to the moon; for they are pure and undefiled creatures, which always obey God, and never decline or swerve from his precepts. But this is the truth of the matter, he gave him to the world, and the world is no worthier thereof than as I said before. Wherefore, although I am neither Peter nor Paul, yet will I not suffer myself to put aside this gift, but will challenge as much for my part as David and all the holy apostles did. Whatsoever I am, yet God is not to be taken as unfaithful to his promise. I am a portion of

the world, wherefore if I take not this gift as mine own, I MAKE GOD UNTRUE.

But thou wilt say, Why does he not show this to me alone? Then I would believe and think surely that it appertained unto me. But it is for a great consideration that God speaks here so generally; to the intent, verily, that no man should think that he is excluded from this promise and gift. He that excludes himself must give an account why he does so. I will not judge them, saith he, but they shall be judged of their own mouth. For this gift was given to all the world, and they, by their unbelief and mistrust of God's word, will not receive it. Yet if a man will consider well, he shall perceive that baptism and also the communion of the body and blood of Christ were ordained, that every man should take this gift frankly and freely as his own. We are saved then, only by the mercy of God; and we obtain this grace only by faith, without virtue, without merits, and without works. For the whole matter that is necessary to the getting of everlasting life and remission of sins is altogether and fully comprehended in the love and mercy of God, through Christ. God grant us his grace that we may believe and trust to this surely—that we may suffer all things with a glad and ready heart, and may so die that we may be saved for ever, through his Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Extracted from the Works of Thomas Becon, one of the English Reformers, who was born A.D. 1510; died 1567.]

HYMN

Hath the invitation ended,

Is the cry of mercy dumb?

Still the message is extended,

Still the call is—"Freely come!"
Still with sinners Jesus pleadeth,
In compassion's gentlest tones,
Still the Spirit intercedeth,
With unutterable groans.
Still the Bride—the Church, would gather
Every wanderer to the fold!
Still the everlasting Father
Would with love each child behold.
Then let every soul that thirsteth
Freely to that fount repair,
And while yet its tide out-bursteth
Drink and grow immortal there.

THE WELL OF LIVING WATER

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"—ISAIAH 55:1.

IT is God who is speaking to us in these gracious words. It is he who says, Ho! and thus calls the attention of heedless men to his message of love. It is God himself, even our own God, who is thus calling on the children of men to come to the waters. He sees men everywhere turned away from Him, wandering in search of other objects, their ear closed against every voice, but that of the world, and He summons their attention. He invites them to stop and listen to his message. Ho, every heedless sinner; ho, every thirsty soul, there are tidings for thee! Come to the waters!

Is this invitation, then, to all sinners without exception? Or is it only a certain class that is addressed? Are all invited just as sinners? Is every one at once to take the message as spoken to himself? Or is it only those who are qualified and prepared in some way that are addressed?

It is evident that the term "thirsty," is here used not to single out a peculiar class of sinners, but simply to describe the natural unhappy state of every unconverted soul. The thirst spoken of is not the thirsting after righteousness, but simply the sense of misery, and the desire to be happy which is in every fallen child of Adam, before he ever begins to thirst after righteousness at all. This is plain from the second verse, where those who are invited are described as "spending money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not." That is to say, they are poor worldlings, throwing away their all upon vanity; toiling for what cannot feed their souls, nor yield them any return. Their way of spending their money and their labour, is one which will do nothing for their souls. It brings them no ease. It does not fill the dreary void of the heart, that is left by the absence of God. It leaves them emptier, thirstier, hungrier, than before. These are the men that are invited. They are the same that Jesus invites when he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" in which words he speaks of the burden which every man is bearing, who remains away from God, just as the prophet declares the thirst that every man is enduring, who has forsaken the fountain of living waters.

The words are therefore addressed to all! COME YE TO THE WATERS. To every sorrowful soul that says, "Who will show me any good?" to every weary sinner that would fain be happy, but knows not how; to every worldly sinner that is drinking from the world's broken cisterns;—to all such, it is said, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." He makes no exception. He says nothing that would exclude any. He invites ALL; and he invites them just as they are.

Here then is God's solemn declaration, that there are waters. It is no uncertain, no doubtful thing. There is such a thing as perfect blessedness for the soul. Most men seem to think, that as they have long gone from one thing to another, seeking happiness, and have always failed, they must just be contented to remain unhappy and make the best of a bad bargain. They have had their trials, but they are not worse off than others. They do not say that they have got their heart's desire, but merely that they have got all a man is likely to get, and have therefore no right to complain. This is the best the poor soul can hope for, in that world to which he clings so fondly!

But there are waters! There are none in the world; it is a wilderness. But they are to be found in God. God says he has waters for us. He has that which will satisfy the soul; which will give us perfect peace,—something that will make us supremely—infinately blessed, so that we shall never thirst again. And he not only provides these, but he presses us to come to them. He would not have us remain another hour without them. It is the poor and the miserable that he invites;

and he repeats the message, "Come ye," to show how earnestly he is pressing us to come. And lest we should imagine that we are to buy or to earn these blessings ourselves, he tells us they are altogether free. They have been bought for us already. They are ours for the taking. It is not needful that we should have something of our own to buy them with. Our getting them does not depend upon our having anything, but takes for granted our wanting everything. Our plea with God is not what we have, but what we need. Nor does the word "buy" here used, contradict this. It is employed to show us that though we have nothing, we are to come with the same confidence as if we had the full purchase-money to give! Though we could buy them all ourselves, we could not be more certain of obtaining these blessings! "Buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Every kind of enjoyment—every kind of refreshment is to be found here. And all free,—all within your reach. It matters not how poor you be,—how sinful, how helpless, how undeserving,—the waters are free,—free to the vilest, free to you! Come with all your poverty, with all your guilt, with all your misery, and take the free waters of this "pure river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." Drink and be blessed! Drink, yea drink abundantly! Why spend money for that which will not satisfy your soul? God expostulates with you, in regard to this. He asks you, Is it wise to act thus? is it reasonable? is it not madness in the extreme? why then persist in it? why not come at once, and drink freely of the water of life? is it water which would quench your thirst for ever?

Hear how God addresses you, and how again he says, "Hearken unto me; incline your ear, hear and your soul shall live." Thus we are taught that the source of all our misery is our not hearkening to God. We have hearkened to ourselves, to our friends, to the world, to the devil, but we have refused to listen to God. This has been our misery. Now the cure is just the opposite. We must listen to God. How

simple, how blessed! The entrance of his words giveth light and peace. In hearkening to him we shall find life to our souls. HEAR, and your souls shall live. Listen and live. No more! Oh sinner, could life be had on easier terms than this? Could salvation be brought nearer, or made freer than this? Could the gate of heaven be thrown more widely open, or a more gracious, more certain welcome be presented to you?

There is in us a constant tendency to come to God with money and with price,—to do something to distinguish ourselves from others, and to get out of the common state of mankind; and in this spirit men read the words of the Holy Ghost, and instead of encouraging words, they make them discouraging. Thus, when it is said, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," people say, "Yes, but I must come; if I do not come I will not get the rest." Now the intention of God is to fix your attention on the person to whom you are to come,—come unto me; but in a self-righteous state we fix our thoughts on the Come; and we suppose this must be the money, this must be the price, and get at once into difficulties as to the way we should come. God wants us to think only about the "me;" but we in our self-righteousness think only about the "come." Thus we entangle ourselves in the thickets of unbelief, and draw darkness over our souls.

The Holy Ghost has used a variety of expressions, in order to prevent this error, and yet men will fall into it. For example, it is said in one place, Come; in another place it is said, Look; in another, Believe; in another Hear; all to prevent your fixing on the act of your own mind, and to fix your attention on the object, which is Jesus Christ. Had it been any other subject than that of salvation, people would have committed no mistake about it. If I had said, "Hear! I have good news for you;" you would never have asked, How am I to hear? If I

had said, "Look, and you will be rejoiced at what you see;" you would never have asked, how you were to look? If I had said, "Believe and you will find it much to your advantage;" you would merely consider whether what I said was true, without thinking of the act of believing. It is not our own act of believing, but the object believed, that is to bring us hope and peace. If we seek to draw our hope from knowing that we have believed, we are as far from the spirit of the gospel as the man who rests his hopes upon his alms-deeds. When we make our own faith the source of comfort, we are drawing from a broken cistern. It is impossible to obtain peace, or strength, or holiness, from knowing that we believe a fact, however true and important that fact may be. The fact believed may be a comfort to us; but our knowing that we believe it cannot be so. When seeking peace for the soul, the question is not "Have we believed?" but "Has God, in very deed, made his Son a propitiation for sin?" Why is it that when such expressions are used in religion, they turn people's attention away from the thing spoken of to themselves? Just because men would turn the act of believing, looking, &c. (which is a bare receiving of what God says,) into the money and the price by which to purchase what God gives. The variety of expressions used,—Come, Hear, Look, Believe,—is employed in order that we might not turn our attention away from what God says, and be taken up with thinking about some particular way of receiving it,—"Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;"—"this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Thus the news which God sends you, is, just like every other piece of news, to put you in the attitude of a listener, and not of a doer; in the attitude of a receiver, not of a worker at all.

The thing which God is here said to give, is life, not mere safety, and security from wrath,—not mere deliverance from hell. What, then, is

this eternal life which God gives you? God's gift is his own life; not the life of mere enjoyment—the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field have that life—but the life which God himself had before worlds were. In other words, the purpose of God is not simply to make you happy, but to make you happy with God's own happiness;—not simply to give you joy, but to give you the joy of the Lord;—not simply to make you drink of the rivers of pleasure, but to make you drink out of the rivers of God's own pleasures, and out of the fountains of God's own happiness, that your joy should be the very same as his, springing from the very same source, and produced by the very same cause. God's best gifts are no portion for man. He himself is the soul's only portion;—he that does not know God as the light, the life, the blessedness of his soul, knows not God, and is without a portion at all! Life eternal does not consist in knowing that there is a God, and that there is a Saviour, but in knowing God, and knowing the Saviour, as the child knows his father, and as the friend knows his friend. Till we see Him and feel Him in his perpetually pervading presence of infinite holiness, and love, and beauty, and wisdom, we cannot be said to know that God for whom we were created. This presence of his is our real home and our real joy, and until we become sensible of it, we are without a home, without a joy, and without a portion in the universe! We are friendless and desolate!

God himself is the soul's inheritance: The Lord's portion is his people, and the people's portion is the Lord. God himself, I say, is our inheritance. My enjoyment is to be in God, so that it continues as long as I continue and God exists, although the whole of creation were swept away. How, then, is God to be thus enjoyed? A person is to be thus an heir of God, by having God's own character in him. You may enjoy God's gifts, without enjoying his mind; but you cannot enjoy God himself, without having his mind. If there is a person who

has the power, and also the inclination to bestow much kindness upon me, I may feel an interest in that person and like his kindness, but if that person is to be enjoyed himself, apart from his gifts, it must be something in his character, something in his mind, something in him that would exist although his gifts should cease, from which my enjoyment is to spring. Now I cannot rejoice in God's holiness unless I am holy; I cannot rejoice in God's love unless I love; I cannot rejoice in God's righteousness unless I am righteous, nor in his truth unless I am true. Therefore it is, that in being renewed, we are said to be made partakers of the Divine nature, and are called to have the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus.

When God, therefore, speaks of waters, he means something in drinking of which you will be partakers of a Divine nature,—something in drinking of which you will share in God's own blessedness. Where are these waters? How is man to be partaker of a Divine nature? How am I to feel as God feels? How am I, who by nature hate my God, and hate my neighbour, to love as God loves—to be holy as God is holy? Where is the provision for all this? It is in the sure mercies of David,—“Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.”

Do you see then the difference between God's giving you a happiness, and God giving you his own happiness, and that this last is what God gives you in Christ? Are you giving God glory for this unspeakable gift? And can you bear witness? that it is eternal life to know Christ? Can you, individually, say of what you have heard, “I know it is God's plan, because I am under its operation; it is taking effect in me; I find all things pertaining to life and godliness in Christ Jesus; I am made a sharer in a Divine nature?” If not, you are still without God and without hope in the world. You are not of that family of which Jesus Christ is the elder brother; you have not in you the mind of Christ.

You may be earnest—you may be serious—you may be pains-taking, but you are not yet a Christian; God's plan has not yet begun to be accomplished in you.

I beseech you see if this be the case. If so, and if God's purpose is not accomplished in you, why is it so? What is your excuse? There can be no real excuse, for there can be no reason but one. You are making God a liar. You are refusing to believe the record which He hath given you of his Son. There is no excuse but this horrid one, that when God is giving you in Christ all things pertaining to life and godliness, you do not believe that all these things are so entirely free to you; and your reason for making God a liar, for refusing to believe the freeness of his gift to you, is the pride of your heart.

The pride of the heart, in respect of pardon, is, that a man would have it said that he himself had bought it. Though you should, in doing what you can in the way of purchase, say it is little, and talk of its unworthiness, and call this humility, your ATTEMPT to purchase sufficiently shows your pride; and all your professions of humility will not screen you from the charge which God has against you, for not rejoicing in what he has provided for you in Christ—for refusing to glorify him in giving thanks for his unspeakable gift. There are waters for you;—free to you at this moment,—open to you as you are! God invites and welcomes you to the fountain; yet you will not come,—or when you think of coming, you insist upon bringing a price in your hand. This is your pride, your presumption. O let it not be your ruin!

I have now declared to you the gospel of the grace of God; and I beseech you that you refuse not the word spoken, for that word shall judge you at the last day; and take heed that you are not found at that day on the left hand of the throne, from being too proud to receive

salvation freely—to take the water of life without money and without price. This is the awful condemnation.

Oh! then, wilt thou not come to the waters and take them freely? And if thou sayest that thou canst not—if thine evil heart of unbelief will not allow thee—wilt thou not cry to him who made thy heart, and who can new-make it, and ask Him to lead thee to these living streams? And surely he will lead thee. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." The woman of Samaria had told our Lord that he ought not to have thought of asking anything of her on account of the disputes between his nation and hers. Such is the love of man to man! The Jew refuses water to the Samaritan! and the Samaritan to the Jew! But such is not the love of God! His is a free and boundless love, which gives liberally to all. If she had known the fulness of that love—how willing to give and how much it had already given unasked—she could not have allowed one suspicion to enter her mind. If she had known that he who spoke to her was himself the great gift of God to a lost world, and the dispenser of all other gifts, she would have asked, and he would have given her living water!

He speaks of his giving as the natural consequence of her asking! He speaks of the giving as necessarily following the asking,—of the former as inseparable from the latter. How touching the declaration, how precious the promise! Sinner as she was, He told her that she had but to ask, and she was sure of receiving! Sinner as she was, she sought and she obtained!—she asked and He gave! Ask, then, and you shall receive; and when you receive, oh! then, all is well: the darkness is past, and the true light has risen! "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

HYMN

Ho ye thirsty! parch'd and fainting,

Here are waters, turn and see!

To the thirstiest, poorest, vilest

Without money all is free—

Thirsty sinner!

Drink and stay not, 'tis for thee.

Ho ye weary! toiling, burden'd,

With a world of woes opprest;

Come!—it is thy Lord invites thee,

Lay thy head upon my breast.

Weary sinner!

Come to Jesus, come and rest.

Ho ye wounded! bruised, broken,

Come, and health divine receive;

Look to him who heals the wounded,

He alone can healing give.

Wounded sinner!

Look to Jesus, look and live.

JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Thy beauty was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."—EZEK. 16:14.

GIVE me leave to ask you one question: Can you say, The Lord our righteousness? Were you ever made to see and admire the all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, and excited by the Spirit of God to hunger and thirst after it? Could you ever say, My soul is athirst for Christ, yea, even for the righteousness of Christ? O when shall I come to appear before the presence of my God in the righteousness of Christ? Nothing but Christ! nothing but Christ! Give me Christ, O God, and I am satisfied! my soul shall praise thee for ever.

Was this ever the language of your hearts? and, after these inward conflicts, were you ever enabled to reach out the arm of faith, and embrace the blessed Jesus in your souls, so that you could say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his?" If so, fear not, whoever you are. Hail, all hail, you happy souls! The Lord, the Lord Christ, the everlasting God, is your righteousness. Christ has justified you, who is he that condemneth you? Christ has died for you, nay, rather, is risen again, and ever liveth to make intercession for you. Being now justified by his grace, you have peace with God, and shall, ere long, be with Jesus in glory. For there is no condemnation to those that are really in Christ Jesus. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or life, or death, all is yours, if you are Christ's, for Christ is God's. My brethren, my heart is

enlarged towards you! O think of the love of Christ in dying for you! If the Lord be your righteousness, let the righteousness of your Lord be continually in your mouth. Talk of, O talk of, and recommend, the righteousness of Christ, when you lie down, and when you rise up, at your going out and coming in! Think of the greatness of the gift, as well as of the giver! Show to all the world, in whom you have believed! Let all by your fruits know that the Lord is your righteousness, and that you are waiting for your Lord from heaven! O study to be holy, even as he who has called you, and washed you in his blood was holy! O think of his dying love! Let that love constrain you to obedience! having much forgiven, love much. Be always asking, What shall I do to express my gratitude to the Lord, for giving me his righteousness? Let that self-abasing, God-exalting question, be always in your mouths, "Why me, Lord? why me?" why am I taken and others left? why is the Lord my righteousness? why is he become my salvation, who have so often deserved damnation at his hands?

But I must turn a little from congratulating you, to invite poor Christless sinners to come to him, and accept of his righteousness, that they may have life. Alas! my heart almost bleeds! What a multitude of precious souls are now before me! how shortly must all be ushered into eternity! and yet, O cutting thought! were God now to require all your souls, how few could really say, The Lord our righteousness.

And think you, O sinners, that you will be able to stand in the day of judgment, if Christ be not your righteousness? No, that alone is the wedding-garment in which you must appear. O Christless sinners, I am distressed for you! the desires of my soul are enlarged. O that this may be an accepted time! That the Lord may be your righteousness! For whither would you flee, if death should find you naked? O think

of death! O think of judgment! Yet a little while, and time shall be no more; and then what will become of you, if the Lord be not your righteousness? Think you that Christ will spare you? No, he that formed you will have no mercy on you. If you be not of Christ, if Christ be not your righteousness, Christ himself shall pronounce you damned. And can you bear to think of being damned by Christ? Can you bear to hear the Lord Jesus say to you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Can you live, think you, in everlasting burnings? Is your flesh brass, and your bones iron? What if they be? Hell-fire, that fire prepared for the devil and his angels, will heat them through and through. And can you bear to depart from Christ? O that heart-piercing thought! Ask those holy souls, who are at any time bewailing an absent God, who walk in darkness, and see no light, though but a few days or hours; ask them, what it is to lose a sight and presence of Christ? See how they seek him sorrowing, and go mourning after him all the day long! And, if it be so dreadful to lose the sensible presence of Christ only for a day, what must it be to be banished from him to all eternity?

But thus it must be, if Christ be not your righteousness: For God's justice must be satisfied; and unless Christ's righteousness is imputed and applied to you here, you must hereafter be satisfying the Divine justice in hell-torments eternally; nay, Christ himself shall condemn you to that place of torment. And how cutting is that thought! Methinks I see poor, trembling, Christless wretches, standing before the bar of God, crying out, Lord, if we must be damned, let some angel, or some archangel, pronounce the damnatory sentence: but all in vain. Christ himself shall pronounce the irrevocable sentence. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, let me persuade you to close with Christ, and never rest until you can say, "the Lord our righteousness." Who knows but the Lord may have

mercy on, nay, abundantly pardon you? You need not fear the greatness or number of your sins. For are you sinners? so, am I. Are you the chief of sinners? so am I. Are you backsliding sinners? so am I. And yet the Lord (for ever adored be his rich, free, and sovereign grace!) the Lord is my righteousness. Come, then, O young men, who (as I acted once myself) are playing the prodigal, and wandering away afar off from your heavenly Father's house, come home, come home, and leave your swine's trough. Feed no longer on the husks of sensual delights: for Christ's sake arise, and come home! your heavenly Father now calls you. See, yonder the best robe, even the righteousness of his dear Son, awaits you. See it, view it again and again. Consider at how dear a rate it was purchased, even by the blood of God. Consider what great need you have of it. You are lost, undone, damned for ever, without it. Come then, poor, guilty prodigals, come home; indeed, I will not, like the elder brother in the Gospel, be angry; no, I will rejoice with the angels in heaven. And O that God would now bow the heavens and come down! Descend, O Son of God, descend; and, as thou hast shown in me such mercy, O let thy blessed Spirit apply thy righteousness to some young prodigals now before thee, and clothe their naked souls with thy best robe!

And what shall I say to you of a middle age, you busy merchants, you cumbered Marthas, who, with all your gettings, have not yet gotten the Lord to be your righteousness! Alas! what profit will there be of all your labour under the sun, if you do not secure this pearl of invaluable price? Labour no longer for the meat that perisheth, but take the Lord for your righteousness, a righteousness that will entitle you to live everlasting.

I see, also, many hoary heads here, and perhaps the most of them cannot say, The Lord is my righteousness. O grey-headed sinners, I

could weep over you! your grey hairs, which ought to be your crown, and in which perhaps you glory, are now your shame. You know not that the Lord is your righteousness: O haste then, haste ye, aged sinners, and seek an interest in redeeming love! Alas! you have one foot already in the grave, your glass is just running out, your sun is just going down, and it will set and leave you in an eternal darkness, unless the Lord be your righteousness! Flee, then, O flee for your lives! be not afraid. All things are possible with God. If you come, though it be at the eleventh hour, Christ Jesus will in no wise cast you out. Seek then for the Lord to be your righteousness, and beseech him to let you know how it is that a man may be born again when he is old! Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; for he has been made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

But I must not forget the lambs of the flock. To feed them, was one of my Lord's last commands. I know he will be angry with me, if I do not tell them that the Lord may be their righteousness; and that of such is the kingdom of heaven. Come, then, ye little children, come to Christ; the Lord shall be your righteousness. Do not think that you are too young to be converted. Perhaps many of you may be nine or ten years old, and yet cannot say, The Lord is our righteousness; which many have said, though younger than you. Come, then, while you are young. Perhaps you may not live to be old. Do not stay for other people. If your fathers and mothers will not come to Christ, do you come without them. Let children lead them, and show them how the Lord may be their righteousness. Our Lord Jesus loved little children.—Extracted from one of Whitefield's Sermons upon the text Jerem. 23:6, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

BELIEVE AND LIVE

"If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?"—JOHN 8:47.

IN these simple words, our Lord appeals to the truth of what he was saying as the ground upon which he expected to be believed. By this he shows us that the truth of a thing is the real ground of faith. Our reason for believing a thing is, that we think it to be true, and our reason for not believing a thing is, that we do not think it true. If we see it to be really true, we cannot help believing it; and if what is thus seen to be true be also good, we cannot help being made glad by it.

Faith, then, is the receiving as true what God declares to be so, and unbelief is not receiving as true what he declares to be so. Saving faith is the believing that as true which God has made known for our salvation. Christ and his work are the things which God has revealed for salvation, and therefore saving faith is believing that to be true which God has told us regarding Christ and his work, (Jo. 20:31.)

In order, then, to faith in God's word, the only question that arises is—"Is this word perfectly true?" In order to faith in Christ, the question is—"Is all that God has told us about Christ perfectly true?" Is Christ really altogether worthy of our trust? If we are satisfied of this, then straightway we believe; nay, we cannot but believe. If we do not believe, it must just be because we are not satisfied that what is told us is really true, or that Christ is so worthy of our confidence as God represents him to be. For if we see it to be just as God says it is, then we believe, and believing we have peace with God—our minds are set at rest.

But here many will say—"Oh we believe all that God has told us about Christ, but we don't feel it; it has no effect upon us." Now I ask—are you sure that you are believing the very thing that God has declared regarding Christ, or only something else which seems very like it? Are you not saying—"All this is true, no doubt; but it is not true to me till I experience some change within which will warrant me in believing that it is true to me? If this be what you are saying, then it is plain that you are not believing the testimony of God concerning Christ, but some other thing. God's testimony is something which is true, whether you believe it or not—whether you are conscious of any change or not. If, then, you are saying that however true the facts of Christ's death and resurrection may be, yet these things are nothing to you personally until you are conscious of some inward change, then you are not believing the truth of God. You are denying God's testimony—you are believing only a part of it, and thereby, in reality, denying it all. You are making God a liar. And, lastly, you are putting aside the very instrument by which the Holy Spirit works the change you so much desire—I mean the truth regarding Christ and his work, which God has declared to you, that, by believing it, you may be renewed and sanctified. Remember, God never says, here is a testimony which is true to you as soon as you have been regenerated. No; that would be no testimony at all; that would be no gospel at all. He says, here is a testimony which is true to you, whether you receive or reject it: here is a testimony, by believing which you are to be renewed and sanctified. (2 Thess. 2:12, 13.)

I know that the Holy Spirit must work in you in order to your believing, as well as after you have believed. But I am speaking at present merely of the thing that is done; not of the agent—who works unseen, like the wind that bloweth as it listeth.

You say, that though the testimony is most true, and though it is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," yet it does not exactly suit you, for you are one of those who cannot feel. In answer to this, I say that it is most suitable for you, for it provides for your want of feeling. It does so, for it tells you of one who can give you all the feeling you want—of Him who "is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance"—of Him who has the Holy Spirit to dispense,—that Spirit by whom alone your insensibility can be removed. It does so, for it sets before you the very truth most fitted to make you feel. God says to you, believe what I have made known to you concerning my Son. You reply, I do not feel. Well, but believe, in order that you may feel. You never can feel until you believe. It is the truth regarding Jesus and his finished work that produces feeling in the soul. You want faith, you say. How then do you think to obtain it? Not by some prodigious exertion of mind to grasp the truth; for faith is the simple and natural impression which truth, as truth, makes upon the mind. You think, then, perhaps, that you must just wait till this new principle starts up within you, and then you will be able to exercise faith on Christ. When this is done, then you suppose your faith will bring you life. Now, herein you err; for it is not faith that causes life; it is the truth which does this; it is the truth which produces both faith and life. It is not your own act of believing that is the means of life; it is the thing which you believe—viz. the gospel. The truth is the instrument, though the Holy Spirit is the agent. You must therefore look out from yourself for the truth, not inwardly upon yourself for faith, or for some conscious movement of the Spirit upon you, in order to be enabled to believe. Hear, then, what the gospel says to you, and thus you will get faith, and hope, and life, and peace, and everything you need. (Isaiah 55:3.)

God says to you—to every sinner—Believe my word, and you shall have everything. You say—No; give me first some inward change of

heart as a personal pledge that this word is true to me, and then I will believe it. God says—What! is not my word true? Can any inward pledge make it more so? Is it not insulting me to ask for anything more than my simple declaration? To wait for feeling before you will believe, is both to question my veracity and to reverse my order of procedure. Reader, mark this! God says believe, and then you will feel. You say, I must feel before I can believe. Do you say—How can I believe if I do not feel? Rather say—How can I feel if I do not believe? Oh that I could persuade you and every weary sinner at once to throw yourselves upon the simple truth and testimony of God, in spite of all your want of feeling. Oh that I could bring you at once to say,—“Well, it is all true, most certainly and entirely true! The whole work is done. It is finished.³ The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. It is true I am not actually forgiven until I believe; but provision, full provision, has been made for my forgiveness, for my peace, for my salvation. If I believe this, then I receive them all. And is it not all true? What then, can keep me from believing it? I do not feel, indeed, as I ought to do; but shall I add to the guilt of not feeling, the guilt of not believing too? Whether I feel it or not, the thing is true; and it is the truth of the thing, not my feeling it, that is the ground of forgiveness; and then the only way of feeling it is to believe it, for how can I feel a thing which I do not first believe?”

It is upon this point that God's controversy with the sinner turns. And this He will not give up. The sinner must be brought to see that the very first thing he is to do is to receive God's testimony concerning his Son as true, and receiving it as true, to go to God in confidence as to a father. This one point God disputes with the sinner; and to bring him to this point, he allows him to go on groping in darkness, sometimes for years. This may seem a small point to many, but it is not so. They may wonder why a sinner should be kept so long in darkness for this sole reason, and why so much

importance should be attached to it. God's honour is involved in it. The veracity of his word and character is involved in it. The truth and freeness of the gospel are involved in it. There is as much self-righteousness, and as great a denial of the gospel in waiting for so much feeling, as in waiting for so many good deeds. Peace gotten in such a way would be at the expense of God's truthfulness, and by a denial of the sufficiency and perfection of the Saviour's work. If you put away from you the grace of God because you have no feeling, no love, no holiness, or because your faith is so defective, then it is plain that you are wanting to make a saviour of these, and "to be found" in them, not in Christ.

Poor sinner, who hast so long sought peace in vain, think of this! This is God's controversy with you. He asks you to believe, and you will not. You so far assent to the testimony, but you deny its bearing upon yourself. This is direct unbelief. This is making God a liar. And hence he disputes the point with you. You must believe his whole testimony, else you can no more get peace and pardon from it than devils can. They, of course, believe that what has been said concerning Christ is true. But this brings neither pardon nor peace to them. Why? Because they know that this testimony has no bearing upon their lost estate, and wears no kindly aspect to them. You must see that you, as a sinner, have an interest in that testimony. It has a most blessed bearing upon you. The devils believe the work of Christ and remain unblest, for they know they are excluded from it. You believe it, and are blest, because you know that you are not excluded from, but invited to share its benefits. Poor sinner! there is absolutely nothing between you and peace! It is at your very door. Yet there is but one way to it; and that way is just the very way which you are so obstinately refusing to enter—believing the record that God has given you of his Son, that in Him you have eternal life. You are seeking the way to the kingdom. God says, there is the gate—it is

open—open to you—to you as you are—enter in. You hasten forward, but forgetting or mistaking the directions, you miss the gate; and not finding ready entrance, you try to force your way over the walls! Alas! they are walls which reach to heaven, and cannot be climbed! Return, return—retrace your footsteps—seek the open gate, and enter in! Believe and live!

Oh! if it be all true that Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; if it be true that his work is finished and our redemption completed, that by that work he removed the obstruction that stood between us and God, and rend the veil which excluded us from "the holy of holies;" if it be true that, in his infinitely precious and all-sufficient work, there is full provision to be found for the forgiveness of every guilty sinner upon earth, then why should any soul remain in darkness? Is the gospel not to all? Are the glad tidings not to every sinner? What says our Lord in his commission to the apostles? "Preach the gospel to every creature"—that is, say to every creature it is for him. Do not say they are not glad tidings to me until I am renewed. That is evident absurdity. If they be glad tidings at all, they are so whether you are changed or not—whether you believe them or not. If they be not glad tidings to you, they are not so to any. Nay, if they be not glad tidings to you, then, of course, you are bound not to believe them at all; and in that case you will be under no guilt and no condemnation for not believing them. And besides, if the gospel does not extend to you, neither does the law; for you can find your own name as little in the one as in the other. And it would be as reasonable to say that the law does not condemn you, because you don't feel yourself to be a sinner, as to say that the gospel does not bring you forgiveness, because you do not feel yourself a renewed soul. If you will deny the gospel, deny the law too. If you will exclude yourself from the justifying power of the one, you may with as much reason exclude yourself from the condemning

power of the other. Think on this and receive the gospel! Believe and live!

But you still say, I believe that the tidings in themselves are glad, and that they ought to fill me with gladness; but still they do not; and how is this? Again, I say, it is because you do not believe them, or at least that part of them which connects you with Christ—which bears upon yourself. But you say, I do believe them! Do you? Then you are a pardoned sinner, a saved soul; for Scripture says, "He that believeth hath everlasting life." Nay, you reply, I have not yet reached that point. I do not yet believe the gospel so as to be saved by it. Then you really do not believe it, or at least you do not believe it to be so true that you can trust your soul upon it! You cannot trust your soul upon it till you get something more, which you call feeling, to make it sufficient to bear the whole weight of your immortality! Does not that show you that you do not believe? For then you would feel yourself perfectly safe in God's hands—far safer in his hands than your own; and feeling that, you would commit your soul to Him without one fear, (Psal. 31:5.)

Now, what is it that makes a sinner feel that he is perfectly safe in committing his soul into God's hands? It is the knowledge that God has, by his Son, accomplished a work so perfect, so glorious, so all-sufficient, that it is no longer necessary that the sinner should die; nay that it is now righteous in God to forgive and bless the sinner; and that God welcomes every guilty sinner back to him just as if he had never sinned. Now that this work is done, why does not every sinner that hears it come and commit his soul to God? Just because he does not feel satisfied that the work is sufficient. He is, unconsciously perhaps, allowing some secret doubts of this kind to lurk in his mind. God declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But he is not yet at one with God on this point. The

moment that he comes to be at one with God in respect to the work of Christ, that moment he casts himself into his Father's arms, and is at peace! Oh, then, believe and live; believe and be at peace.

And this brings us to another view of the gospel, viz., the aspect in which it presents God's character to us—that of love—compassionate, unutterable love. In God's character, love is an essential part, for "God is love." But, then, how shall God show his love to sinners and yet be just? The work of Christ declares this. It discloses to us the depth of God's love to man, even when he became a sinner. It shows us that having secured all the ends of holiness and justice by the death of his Son in the room of the sinner, he is now at full liberty to let that love flow out to sinners. The blood of Christ proclaims to us how much God is in earnest in his hatred of sin on the one hand, and in his love to the sinner upon the other. Christ's work is the expression of God's love to sinners. It declares the infinite extent of that unutterable love. It has removed every ground of suspicion and distrust. It gives every sinner perfect ground of confidence in him. An unfallen being cannot distrust God. The fall introduced an element of distrust. It was impossible that we could trust God, or feel ourselves safe in his hands, so long as we saw that he was under the necessity of punishing us. So long as we saw that he could neither be righteous nor holy unless he condemned us, so long we could not feel anything but dread of him, and would see that our only security lay in fleeing from his presence. All this insecurity and distrust have been wholly removed by the death of Christ. God is no longer under the necessity of punishing the sinner. He is now at liberty to give full vent to his love. Nay, it is now a righteous and holy thing in him to forgive the sinner. He is more glorified now in forgiving than in punishing the sinner. In his character, as revealed and ascertained to us in the work of Christ, there is full ground of confidence for every sinner. All may find refuge here. Acquaint thyself with him, and be at

peace. To know God is to be at peace; and all our disquietude arises from our not knowing him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee;"³ that is, there is something in God's name or character which cannot be known without producing confidence.

Here, then, there is full and sufficient ground of trust for sinners—a ground of confidence altogether independent of anything good in them. It is easy to see how God's nature is fitted to give confidence to all unfallen beings. But here the question is—Is there enough in that character to warrant the confidence of those in whom there is absolutely no good? The gospel answers—Yes! It was for this very end that the Father sent his Son—to reveal his character to sinners; and it was for this that Jesus died and rose again, that a way might be opened up for sinners to avail themselves of that character. To all, then, this character is proclaimed as a ground of confidence, in virtue of which every sinner in the world may return to God in the perfect assurance of a gracious and most fatherly welcome. Anxious sinner! think on this. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

But it is perhaps asked here—Am I to come just as I am? is this ground of confidence open to me as I am? Yes, just as you are. And am I at liberty to exercise confidence towards God in the first moment of my return; or am I not to wait for some more feeling, or conviction, or preparation?—must I not go and pray that I may be enabled to return; and use the means for helping this forward? Here you ask—Am I at liberty to trust at first—is my first act to be an act of confidence? To that I answer—Most certainly. The very thing which God wants you to do, and without which everything else is but an empty sacrifice, is to come and trust in him; and if you are not at liberty to do so at first, you never can be so; for the grounds of our confidence never alter, and you have just as much ground of confidence in God's character at this moment as you ever can have.

You think it presumption to put perfect confidence in God at once, and at first. It is not so. There is no presumption in doing that which God asks you to do, and in which he delights. Not to do so is far greater presumption; nay, it is worse, it is making God a liar. And mark this—you must either trust or distrust God; and will you dare say it is your duty to distrust God when you come to him? You shrink from such profanity. Then shrink from the awful guilt of not trusting God the first moment of your coming near to him. Again you say—"I must wait and prepare myself, use the means, and pray that I may be enabled to return." Nay, you must not wait—you must arise and go to your Father; and as for preparation, the only preparation I know of is just believing the record which he has given you of his Son. As to means, the simple truth regarding Jesus and his work is the only effectual means which Scripture sets before you. As to praying that you may be enabled to trust, &c., I ask, how can you pray to one in whom you have no confidence? You must trust before you can pray. If, then, you have at this moment sufficient reason for trusting God, what should hinder you doing so? What prevents your first act of return from being an act of confidence? The truth is, you are not yet fully persuaded that God's character is really such as to afford ground of confidence. You want to get evidence of some change in yourself, and then you will believe this—that is to say, you want to go to God on some better footing than that of a sinner; and then you will be able to trust him, and then you expect him to recognise your newly-acquired claim. Such presumption! Such perversion of the gospel! To make your own character, and not God's, your ground of confidence! Will God accept this at your hands?

Remember that the very first act of a sinner's return to God is that by which, believing all that God has declared about his love in Christ, and his willingness to welcome every sinner who will return, he puts his trust in Him and says, Abba, Father! Here is no mystery and no

mistake. God says, RETURN! and that one word is sufficient for you, for it shows you the posture in which God is standing towards you, and that his feelings towards you are those of unutterable compassion and benignity,—What more could you have to give you confidence in God! With such evidence of his character, how can you help trusting him; or how could any amount of feeling in you give you greater ground of confidence than you will at this moment possess! Whether you will believe it or not, you have already most ample ground of confidence towards God—ground which remains the same whatever the state of your feelings may be. All you have to do is to avail yourself of this, by going to him in confidence as one who no longer doubts what He has told you about himself and his Son. Believing that testimony, go to him as your Father—speak to him as your Father—ask of him what you will and it shall be done unto you. When, then, at any time, you lose your peace or hope, it is because you are forgetting the ground of your confidence, and letting go your hold of the testimony. And when you are seeking your way back to peace and confidence, do not begin to search for evidences of your own good estate, or pore over your past acts of faith, or attempt to work yourself up into great fervour of feeling; but go simply back to the sure testimony of God regarding the finished work of his Son, and say, "Is not all this still true—still the same?—then I need not fear nor be troubled. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? still trust in God: return into thy rest, O my soul."

Do not say, I cannot believe. Christ says, ye will not. It is your unwillingness that keeps you from believing. Do not say, I am seeking Christ, but cannot find Him. This is not true. It is Christ who is seeking you, and not you who are seeking Christ. Cease to flee from Him. Allow Him to save you. Do not mock Him by trying to save yourselves; or by trying to help Him to save you; or by trying to

persuade Him to help you to save yourselves. It is thus that you thrust salvation from you. And so determined are you not to be saved in God's way, that till the Almighty Spirit make you willing, you will not give up these attempts to be your own saviour: you will not consent to let Christ save you wholly. Do not say, I have done all I can, and am waiting for the Spirit. It is not true. He is waiting for you. He would come in and dwell in you if you would only give over resisting Him. Do not excuse yourselves and throw the blame on God, by referring to our Lord's words, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him;" for the meaning of that is plain, as showing the manner in which our unwillingness is overcome. We must be drawn, for we struggle and resist. And would you say that persons must go on in profligacy, because Scripture has said "they cannot cease from sin." Do not say, I am sure I am willing—remember, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. It is your unwillingness that keeps you from believing. If you can believe man's word, surely you can believe God's word, for it is the same act of mind in the one case as in the other: nay, you ought surely far more readily to believe God's word than man's word, for you have far better ground for believing the former to be true than the latter. When believing any thing, you simply ask, is it true? Or, in believing any person, you simply ask, is he worthy of credit? If satisfied that the person is worthy of credit, and the thing true, you at once believe it. If you know the thing to be true, whether it be spoken by God or man, how can you help believing it? Do you ask, What then keeps one from believing? I answer, many things, but chiefly these,—hatred of truth—unwillingness—love of sin—pride—love of approbation—dishonesty.⁵ These are some of the hindrances. But will you dare excuse yourselves by pleading these?

But then, if faith be so simple a thing, is it not incredible that we should get forgiveness, and life, and peace, and all the blessings of

the kingdom, upon the putting forth of so simple an act? Now, does not this show that you want to make a merit of your faith—to couple so many things with it as to make it somewhat deserving of such blessings? And if you couple your feelings to your faith, in order to give it weight, why may not another man couple his works? It is just because it is so simple, and allows no merit at all to man, that such mighty consequences hang upon it. It is evident that in making such an objection, you are supposing faith to have some merit, and that you are laying such stress upon the change wrought in you by the Spirit, as actually to make it part of the price of your redemption, and turning it into a self-righteous plea for acceptance with God. Or at least you are making your consciousness of the Spirit's work your warrant for believing and your ground of confidence. Now the Spirit's work must not be confounded with the work of Christ; and yet, according to your ideas, it seems as if it were the Spirit's work, and not Christ's, that contained the gospel! Oh, then, throw yourself upon the simple truth—that Jesus died and rose again. "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance;" i.e., it is all true, and it is the very thing for you. Believe and live!

Do not say, I am not sure whether I believe or not—whether I love or not." If you say thus, the probability is that you neither believe nor love. And if you are content to remain in that state; if you say, as many do—a man cannot make sure of these things—then you may be quite sure that you have neither part nor lot in the matter. What! can you not be sure whether you believe a thing or not? Does the prisoner not know whether he has believed the tidings of his respite and deliverance? What! can you not be sure whether you love God or not? Is it so hard a thing for us to know whether or not we love an object? Are earthly loves accompanied with these uncertainties? Does the friend not know what friend he loves, and who it is that loves him in return. Does the natural eye not feel the difference when

midnight is exchanged for the brightness of the rising sun? Ah! when thus you try to magnify the difficulties of making sure of salvation, is it not because you love the darkness rather than the light? How can you have one moment's peace so long as you are in doubt whether God be your Father or not? How can you live, how can you eat, how can you sleep, so long as you are not sure whether or not you are his child? How long will you go on praying that God may become your Father, instead of at once believing his testimony and going to him in confidence as your Father? It will not do. There can be no life in religion, no liberty in God's service, no repose of spirit, till Abba, Father, is the joyful utterance of the lip—the natural and spontaneous breathing of the heart!

We say not these things to cause any one to despair. Oh no! but for the very opposite end. It is to bring every doubting, troubled spirit, at once to peace, by showing him where that peace is to be found. Weary sinners! here are glad tidings for you! There is but a step between you and life! This very moment you may enter into peace! This very moment you may come and say Abba, Father! All things are ready and you are welcome! Your Father seeks you: He has no pleasure in your death: He is in real earnest when he asks you to turn and live. His interest in your welfare is sincere and deep. Oh, then, return and be at rest! Believe what he has told you about the finished work of his Son, and arise and go to him—enter again your forgotten home, take your place at the table, and rejoice with them that rejoice over you—"This our brother was dead, and is alive again—he was lost, and is found."

Ho, ye that are afar off—wandering in misery through the waste howling wilderness—return, return! The storm is rising—the last fatal storm—and where will you find shelter? Here is the refuge from the storm and the covert from the tempest—in the finished and

accepted work of Immanuel. Place yourselves beneath this precious covert! Here is the paternal wing stretched out—oh flee, flee to its shadow, that you may be sheltered there! Oh, ere that wing be folded up, and all who have taken refuge beneath its ample stretch, be gathered up along with it—ere the covert be withdrawn and you left unsheltered amid the approaching storm—ere grace be gone and wrath begun—oh, flee, flee to the everlasting shelter of the all-protecting wing! "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

SIN PUT AWAY BY CHRIST

"But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—HEB. 9:26.

THIS verse states the end for which the Saviour of the world appeared. It was "to put away sin." This end he has accomplished. It is no longer a mere purpose, something future, but already finished. He has done that which he came into the world to do. He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. That sacrifice was offered and accepted eighteen hundred years ago. And by that sacrifice sin was put away. If sin was not put away then, it certainly has not been put away since, nor can ever be. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; there is no other putting away of it. The offering up of that sacrifice, and the putting away of sin, are things now past. And both of these were finished together upon the cross. We have therefore

glad tidings to proclaim to every sinner; glad tidings for thee, whosoever thou art, who readest these lines. Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself!

But in what sense has He put away sin? Not in the sense of putting it out of existence. He has not put it away so that it has ceased to be. It still exists, as you know, and perhaps lament. It exists in your heart, and exists in your life. It mingles in every thought of the one, and in every act of the other. To such an extent does it exist, that in God's pure all-seeing eye, there seems to be nothing in either but sin. The whole is nothing but one vast mass of sin. In this sense sin is not put away from any in the world that now is;—so far from it, that it overspreads the whole race of man, as widely as the waters of Noah's deluge overspread the earth. To that eye which takes in the whole of it at one glance, and sees the guilt of each man minutely and fully, so hateful a sight does this guilty world present, that the wonder is, that God does not put sin away by the destruction of every being on whom it appears. So awful a doom could only be stayed, even for a moment, by that sacrifice of himself, which Christ has offered up. This sacrifice is the only barrier between a guilty world and the wrath of an angry God. It is the only thing that prevents the vengeance of eternal fire being poured out for the instant destruction of this sinful earth.

Neither has Christ put away sin in such a sense that it cannot and will not be punished. Notwithstanding what he has done, it may be punished, and it is punished in the case of thousands and tens of thousands in the world of woe. Christ's death has not blotted hell out of being. It has not quenched the everlasting burnings, so as to make it an impossible thing that any sinner should ever feel them. He has done everything that is necessary to keep you, or any, even the guiltiest sinner upon earth, from going to hell. But hell still exists,

and the work of Christ has not made it impossible that you should fall into it. And notwithstanding that work, the penalty of sin—of all your sin—may yet be inflicted on your soul there, even as at this very moment it is inflicted upon countless myriads of souls, once within the reach of mercy. Just read these two plain passages (and there are thousands of such) Eph. 5:3–6; Col. 3:5, 6; and beware of flattering yourselves that because Christ hath put away sin, you shall not be punished. On the contrary, while that precious fact proclaims that forgiveness is free to all—free to you just now, and as you are; nothing in the universe proclaims so loudly that escape from punishment is impossible, and condemnation inevitable, if you refuse what has thus been so generously provided. Even Christ himself, who was God clothed with our nature, behoved to die, because standing in the room of the guilty. And while this fact proclaims to us that none need to die for their own sins, since this mighty One has died for sin already, it also declares that none can possibly escape from death on whom any sin shall at last be found. For if it was punished when found upon the Son of God, though not his own, is there any being, even the highest in creation, that can escape, if even so much as one sin be found in him?

Christ then hath not put away sin, so that it does not exist or cannot be punished. But he hath already put away sin, in such a sense that it no more stands as an obstacle in the way of your going to God. He has so put it away that you may go to God just now and as you are, with all your filth and sin, even as a child goes to the bosom of its own father. He has so put it away, that you may go to him with every thing you fear, to spread it out before him,—with every thing you want, to obtain it from him. He has so put it away, that you may go to him now with all boldness, nothing doubting. That which gives you access at all, gives you access with boldness, and assures you of a welcome. That which gives you any hope at all, gives you every hope,

nay, takes away all ground for unbelief or fear. Where is there room for doubt, or suspicion, or want of assured confidence, if Christ has really done all that this passage declares he has? Once your sin was such a barrier that there was no access to God, the fountain of life, for a guilty creature like you. It made a gulf between you and that blessed fountain, which, but for the work of Christ, none could ever have crossed. It barred his throne—it shut his presence against you. It made you, for anything you could do, an eternal exile from that presence, which is the paradise of the soul, and where there are rivers of pleasure for ever. And but for the work of Christ putting away your sin, this exclusion must have continued for ever. But blessed be his precious name, he hath now put away sin, so that there is no more exclusion of you, or any poor sinner upon earth. The sentence of banishment is repealed. The throne of God now stands open to you. There is not an obstacle, not a single stone or straw in your way to it. It is open and free to all. God is now calling his banished ones home. He is inviting you to himself just now—inviting you once more to share in all the fulness that is in himself. And on this invitation, and because the Lamb of God has put away sin, you may go to him at this moment as freely and confidingly as if you had never sinned at all. You may go to him with as confident a heart as any of the unfallen angels round his throne. Nay, more so, for they approach on the ground of a creature's innocence—you are invited near on the righteousness of him, who is God over all. And coming on this ground you may freely ask for everything, in the full assurance that all shall be given till you happen to ask for something better and dearer to God, than what he has given you already unasked—his own Son. Poor wanderers! why not on such a ground return to such a home? Why stand afar off in poverty, rags, and wretchedness, when through the sacrifice of his own Son, the way to your Father's house, your Father's arms, the fulness of your Father's love, is entirely open? Luke 15.

Christ hath also put away sin, in so far as it was an obstacle in the way of God's love flowing forth most freely towards us, towards any sinner upon earth, towards the poor guilty sinner who may now be reading these lines. In consequence of the sacrifice of himself, none of our past or present sins are any reason why that love should not fix on you, and enrich you with all its boundless treasures. Notwithstanding them all, God can, honourably to himself, and safely in respect to his government, make you its blessed object, and pour out upon you its immeasurable, inexhaustible riches. And what he can do he is most willing to do. You have the assurance of this in the numberless invitations by which he is inviting you to come to himself for everything. For each one of these is as much addressed to you personally and specially, as if it had been inscribed with your own name, or sent to you expressly down from heaven. And all of them not only imply that he is ready, but even longing to bless you with the free forgiveness, the overflowing love of a father's heart. These are just the calls of his love to you—now that all obstacles are taken out of the way of its freest and most unlimited exercise—they are the voice of love sounding upon earth in the ears of every poor wanderer, a welcome to all the treasures of a father's grace, a welcome to the place of a son in a father's heart. And of this blessed fact you have likewise the assurance in the past doings of that same love. What has it already done to take every obstacle away that once withstood your enjoying it? What has it already given? It has given his own Son. This is the measure, the manifestation of the Father's love! Think of it. Try and take its dimensions. That gift proves it infinite. And dare you not trust an infinite love—that love being also free? Dare you not cast yourself without reserve or fear upon a love that is perfectly free and perfectly infinite? And now that it is as free to flow out upon you, as the very light or air of heaven, can you not leave yourself at its disposal? can you not expect everything great and blessed at its hands? If there is nothing in the way of that free

and infinite love, why may not you enjoy it, as much as any guilty sinner that has ever gone before you? And from that love which has already given the Son, and thus made a free course for every other, may you not hope to receive even "all things"? If it gave even the Son, when every obstacle stood in the way, what will it not give now that every obstacle has been taken out of the way by the propitiation for sin which that Son has made? Before that sacrifice was offered, it might he said to be pent up and confined in the Father's bosom, waiting till the hindrance should be removed. Now it is no longer pent up. It has a righteous opening out of which it may issue forth, and a righteous channel along which to pour itself. Now it is streaming over on every side. It is flowing on in full tide towards sinners. It is seeking to flow into each of you. And it would enter if you would not close your hearts against it. It would come in and fill your soul with its blessed peace, just as the light pours in when the eye is opened upon the sun. As there is no more obstacle in the way of the poor prodigal's return to his Father, so is there no more any obstacle in the way of the Father's most gracious welcome to the poor prodigal. The one is free to return, the other to receive; the one may come without fear, the other may welcome without dishonour. Christ has made way for both at once, and by the same act—the sacrifice of himself. Now that the way is open, and a Father's arm stretched wide to welcome thee, poor prodigal, wilt thou not return?

In a word, Christ hath put away sin, so that now it is no more a necessary and unavoidable cause of punishment to those who have personally committed it. But for his sacrifice, it would and must have been so in every case whatever. The honour of God's character, and the safety of his holy moral government, would have made this indispensable. But the one is now so entirely vindicated, and the other so inviolably protected by the great sacrifice of the cross, that no necessity now compels the moral Governor of the universe to

punish sin in the person of those who commit it. In consequence of that one great event, and on the ground of it, God can now most honourably dispense forgiveness and eternal life to every guilty rebel upon earth, and that most freely—without any restriction or term whatever—even without money and without price. That great sacrifice did more to vindicate his character and uphold the rectitude of his government, than the eternal death of all would have done. In so far as these are concerned, that one event, once for all, has therefore rendered this unnecessary; and God is accordingly, in consideration of that alone, with which he is entirely and for ever satisfied, now offering to pass from the sentence of death in the case of every sinner whatever, who is wishing it at his hands. And should any necessity henceforth arise for executing that sentence of eternal death, it must be created by the sinner himself—by his obstinate refusal to accept deliverance, so generously procured, so freely offered—put thus freely and entirely at his own disposal.

Poor soul! just look to the sacrifice of the cross, and tell me after this why you should die? That was the sacrifice of himself, God in your flesh! Think of him who was the lawgiver, rising up from his throne, and in the nature of a creature rendering obedience to its utmost demands. Was not this doing higher homage to the majesty of God's holy law, than could have been done by the entire and eternal obedience of all mere creatures? After this, what can be needed to assert its dignity, and maintain its honour? Think of him who was God over all, the source of all life and being, and, therefore, by infinite degrees better than all,—think of him in our flesh, dying in the room of the guilty! It is in consequence of this, and this alone, that God is now proclaiming free forgiveness to all. He can give you pardon and eternal life, free as he gives you the light of his sun; and in consequence of the sacrifice of himself, no stain is thereby cast on his character, no danger accrues to his holy government. This is the

righteous and honourable way in which the holy Governor of the universe is now offering life to all of our fallen race. Go, poor sinner, take it at his hand. Go to him and be pardoned. Go to him and be freely loved. Go to him and live for ever. All has been done that is necessary for this. All you need now waits your mere acceptance. Sin, the only obstacle, has, in the sense just stated, been taken away. All sacrifice has now ceased. Why? Because that has been offered which answers all. Look to that sacrifice, and to that alone—and if the Spirit sheds his light upon it, it will also satisfy you. It will satisfy your conscience, and take from it the conviction that sin must also be punished in you. That is your life, your light, your peace, your joy, your all. That and that alone will fill you with a sense of forgiveness—will assure you of everything, by assuring you that God is pacified—that God is your friend.

There is no room for any soul to deprive himself of all this comfort by saying—"but is it my sin? no doubt he hath put away some sin, but can I be sure it is mine?" There is no room for such a question, if the sense above stated be given to the words. In that sense, it is all sin that is put away. Mark the very language, "to put away sin"—sin in general—not some person's merely, but sin. Think of the sense above given to the words, and ask yourselves if it be not the burden of the whole gospel, the sum and substance of the good news proclaimed therein to every sinner without exception; that in so far as it was a necessary cause of eternal death to the guilty, or as any barrier in the way of coming to God, and of God's full tide of love coming to him, sin hath been put away from every poor soul, still in this world and on this side of hell. Besides, if this were not true of all, how could it be true of any? Where could even the Apostle Paul, or any of the Apostles or primitive Christians, obtain the assurance of their sins being put away, if it was not in the simple declaration respecting Christ's infinitely precious offering? They had no revelation of this

blessed fact, special and peculiar to themselves. If they found it at all, they found it just in such an universal declaration as that before us. If they found it there, why may not you—why may not any? Their names are no more there than yours. And if that sacrifice has done all that was needful for the putting away of your sins, how can you think of having them put away by something done in or by yourself? In that case, yours would be put away, not by the sacrifice of Himself, but by something in you? If by that sacrifice, the thing is done eighteen hundred years ago; if not then, should it ever be done, it must be owing, not to Christ's sacrifice, but to something else, which is future and yet to be done.

Oh! that men but knew the completeness, perfection, infinite efficacy of this one sacrifice, and the absolute freeness with which, on the ground of it, and of it alone, all the blessings of salvation are offered to every sinner without exception. The knowledge of this would ease their hearts at once, would assure them at once of everything—of safety, of free forgiveness, yea, even of life everlasting. This grand atonement is the ground of all assurance. Look to the subsequent context, and say if it be not so, (chap. 10:19–22.) What is the blessed doctrine of this context? Is it not that Christ hath done by the one offering of himself, once for all, what all the offerings under the law could not do, and which their very repetition proved they could not do? All offering has ceased, just because there is remission now free to all, (verse 18.) And what is the result of the whole in respect to us? Why just that we may come with consciences entirely disburdened, by this one offering, of all dread and apprehension, even in the full assurance of faith, that in his Son God is now well pleased. In this blessed and child-like assurance we may now go to God as our Father for everything we need or wish for, in this world and in the world to come? Oh, yes, this sacrifice is the ground of all assurance. It is the mere sight of this sacrifice in all its glorious sufficiency, that heals

our whole spiritual case—that sets us right at once with God, and makes us safe for eternity. It is not the sight of this sacrifice and something else—something of our own added thereto, our own faith in it for instance, that assures the soul before God, and forms the ground of everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Our faith is just our seeing that this sacrifice is complete and perfect by itself alone, neither needing nor admitting the addition of anything else whatever, as a ground of confidence, a ground of child-like approach to God. For this, it is the sacrifice alone that needs to be seen, and not our faith along with it. It is because we think that the latter must be seen along with the former, and because we are always going in quest of the latter as the more important of the two, that our souls see no light, or the mere twilight, the mingling of light and darkness. In seeking the latter, we lose sight of the former, and therefore of all our light and comfort, for it is the former which is the source of all.

Oh that you would look to the sacrifice alone, and by itself. Nothing else but that sacrifice seen in all its solitary naked glory, is necessary to make a heaven within your hearts even now, and make you sure of heaven hereafter. I want nothing as my ground of confidence before God, as the means of assuring me of everything—nothing between me and hell,—but the simple sacrifice of Christ. Let me see just that sacrifice, and I see the everlasting proof that there is a love in the heart of God, which is absolutely infinite, and which is now free to me and to every human being whatever. Can more be needed? Can more be desired? Can more be obtained? This is all. "None but Christ—none but Christ."

"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD."

WORDS OF WARNING

"Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him."—ISA. 3:11.

"To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."—2 PET.
2:17.

UNCONVERTED SINNER, thy state is sad, and thy misery is great! No tongue can tell how sad is that state—no soul can conceive how great is that misery. Thine heart may well meditate terror, for thou art still unpardoned, uncleansed, unsaved! Thy feet are just about to stumble upon the dark mountains; and woe, woe, yea, ten thousand times woe to thy poor soul, if this night it were required of thee. Poor forlorn soul! Thou hast no God, and therefore thou hast no happiness! Thou hast no Christ, and therefore thou hast no pardon, no peace! Thou art without a father, without a friend, without a hope, and without a home! This earth is truly to thee "a wilderness and a land of darkness." Thou walkest through it a houseless, homeless wanderer; no arm to lean upon, no chosen companion of your secret thoughts and feelings; no friend to soothe your griefs or share your joys! Thou mayest have what men call a father, a brother, a home, on earth; but thou canst not call God thy father, nor Jesus thy brother, nor heaven thy home above! Thou wanderest on from day to day, a houseless, homeless outcast, seeing nothing around thee but trouble and sorrow, and nothing before thee or above thee but the blackness of darkness for ever!

Thou art an enemy to God! And who has ever hardened his heart against him and prospered? An enemy to the blessed God! An enemy to him that made thee,—to one that has never wronged thee in ought,—to one that has loved thee with a love so true and tender as to give for thee his only begotten Son! Yea, thou hatest him! Thou treatest him as if he were some hateful and hated fellow-worm, whose company thou couldest not endure.⁴ Oh what vile ingratitude, what desperate malignity, thus to return enmity for friendship, hatred and scorn for gentleness and love! The most loveable object in all the universe is the object that thou hatest most! Oh what madness, what enormous wickedness!

Thou art a child of wrath! And oh, what words can express, or what mind can conceive, all that is meant by this? Everything threatens wrath to thee. Thou dost not yet, indeed, gnaw thy tongue for pain, or gnash thy teeth in agony, but thou shalt shortly do so, if grace prevent not. I dare not call thee a "vessel of wrath fitted for destruction;"² for who knows but thy God may yet pluck thee as a brand from the burning; but at least I know that, so long as thou remainest unconverted, thou art treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. And if to be a child of wrath be so awful a thing, even when seen afar off in this place of mercy, oh what must be the horrors of that wrath throughout eternity! A child of wrath!—that is, all made up of wrath: whose very being is wrath! The air thou shalt breathe in shall be wrath—burning wrath! The light in which thou shalt dwell shall be scorching wrath; how different from the pleasant sunshine of earth, and the cool fresh air of morning. Wrath shall be within thee and around thee, above thee and beneath thee: wrath shall throb in every pulse and flow in every vein! And it shall be FOR EVER! Oh that word which sums up all despair! For ever! The eternal wrath of the eternal God; the unchangeable wrath of the unchangeable God! Poor child of wrath, wilt thou not turn and flee?

Thou art a child of the devil! Satan is thy master, and thou art his willing slave. Poor miserable soul, canst thou be content with such a master and such a bondage? Remember! thy bondage is eternal, thy chains eternal, thy prison-house eternal, thy torment and thy tormentors are eternal! If thou diest out of Christ, hell must be thy habitation for ever. Oh what an abode!—amid flames and wrath; echoing eternally with wailings of woe that might melt the very mountain-rock! It is called "a lake burning with fire and brimstone;"⁴ that is, with the hottest, fiercest, most penetrating, most tormenting of all flames. It is called a lake. Not a river, whose waters of burning anguish might be dried up or pass away; nor a sea which ebbs and flows, and whose wide extent, or perpetual change, or wind-swept surface might furnish some respite, some cooling relief. No; but a lake—still, stagnant, gloomy, and unchangeable! But more than this—thy soul itself shall be its own hell. Even were there no flames without, the furnace within shall be torment beyond endurance. Thy passions, thy unsatisfied desires, thy conscience, will be thy worst tormentors, worse than all the fiends of darkness—tormentors from which thou canst not flee. All that thou mightest have gained, and all that thou hast lost for ever, shall curse thee with their bitter memory. Earth lost—friends lost—possessions lost—time lost—the soul lost—heaven lost—eternity undone! Poor sinner, why wilt thou not live? Precious immortal, why wilt thou die?

Poor Christless soul, what a bitter lot is thine! What a doom of wrath and woe! To be tormented day and night for ever, in presence of the holy angels and in presence of the Lamb! The bottomless pit incloses thee for ever, and seals thy everlasting despair. Ah! the most distant and lonely hill of immortality would be welcome in comparison with this; aye, the gloomiest wilderness of earth would be Paradise when compared with this! There joy is a thing unknown. Love is a thing forgotten, or remembered only as a part of the once-familiar scenes

of earth now gone for ever! No peace nor hope in all the God-forsaken regions of the damned! No Saviour troubles you now with his offers of life. No God wearies you with his messages of love. Life and love belong only to heaven; and thou art in hell. Thy portion is the second death. Who shall undo your prison-bolt, or unbind your chain? Who shall fetch water to pour upon the unquenchable fire, or obtain even one drop to cool your burning tongue? Who shall dig the worm that never dies out of your tortured marrow? Who shall soothe your hopeless wailing or dry up your everlasting tears? No friends now; no companions now! The mirth of the world is over, and all its glory is departed. The song and the dance are over. The revelry of midnight is hushed, and the pleasant sunshine of earth has been exchanged for the blackness of darkness for ever. With all these certainties in view, oh! what is this world to a dying creature? What are all its pleasures or its business to a being formed for immortality? Poor dying sinner! dost thou not know that Jesus died that he might deliver you from a present evil world? Poor child of sin and dust, wilt thou not become an heir of endless glory?

Sinner as thou art, still there is hope—hope for thee; for thou art in the place of hope. This is the acceptable year of the Lord, and God willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He has no pleasure in your death. He lays his solemn command on thee that thou shouldest believe and be saved; so that the highest act of iniquity is to refuse salvation, to refuse the free gift of life! He entreats you to turn and live. He yearns over thee with a father's tender love. Yes! the love of thy God is a true and sincere love. It is no mere idea; it is reality. The words in which he has declared this to thee are not the language of mockery; they are not mere words of course. They do mean all that they seem to do: only they come infinitely short of the sincerity, the warmth, the tenderness of his paternal affection. They are but rays from the Sun

of love. They are but the scattered drops from the ocean, the measureless ocean of the Father's love!

No fondest parent's melting breast

Yearns like thy God's to make thee blest.

Poor sinner! if thou diest, it is not because of any want of love in God or any want of sufficiency in Christ. It is not because God would not be reconciled to thee, but because thou wouldest not be reconciled to God. His heart is toward thee; his desires are toward thee. He longs to welcome thee again to the family mansion, and to place thee again at the family table. Your sins and iniquities have not made him cease to care for you. His interest in your welfare is still as sincere and deep. Not that he palliates your sin, or excuses your continuance in it;—no; but that he longs to deliver you from it; and so warm and tender is the interest which he takes in you, that he seeks to compass this deliverance by every means. Do not suppose that there must be something good about you before he can feel kindly towards you. His thoughts towards you have always been, and still are, thoughts of unutterable compassion. In your misery, in your blindness, in your forlorn state of sin and danger, there is something which calls forth the affectionate interest of Him who made you. Oh, despise not, deny not, distrust not love so infinite, so divine. Do not wait, do not delay. Do not say, "I must try to prepare myself for coming to God." No! Come at once: come as you are: come this moment! As the Lord liveth, there is but one step between you and life; one step between you and peace! Take that one step! Believe what thy God hath made known regarding his well-beloved Son, "that believing, ye may have life through His name."

ELECTING LOVE

"Vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory."
ROM. 9:23.

ELECTION means choice, and to elect means to choose. The sovereign right of choosing belongs to God alone. Hence He said himself to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." His will is the law of the universe. We are the clay, and he is the potter.² All things take place according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Every thing in this world happens according to God's eternal arrangements. Nothing takes place except what God causes to be or permits to be; and whatever happens in time is decreed from eternity.⁴

All that God does, he arranges beforehand in his eternal counsels with infinite wisdom. He does not leave any thing to chance, or to the direction of beings less perfect in wisdom than himself. If he were to do so, every thing would go wrong. And what he intends to do is not left undetermined till the moment, or the day, or the year before doing it, for then He would be a changeable being like man; but it is settled from all eternity. Hence it is said, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Thus God decreed from all eternity to make the world, and when his appointed time came, he made it. So God decreed from all eternity to create man, and when the fixed time came, he was created. It was not Adam who chose to be made; but it was God who chose to make Adam.

Now, what is true of the making of man, is far more true of the saving of man. Adam was made, not because he chose to be made, but because God chose to make him; and Adam was saved, not because he chose to be saved, but because God chose to save him. Adam's salvation depended wholly upon God's having chosen him to salvation, that is, upon God's having elected him. Had God not chosen him, he never would have chosen God, and so would never have been saved. So it was with Cain and Abel. Both were equally lost by nature, yet Abel was saved, and Cain was not. Why was Abel saved? It was not because he chose God any more than his brother Cain, but because God chose him. Therefore it is written, "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." What is true of Abel is true of all that ever have been, or ever shall be saved. It is God's electing love that saves them. It is God's choice, not their own, that makes them to differ from those who are consigned to wrath.

What shall we say then? is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! God cannot be unrighteous in saving whom He pleases, or in passing by whom he pleases. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?³ Shall worms of the dust say, What doest thou? His decreeing to save man, did not make it unjust or cruel to pass by the angels. It could not be so unless they had deserved to be saved, which they did not. He decreed to save none of the angels, but he decreed to save some from among men. He needed not have saved any. He might have left them all to perish, just as he left the angels. But he determined to save some. He did not determine to save all, else all would have been saved, just as all the angels were kept from falling whom he decreed to keep. It would have been infinite love to have saved one single soul; but it was far greater love to save so many. And then how wonderfully was this love shown forth in his

determining to do so from all eternity? O what unfathomable love is displayed in God's eternal decree of electing love! To be thinking of us from all eternity! To leave nothing to chance, but to fix every thing beforehand! To leave nothing to our own wretched choice, but to arrange every thing from all eternity according to his own glorious choice, his infinitely perfect and unerring plans! O what a universe is this, where nothing, not even the falling of a sparrow, is left to any thing short of infinitely perfect wisdom, infinitely pure and perfect love! O, if there were no eternal and unchangeable decree of the God only wise ordering every thing aright, what a mass of inextricable confusion would this world be! How unutterably consoling to think that every thing that occurs is ordered by the eternal will and wisdom of the blessed God!

By nature man chooses nothing but sin. No man would choose God, or ever think of God, if God did not first choose him. If men then were left to their own choice, all would be lost. If there were no decree of God, no man could be saved. How fearful then the doctrine of those who say there is no eternal decree! To take away God's electing grace, is to take away a poor sinner's only hope of salvation. It must be plain then to all, that God's decree does not hinder any man from being saved. Those that are lost, are lost not because God wanted them to perish, but because they would not be saved. They would have been lost even had there been no decree, because they were sinners. God's decree did not make them sinners; it did not force them to be lost. It found them sinners, and it left them so. It found them lost, and it left them so. It did nothing more. It did not compel them to sin; it did not drive them to ruin. No. It simply passed them by. And was the sovereign God not entitled to do this?

Man could not create himself, and far less can he save himself. When God made him, he brought him out of nothing; when God saves him,

he brings him out of a state far lower and worse than nothing. If in the one case, then, every thing depended upon God's will and decree, much more in the other. There can be no injustice here. Had God pleased he might have saved the whole world. But he did not; and thousands are now in hell, and shall be to all eternity. Who will say that God is unjust, because he has left them to perish for ever, while he has saved others as vile as they? If there be any cruelty at all in the matter, it must be in his allowing any to perish when he might have saved all. The opposers of election say, there cannot be such a thing as a decree fixing every thing, or God would not be sincere in saying that he willeth all men to be saved. But they might far more plausibly argue, that God cannot be almighty, for he says he wills all to be saved, and yet does not save all!

If there be any injustice in the case, it must be, not in decreeing the thing, but in doing it. And yet the thing is done! Whether decreed or not, the thing is done! To remove the decree will not extinguish the flames of wrath. Hell is peopled already with millions of immortal souls, doomed to fiery wrath; while heaven is filled with millions of ransomed sinners, as vile, yea, perhaps viler far than they! What has made the difference? Man's will or God's?—man's choice or God's? Those that deny God's electing love may say, "Man's will:" but they who own a sovereign God, will say at once, "God's will, not man's." Yes! God's eternal will, for Jehovah changes not, but his plans and purposes are, like himself, from everlasting. "Who hath made us to differ?" is the wondering exclamation of earth. "Who hath made us to differ?" is the rapturous song of heaven!

If in the valley of dry bones which Ezekiel saw, some bones only had come together, while others remained as they were lying, what would have made the difference? Would it have been that some bones chose to rise, and others to lie still; and that God waited till he saw what

bones chose to rise, before he made up his mind regarding them? or would it not have been wholly of God? So it is with regard to dead souls. They do not choose to rise, nor does God wait till he sees some inclination to move amongst some of them, before he fixes his plans. No; they rise because God chose them from all eternity. They did not raise themselves, nor did they even desire to rise of themselves. Take away God's decree, and you take away a sinner's only hope of being saved. Had there been no electing love, there could have been no salvation. And nothing can be more foolish than the idea that God's decree interferes with man's liberty. The only point at which it does interfere, is in saving souls. Those that are lost, are lost because God does not interfere with them, but leaves them alone to enjoy their miserable liberty—that is, to remain in the bondage of sin. It is God's electing love that takes off the fetters with which the sinner is bound, that he may draw them to himself with the bands of love. Election draws some to God, but keeps none away. It is a help, not a hindrance.

God's choice is an eternal one. Who but a heathen would say, that God changes his mind or his plans, so that he resolves to do a thing to-day, which he did not intend to do yesterday, or that he must wait to see how men will act, before he can arrange his counsels? Is this like the unchangeable God, to change his plans according to the changes which take place in man—to make the variations of man's will the rule by which his purposes are regulated? O miserable uncertainty! How could the universe hold together for a day with such a government as this! No! God's choice is the choice of eternal love—the calm, deliberate, eternal purpose of love! O blessed choice of the blessed God! No changes of man can change thee! No fluctuations of time can affect thee! No storms of earth can sweep across thy path, or mar thy glorious certainty!

THE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

PART I

AS RECORDED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him."—JOHN 14:17.

GOD has lately been sending showers of his Spirit upon many dry places of Scotland.—"He has caused waters to run down like rivers." At such a time, therefore, it is specially needful for us to remember the words of the Lord. "Them that honour me I will honour." For how bitter would be our regret, and how awful our guilt, if we were to grieve him by neglect. Reader, may the Lord keep you from this sin, lest you should have to mourn it all your after days,—bemoaning the heavens over you as brass, and no souls converted, none of your friends awakened, love waxed cold among the saints, your own soul become like Pharaoh's ears of corn, "thin, and withered, and blasted with the east wind."

In order, therefore, to honour the Spirit, you must know his workings. It is written concerning him, "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him." Yet after all, how many even among believers are there who

know him too little. Hence they give him but little honour. O then come, and see what mighty wonders he has wrought in the earth.

Let us begin with his works as recorded in the Old Testament; and for the sake of distinctness, we shall divide these into seven periods.

FIRST PERIOD.—THE CREATION

THE Holy Spirit, as one of the persons of the glorious God head, created the heavens and the earth. The sea, the sky the earth, and even man himself, were his work. He removed the waters from the face of the solid earth, and gathered them into their beds. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." He moved the vast unwieldy volume of the immense ocean, and put it in its place. Soon it became a calm expanse,—a sea of glass in an unfallen world reposing in clear purity. Above this ocean he adorned the sky;—"By his Spirit he garnished the heavens." He put every planet and star in its orb and station; and it is he who upholds them there. He garnished the sky for man's sake. The beautiful clouds of sunset—"the spreadings and balancings of his clouds,"²—the deep blue sky at noon, and the bright stars seen in the clear night, all were the work of the Spirit. This earth too was adorned by him, as even now this is his work;—"Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth." It is he who, even in our fallen world, brings verdure over the earth when winter is past, drawing forth anew from the soil, in the season of spring, all that is nourishing, and all that is pleasant to the eye of man. And by this annual specimen of his work on earth, we may infer what was the glory of the unfallen creation, and what will be the glory of earth restored, when, by this same Spirit, "the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon."⁴ He prepared man's dwelling,—the heavens over his head shining with unfallen glory,—the sea within his view

reflecting the splendour of the sky, and itself full of wonders, while the earth scattered its wealth in profusion for his enjoyment. And when all things were thus ready, he created man;—"the Spirit of God hath made me."

1. Reader, were you ever well nigh despairing? Were you ever saying, that none cared for your troubled soul? Behold, the Holy Ghost! He has specially to do with the spirits of men! behold his love to man! The interest felt in unfallen man by the Spirit, was not less than that felt by the Son and the Father. 2. Learn the beauty of holiness. For if the beauty of the unfallen creation in its external aspect was so perfect, infinitely more excellent will be that wrought in the inner man. For the external beauty was in a manner only the by-work of the Spirit; whereas, the adorning of the inner man is his peculiar operation. Judge by this, how glorious he will make the soul that receives him. 3. What a mighty creating Spirit is he! How easily, then, he could renew you, reader, if you are still unconverted. Conversion is creation-work; "Create in me a clean heart;" and here is he who can accomplish it. Or, are you troubled? The Spirit who brought order out of confusion,—making hills take their proper place, and seas move to their bed,—heaving at his pleasure the unwieldy mass of deep waters,—he it is who can bring you to rest. As he cleared the face of the sky, cleaving asunder the thick darkness, and shewing "the body of heaven in its clearness," so he can dispel your clouds, and shew you the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

SECOND PERIOD.—THE FALL

WE are sure that the Holy Spirit felt the awful ruin of man. He is "grieved" at each individual sin. O then, how deep must have been his feeling when he saw the flood-gate of all sin opened! And as he

had been the agent in communicating to unfallen man the love of the Godhead, so now it grieved him to withdraw from his office.

But after all we find him not forsaking man. We find his regenerating and converting work made known the very day that Adam fell. In the promise that conveyed the glad tidings of the Redeemer, the work of the Holy Spirit was contained;—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman; and between thy seed and her seed." In this "enmity" to Satan, lies the whole principle of regeneration. We have here a statement of conversion, and that too, in its connection with the work of Christ. By means of the work of Christ, the Spirit works in the fallen man, love to God, and enmity to the devil and his seed.

1. Thus the doctrine of regeneration was taught in Eden. It is an old truth, and so important, that it is found among the first principles of redemption. 2. There is need of the entrance of God, the Holy Ghost, to enable man to escape from Satan. Satan holds the sinner fast. Look at Satan's undisputed dominion—hell! See how awfully fast every unsaved soul is secured! None escape from it; they have chains that never break—fetters that never snap—and a hand grasps them that none can unclasp but the Spirit of Christ! 3. The Holy Spirit, in delivering a soul, brings it to side completely with Christ and his cause. "I will put enmity." The man cannot any longer hesitate about his choice. He becomes decided. Instead of a lingering love to the world and Satan's tempting offers, his soul is in the state of "enmity" towards these instruments of his ruin.

THIRD PERIOD.—THE FLOOD

THE Holy Spirit had often entered into souls, and saved them by pointing to a promised Saviour. He had breathed on Enoch the spirit of prophecy, that man might know more fully of a coming Saviour. He preserved a record of his love to men, by keeping Enoch's words

in the memory of the fathers, and at last inserting them for our use in the epistle of Jude. But as the wickedness of man increased, his love began to be more strikingly seen; just as the brightness of a beacon-light is best seen when darkness has covered the sky. It is worthy of our notice, that at every new crisis the Spirit comes into full view. We shall see this verified in every after period, and it proves to us, that he was all along traversing the ways of God to man.

We find the Holy Spirit before the flood, "striving with men." The Holy One strove even with the giants that were on the earth in those days, and with monsters of iniquity! He strove, and they resisted during 120 years. So unwearied—so patient was his love! And it was he who raised up and qualified Noah to preach salvation, and enabled him all that long period to persevere amidst the mockery of the whole earth! For 1 Peter 3:19 tells us, that this same Holy Spirit, who afterwards showed his love to man, by quickening Jesus, was in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, sent by Jesus to enable Noah to testify to that wicked generation, who are now "spirits in prison,"—cast into hell, because they would not hear the call. The object of his "striving with men," was to lead them to righteousness, that they might be saved. For he foresaw the terrors of the flood, and the more awful terrors of hell, into which the flood would sweep them. He heard, though it was yet distant, their cry of woe, and he strove with them. He strove with old men and little children, young men and maidens; and yet they resisted him and perished.

1. Here is an awful fact; the Spirit strives with many whom he does not convert. How this should be so we are not told; for he could as easily overcome as strive. But the fact is beyond a doubt; and its very mystery makes it more tremendously impressive. If you read the Bible and are not converted, you resist the strivings of the Spirit; for

Heb. 3:7 shows you that he speaks in every verse. When you hear Christ preached, and are not moved, you are exactly as 1 Pet. 3:19, represents the men before the flood. And Stephen declares, that opposers of the truth are in the act of continual resistance to the Holy Ghost How awful! A silent contest, spirit against Spirit! the spirit of man against the Spirit of God.

2. Notice the times when he specially strives. We saw he did so under Noah's preaching; and he does so still. But his reason for special striving by very powerful ministers is, because a flood is coming on you. It may be an intimation of calamity near to our land, that he has raised up some to preach with special power, for he strives specially before any calamity comes. Reader, perhaps before you are to be overtaken by some sore trouble or wasting sickness, God is striving with your soul! That alarming passage which you last read, may be sent to arouse you now, because the billows of a flood are almost already wetting your feet.

3. Learn the object of all the Spirit's strivings. It is in his deep love to draw you to righteousness. No doubt he enabled Noah to persuade with great earnestness, and to show the place of safety—to describe the ark and its security, impenetrable by water, proof against the dashing billows. Just as now he enables his ministers,—in prospect of the fiery deluge, when the gates, (instead of "the windows") of heaven, shall be wide opened to let the flood pour along—to urge sinners to flee. He it is that enables them, for your sake, reader, to set forth the full provision made for sinners in Christ—to tell you that there is an ark ready, if you will only be pleased with it, and go in—a Saviour ready, with whom the Father is well pleased, and with whom he wishes you to be satisfied, as he is himself. If you believe your danger, and that an ark with an open door is offered you, surely you will enter in.

4. Ministers learn that their strength lies, like Noah's, in being upheld by the Spirit. They are raised up by the Spirit to testify of Christ, the ark.

5. Behold the immensity of the Holy Spirit's love! He visits thousands upon thousands! Even as at Pentecost, in after days, he displayed his love by coming on some from all kindreds and people.

FOURTH PERIOD.—FIRST CENTURIES AFTER THE FLOOD

EARTH was peopled again, and the Spirit did not forsake the place where he had striven before. The confusion of tongues at Babel was his work, as one of the persons of the Godhead, like the gift of tongues at Jerusalem. His love is herein seen, in as much as he thus took direct means to bring down man's pride, breaking up their company, and in this way leading them to feel their weakness and folly. He wished to stem the torrent of sin. And then he exhibited his marvellous power, by setting apart individuals, and keeping them safe amidst an apostate generation. He formed such a character as Abraham, full of faith—like a lofty pillar erect on a desolate heath. He gave Joseph his holiness and discretion, so that Pharaoh said, "The Spirit of God is in him." It is probable, also, that about this time Job was kept separate in a heathen land—a monument of the work of the Holy Spirit, in opposition to the "spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." In him "the enmity" between Satan and the woman's seed was eminently displayed. And Job knew the Spirit who preserved and sanctified him; for he often speaks of his works.

1. Believers, learn from this the immense power of the Spirit. You see he can keep a spark alive amidst the ocean—Joseph in Egypt. As there is immense power manifested in regeneration, so also in the preservation of the regenerated; as you find spoken of in the New

Testament, "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe. "Never despond. If you are tried by friends, or "by iniquity at your heels, compassing you about,"³ yet remember the power of the Holy Ghost as an Agent of the Godhead. It will glorify him the more to keep you safe.

2. Sinner, you cannot excuse yourself by saying that you are hedged in by insuperable barriers, that your situation makes it impossible for you to obey God. It may be you are tempted by being rich; or if poor, you are on that account tried with the prospect of temporal ruin if you are to be on God's side. Therefore you say, "There is a lion in the way." But the Holy Spirit is able to make you stand, and keep you from falling. The root of your hesitation is a willingness to find it impossible—a desire to be able to say "I pray thee have me excused." If you doubt the Holy Spirit's power and willingness to keep you from falling, you make God a liar, and you love darkness rather than light.

FIFTH PERIOD.—ISRAEL IN THE DESERT

IN this period the Spirit, as Agent of the Godhead, manifests himself in a threefold manner. The first was, his leading Israel through the great wilderness. When any great thing was to be done for man, we always find the Spirit come into view. Now, one great end to be accomplished by separating Israel from other nations was the coming of the Redeemer. It was, therefore, a scheme that breathed love to the world. No wonder, then, that we find it written, "As a beast goeth down into the valley, so the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest" We find him counselling the people, and turning the heart of enemies. When their desert state was nearly ended, he put into the lips of Balaam some of the sweetest words of comfort and blessing that Israel ever heard.

1. Learn then, Providences are under the direction of the Holy Spirit. He turns the heart of men,—suggests, hinders, excites. A person that speaks to you on the road may be sent by him. A person's change of plan or purpose may be his direct act. And thus he may bring the answer of prayer. 2. Ministers get words from the Spirit, like Balaam. And this is a most encouraging truth, when connected with the preceding. The ministrations prepared for you, and your being led by him up to the temple, like Simeon,³ all will be arranged by Divine wisdom for your salvation. 3. Your sphere in life has been fixed by the Spirit. He leads you in the desert. He prevented people offering you a better situation, and he reconciles your mind to the place where you are—"he causes you to rest."

But there was a second way wherein the Holy Spirit, at this period manifested the love of the Godhead to man. While in the desert, the Tabernacle was set up, full of the types of Christ. And we read how the Holy Spirit filled Bezaleel and Aholiab; "I have filled them with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." The object of the skill so imparted was, to enable them accurately and faithfully to form the various vessels and furniture, all which were to typify the Redeemer.—As no man can know Christ except the Father send the Holy Spirit to teach him, so none could execute the patterns of heavenly things except by his guidance. And therefore, these two men, and as many besides as were engaged in the work, were filled by the Spirit: "in the heart of all the wise-hearted I have put wisdom."⁵ It was a day of Pentecost to the Old Testament church—"he gave gifts to men," that they might make known Christ. Learn from this: 1. The Spirit's deep concern in your salvation. He takes care to have the way pointed out clearly and accurately. 2. No one can come to a saving and correct acquaintance with Christ without the Holy Spirit. 3. Ministers are taught that they cannot set forth

Christ to their people without the direct teaching of the Spirit. Without him they may show a Christ, but not the full, living Saviour—some lineaments of his form will be wanting; something of his beauty hid.

But there was a third way, during this period, whereby the Holy Spirit wrought for men. He gave a type of himself He taught them to erect a Laver of brass, opposite the altar. In this Laver was a type of the Holy One. Whatever regarding Christ was meant by the brass, the water typified the Spirit. It stood filled with pure crystal water; which, when the sun shone upon it, would attract the eye of every worshipper, like the stream, "clear as crystal, that proceedeth out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." Israel was thus taught how beautiful is holiness, and that all purity comes from this full source, the Holy Spirit. Even after a man was cleansed from sin at the altar, he found himself requiring a purity that could be communicated only by God. The worshipper saw that being justified by the blood of atonement, he must forthwith look for sanctification from the Spirit. The work of Christ, and the work of the Spirit were held forth in equal clearness; and there was no possibility of passing into the Holy place without approaching both Altar and Laver.

But there is more to be noticed regarding the Laver as a type of the Spirit. We know that it was always present in the Tabernacle-courts, and that it was carried from place to place along with the other vessels of the sanctuary. But while an account is given of the manner in which these other vessels were carried by the Priests and Levites; there is no mention of the Laver's carriage. This is remarkable. It is carried by those who bear the vessels of the Lord; it is one of the most important of their vessels; without it no Priest could ever enter the Holy Place; yet no mention is made of its presence amid the rest of the holy furniture. How significant is this, silence! The Holy Spirit

in the camp of Israel, silently yet mightily present! Ever there, yet ever in calm silent majesty. It was He who converted every subdued rebel in the camp,—it was He who filled every man of wisdom with his gifts,—it was He who clothed Eldad and Medad and the seventy elders with the spirit of prophecy; yet all in such a way as seemed to hide himself. Herein we trace the lineaments of the same person of the Godhead who appeared at Jordan choosing the dove as his emblem; and who, when the Father spoke from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son,"—gave his testimony by resting on the person of Jesus, and in the stillness of divine majesty filling that temple with the fulness of God.

He taught the Old Testament saints (as he does all his saints still, that their resting-place was the work of Jesus, not the Spirit's work in them. His office has always been to lead the sinner to the work of the Saviour. This is the same Holy Spirit of love and grace, who has ever been the Almighty agent in uniting the soul of the sinner to the person of Jesus, though unseen. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." But the Spirit is there too; yea, it is He that gives our souls that very fellowship. "If a man love me he will keep my commandments, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Is the Spirit not here? Is he not reconciled to the soul, to whom Jesus and the Father are reconciled? If he be, why is not He also in that dwelling? The answer is,—He it is that brings in the Father and the Son. There could never be a doubt of the Spirit's entrance into a soul that had received Jesus; the only doubt that existed was,—Would Jesus himself come, and would his Father? The Holy Spirit not only subdues the redeemed sinner's soul, and turns his eye for ever to the Cross; but by the same quiet, holy ministration brings in the Father and the Son to his new-born soul. The Laver is ever among the

sanctuary vessels; it is essential to every fully-performed act of any worshipper in the Holy Place; and yet it is unnamed at the time.

Once more. It was during this period that Scripture began to be written by holy men whom the Spirit inspired. The Pentateuch was given to Israel at this time.

SIXTH PERIOD.—THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

AFTER Israel had reached the land of Promise, and set up their Tabernacle there, they soon forgot the Lord. They turned their eye away from the glorious mass of types whereby they might have been always kept looking to the coming Saviour. As a consequence of their sin, the enemy came in as a flood. Often there seemed no hope of deliverance; often it had come to this extremity, that the Tabernacle and the Ark (the type and pledge of a coming Redeemer) as well as the very people from whom Christ was to come, were on the point of being swept away. Had this been permitted to take place, where would have been the hope of man?

But the love of the Spirit appeared again. It was he who raised up deliverers. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel, and he judged Israel, and went out to war." And so it is said of Gideon, "The Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon;" and the like of many others.

Reader, be excited by this, 1. To pray for the raising up of instruments for the work of the Lord. We need them in church and state, and he is willing to send them, and often does it suddenly. In your prayer-meetings ask this special work of the Holy Spirit; for it is written, "When the enemy comes in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." And we might have noticed, in the desert-time, that Moses no sooner sought help, because unable to bear all the people, than lo! "the Spirit came upon seventy of the

elders."2 2. If you want courage to confess Christ before men, the Spirit is he who gives it. He gave it to Gideon, who before shrunk from all trial, and was threshing wheat in a retired concealed spot, from fear of men. 3. If a day of trial is near, then our provision is in the Holy Spirit—"a Spirit of power"—able to prepare Christ's weakest saints, even if they be called to endure tortures and martyrdom.

SEVENTH PERIOD.—TIME OF THE KINGS

THOUGH often grieved, the Holy Spirit, in wondrous love, continued to raise up deliverers, until the days of Saul. Israel had sinned in seeking a king, yet when Saul had been appointed, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him," to give the heart for his office. It was, however, only a gift to be used for others, it was not grace to himself. And farther, in his days, Samuel the prophet presided over those schools of the prophets where there was so much of the Holy Spirit, that many who mingled with them for a night became new men. Memorable lessons were thus taught to the world, viz. Gifts are not the same thing as grace. A minister may edify his people, and yet be, like Saul, just a rod in the Spirit's hand to smite the rock, or an iron pipe through which pure refreshing waters flow. In our days this is a warning much needed. Public zeal, and our being made a blessing to others, is not grace in itself. It may often be Saul's gift. On the other hand, the schools of the prophets exhibited a work of the Spirit in reality, and they were the salt of the land. The gifts and the graces of the Spirit were displayed separately, perhaps on purpose to show how certain it is that they are not the same.

But soon after, both were united in the person of David. During many years, he was tried in the furnace, and all that time, the Spirit was sanctifying the man for his future work. He was deepening his holiness, that it might be bright and steady amidst the cares of a

kingdom. Having finished his preparatory work on David, he raised him to the throne, and suggested to his mind many schemes for the advancement of the glory of God. The ark was brought to Mount Zion with great honour and triumph; and so Christ in type was thus brought eminently into view of all Israel. And then the book of Psalms was dictated to David by the same Spirit, a book where the name of Christ is as ointment poured forth, in his sufferings, and in his glory.

The same was repeated, but in a higher degree, in the days of Solomon. The Holy Spirit suggested the plan of the magnificent temple, which being at last completed, the Saviour in type was exhibited thereby in a glory never known before. The splendour was such that all ends of the earth came to see it. All this was the work of the Spirit—"the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit"³—who was taking the things of Christ, and showing them to the world. No doubt, many souls that came, attracted by the splendour of the temple, learned the way of salvation, and returned home glorifying God. The Song of Songs, written at the same time, set forth the glory of the Redeemer, as the book of Psalms had done. And we find, as a consequence of all this, that both in the days of David, and of Solomon, there was a most extensive revival of true religion. These were times of refreshing. Indeed, there were never in Israel such happy times as when Solomon's temple was finished; as if to show the endless streams of blessedness that flow from a fully set forth Saviour. And in these days of Solomon, the Brasen Sea, brimful of the purest water, was a significant type of the Spirit. It stood on twelve oxen of brass, and was adorned with flowers, lions, oxen, cherubim,—apparently to set forth the truth, that in the days of the Prince of Peace, this earth shall be renewed, and delivered from the bondage of corruption, and filled with the Holy Spirit to its utmost bounds.

Learn here, 1. That a revival proceeds from the love and power of the Holy Spirit. He raises up instruments and gives the blessing. If a minister come among a people, and be blessed to them, it was the Spirit who sent him, and clothed him with power; and the people who would keep what they obtain must acknowledge the Spirit's love. 2. The Spirit quickens souls whether individually, or on a large scale, by bringing Christ fully into view. At the time when he was setting forth Christ before the whole nation in the temple, he was also carrying the same truth to private dwellings, and making it permanent there by means of the Psalms and Song of Songs.

Besides all this, the wonder-working Spirit showed in detail at that time many of his peculiar acts. He taught David that he alone is the author of conversion, "Create in me a clean heart,"—and of continuing holiness, "Uphold me by thy free Spirit,"—and of all discoveries of God, "Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness."² And, O reader, he showed that he is traversing the earth in search for souls, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit;" and that he will come and reside in souls that turn their eyes to the glorious Saviour, "Turn ye at my reproof; behold I will pour my Spirit unto you."⁴ He is "Good," that is, he is "LOVE," even as the Father is said to be.⁶

During the reign of the other kings of Judah, many books of Scripture were written for all ages; each a gift of the Holy Ghost to the children of men.

In the prophets he is always spoken of in connection with Christ's work. Isaiah was told that in future days he would rest on Jesus, to furnish him for his work. Three times is this declared, because of his desire to fix our eye on the infinitely perfect work of Jesus? He wishes you, sinner, to rest there. When Christ did come, there was no

spot on earth's surface whereon the Spirit would rest but the person of Jesus. He passed by the rich fields,—the mines of gold,—the wealthy cities,—the ceiled palaces, and repaired to the desert, that he might rest on Jesus! And so while Christ's coming was still only foretold, the Spirit ever appears in connection with it. When the men of Israel lost sight of The Hope of their fathers, seventy years' captivity ensued till the Holy Spirit revealed to Ezekiel and Zechariah, that he would be the author of their deliverance, by turning them to the Redeemer. The remedy for Israel's desolation at this day will be the Spirit directing their eye to Jesus.

Thus, reader, the love and office and power of the Spirit were sounded forth in the full voice of prophecy, for ages and generations; and they have reached you. Behold! he strives to find entrance into that soul of yours. Will you resist the Holy Ghost? or is he to come in and say of your soul,

"This is my rest, here will I stay,

For I do like it well?"

NOW

"To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart."—Ps. 95:7.

"I have long known that unbelief was my misfortune,—but, O Sir, until to-day, I knew not that it was my GUILT."

MY dear fellow-mortal, whoever you are, I now, in the name and presence of God, and in Christ's stead, lay before you my message; even this record, "God giveth you eternal life, and this life is in His Son," (1 John 5.) The free, the full, the sincere gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus, is at this moment held out to you whose eyes now rest upon these words; trifle not with it—put it not from you, I entreat of you—you have to answer for this very offer—your accepting of it will from henceforth make you eternally happy—your refusal may be the signal for the door of mercy to close for ever! Hear me, O hear me then, just as if you saw the gate of heaven moving in its portal about to be eternally closed—"Be reconciled to God!" Behold in the sorrows and death of his Son a perfect atonement for sin, and a pledge that he is reconciled to your salvation. O why then will you not come to him? Did you but know how sweet it is for a mourning, heavy-laden soul to rest itself on the finished work of Christ—and in assurance of hope to look forward to a peaceful, perhaps a triumphant death—to a glorious resurrection—to an eternity as full of bliss as an infinite God can make it to be—to look thus forward, and in the exercise of faith to say, "All, all is mine! for Christ is mine and I am his!"—if you could know the sweetness of this, even in a faint degree, readily would you say, "I will go with him!"

But, sinner, if we part as we meet—if you lay down this little messenger as you took it up, unbelieving and having no desire to believe—then must I tell you what remains for you: "He that believeth not shall be damned," Mark 16. Nay, it is not only a "shall be," but at this very moment you are in a condemned state: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God," (John 3) This one act of unbelief is enough to sink you into everlasting misery. And wherefore? Because it is downright blasphemy. "He that believeth not God, hath made

him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son," (1 John 5.) Is not that blasphemy, and yet you who receive not with the heart the message of salvation, are guilty of it.

Immediate repentance, immediate faith, immediate conversion to God through Jesus Christ crucified, are your immediate duty; and not to perform this duty is your immediate guilt. It is of no use to say, that you "cannot do these things without the grace of God." Grace does not create duty; for duty exists before grace, and is independent of it; you are bound to repent and be converted, because God requires it, although there had been no Saviour and no salvation. He that pleads the want of grace as an excuse for not submitting, shows that he is one of those that "will not" turn, and the death of such he must die, without remedy.

Are you not a sinner now? This you will not deny. Are you not under sentence of condemnation now? Is not the anger of God as present as sin is? Are you not then already in danger of the judgment? and is there a moment in which you may not perish eternally? Are not your blessings cursed now? Do you not feel now, in the blindness of your eyes, the hardness of your heart, the forerunners of eternal death? Why then delay?

Is not the Lord Jesus Christ a Saviour now? Is not his sacrifice finished, and his intercession begun? Does he not live now? Can he not save now? Will he not receive you now? Is he not actually saving multitudes of sinners on this earth now? Whilst you are delaying, are not others coming to him, even now? and will not many more come to him, to-day, to-morrow, and every day hereafter, until the last sinner come, and every now is occupied? and why then do you delay to come to Christ?

Is not the Gospel, which is the message of Christ's love to you, true now? Can it ever be more so? Is it not perfect and fixed? What it ever was to others, is it not that now to you? What it shall be to the end of the world, is it not that to you at this instant? Can it ever be more gracious or free than now? Can it ever come nearer to you than at this present time? Can it ever be of greater authority than now? Can there ever be more of God in it, more of Christ in it, more of the Spirit in it, than now? Can it ever have a more individual application, a more personal offer to you than now? No—never—were you to live a thousand years:—the Gospel never changes: then why delay to receive it?

Is not faith the same now, that ever it can be? Is it not the same truth that must be believed? Must not the same soul also now as hereafter perform that act of faith? Must not the same understanding discern, the same heart receive, the same conscience submit, the same very person be converted, now as then? Present truth demands present belief: present grace demands present acceptance, even as present law demands present obedience, and a present judge demands present judgment? Is it not so? If you propose believing and being converted a year hence, must it not be in that very way which is your duty now? Why then delay to believe and repent?

Is not present delay present sin? If a thing be my duty now, then not to do it now, is not to do my duty now, which is sin. If a thing is not my duty now, then in not doing it now, there is of course no delay, and therefore no room for sin: it is the presentness of the duty which constitutes the sin of delay. If I ought to believe now and repent now, and do not, then am I guilty now. A resolution as to the future is no substitute for present action; it is in fact a refusal to perform duty until that time come which we have selected; and he that delays for a time, does wilfully sin during that period. To resolve to be converted,

shows that you hold it to be a duty for which you are accountable; to put it off, declares, that you prefer continuing in an unconverted state: thus you are your own judge, and convict yourself of present sin. If you are a sinner, you ought not to advance one step farther, but now to turn and believe in Christ with your heart unto salvation. Why add the sin of present impenitence to that of past iniquity? why delay, of purpose, when delay is sin?

Present unbelief entails present condemnation—for, "He that believeth not is condemned already," but delay is unbelief, and therefore entails condemnation every time it takes place. As long as a man returns not to God through Jesus Christ, he is sealing up his former sentence of death, by taking out a new sentence of death in addition to it. A man's curse therefore as a sinner is heaping up every moment; and his damnation doubling without end, whilst he puts off coming to Christ and closing with Him as his Lord. Oh that men would then consider, what account they can give of themselves, even to themselves, at death, in judgment, and above all in eternity, when they find that by the poor device of delay they have brought themselves into the lowest perdition of hell! then must the past pleasures of delay become the present agonies of the eternal dying!

And what excuse can you plead for such delay? The Gospel is sent to you as you now are; not as you once were or may hereafter be:—the only condition is acceptance, free acceptance, present acceptance, personal acceptance, cordial acceptance. "Hear and your soul shall live!" What you are is what the gospel respects in you; what you need is what the gospel offers:—to wait, therefore, on the plea of not being good enough, and of wishing first to become better, is self-deceit, and a lie against the gospel. The best work you can now perform is to believe now, and to turn now; and, without this, all intended preparation is but condemnation. Nay, so far from gaining or

becoming better by delay, you lose and become worse. Your heart becomes harder, your mind darker, your sin greater, your time shorter, your burden heavier, your love less, your terror more, heaven farther, hell nearer, God more angry, the Spirit more grieved, the Saviour more dimly seen, the Gospel more powerless, ministers more faint, friends more despondent, prayer less importunate, Providence more unfelt, the world stronger, the flesh sweeter, Satan mightier, and the drowsy slumber of the second and eternal death now at hand more frequent and irresistible! Then shall that word be fulfilled, it may be, "I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh upon you! Ye shall call unto me, but I will not answer!" Reader, is that meant for you? What know you but it may!

Arise, flee—the way is before you—hold on straight before thee, but make speed—haste thee, haste thee! Behold that Throne of Grace. Behold that Mediator, with the blood of sprinkling, before it. See, he is an Advocate—an Intercessor for transgressors; go up to him now in thine heart—put the catalogue of sin into his hand—see how he smiles over thee with love inexpressible—receive the sprinkling of his blood on thy conscience. Now lift up thine eyes. He who sitteth on that throne unseen is the eternal Father! He who led thee to this throne is the Blessed Spirit, the Comforter! He who now holds thee with a kinsman's hand before the throne is Jesus, the "suffering Saviour!" and that blessing which is now issuing from the throne unto thee is a free, full, present, and everlasting "salvation by him!"

O Lord God, do thou grant unto the readers of this little book such grace unto life eternal! Let my beloved reader pray, saying, "Amen! and Amen!"

[Extracted from a little work by the Rev. J. M'Donald, Calcutta.]

July 1840.

TO THE UNCONVERTED

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man hit thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." ISA. 55:7.

MISERABLE SOULS!

With the eye of a sure, though too feeble faith, we see the heaven which you neglect, and the blessed souls in glory with Christ, whose companions you might be for ever! We see the multitude of souls in hell who came thither by the same way that you are going in, who are shut out of the glorious presence of God, and are now among the devils that deceived them! With our bodily eyes we see abundance of poor sinners living about us as if there were no God, no Christ, no heaven, no hell, no death, no judgment, no eternity! O what a deceiver is the devil, that can thus lead on souls to their own damnation! O what a cheater is this transitory world, that can make men so forget the world where they must live for ever! O what an enemy is this flesh, that thus draweth men's souls from God! O what a besotting thing is sin, that turneth a reasonable soul into worse than a beast! O what a world is this, where men are labouring to undo themselves, and gratifying the devil against that God and Saviour who would give them everlasting blessed life!

Poor sinners! will you still be cheated by this deceiving world? Were you made for no better, no higher work than this? What! not one awakened look into the world where you must be for ever? Not one heart-raising thought of everlasting glory? Not one heart-piercing thought of all your Saviour's love? Not one tear for all your sinful lives? O God forbid! Let not our labours be so despised! Let not your God, your Saviour, and your souls be set so light by.

Alas! what heart can now possibly conceive, or what tongue express the pains of those souls that are under the wrath of God! Then, sinners, you will be crying to Jesus Christ, "O mercy! O pity, pity, on a poor soul!" Why, I do now, in the name of the Lord Jesus, cry to thee, "O have mercy, have pity, man, upon thy own soul!" Shall God pity thee, who wilt not be entreated to pity thyself? If thy horse see but a pit before him, thou canst scarcely force him in; and wilt thou so obstinately cast thyself into hell, when the danger is foretold thee? "Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?" (Nahum 1:6) Methinks thou shouldst need no more words, but presently cast away thy soul-damning sins, and wholly deliver up thyself to Christ. May the Lord persuade thy heart to strike this covenant without any longer delay! But if thou be hardened unto death, and there be no remedy, yet say not another day but that thou wast faithfully warned, and hadst a friend, that would fain have prevented thy damnation.

Poor souls, consider,—God is in earnest with you; and why should not you be so with him? In his commands, his threatenings, his promises, he means as he speaks. In his judgments he is serious. Was he not so when he drowned the world? When he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah? And when he scattered the Jews? Is it time, then, to trifle with God? Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. In teaching he neglected his meat and drink. In prayer,

he continued all night. In doing good, his friends thought him beside himself. In suffering, he fasted forty days, was tempted, betrayed, spit upon, buffeted, crowned with thorns, sweat drops of blood, was crucified, pierced, died: there was no jesting in all this. And should not we be serious in seeking our own salvation?—The Holy Spirit is serious in soliciting us to be happy. His motions are frequent, pressing, and importunate. He striveth with us. He is grieved when we resist him. And should not we be serious, then, in obeying and yielding to his motions? God is serious in hearing our prayers, and bestowing his mercies. He is afflicted with us. He regardeth every groan and sigh, and puts every tear into his bottle. The next time thou art in trouble, thou wilt beg for a serious regard to thy prayers. And shall we expect real mercies, when we are slight and superficial in the work of God? The ministers of Christ are serious in exhorting and instructing you. They beg of God, and of you; and long more for the salvation of your souls than for any worldly good. If they kill themselves with their labour, or suffer martyrdom for preaching the gospel, they think their lives are well bestowed, so that they prevail for the saving your souls. And shall other men be so painful and careful for your salvation, and you be so careless and negligent of your own? How diligent and serious are all the creatures in serving you! What haste makes the sun to compass the world! The fountains are always flowing for thy use; the rivers still running; spring and harvest keep their times. How hard does thy ox labour for thee from day to day! How speedily does thy horse travel with thee! And shalt thou only be negligent? Shall all these be so serious in serving thee, and thou so careless in thy service to God? The servants of the world and the devil are serious and diligent. They work as if they could never do enough. They make haste, as if afraid of coming to hell too late. They bear down ministers, sermons, and all before them. And shall they be more diligent for damnation than thou for salvation? Hast thou not a better Master, sweeter employment, greater

encouragements, and a better reward? Time was when thou wast serious thyself in serving Satan and the flesh, if it be not so yet. How eagerly didst thou follow thy sports, thy evil company, and sinful delights! And wilt thou not now be as earnest and violent for God?—You are to this day in earnest about the things of this life. If you are sick or in pain, what serious complaints do you utter! If you are poor, how hard do you labour for a livelihood! And is not the business of your salvation of far greater moment?—There is no jesting in heaven or hell. The saints have a real happiness, and the damned a real misery. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in heaven, nor such lamentations in hell. All there are in earnest. When thou, reader, shalt come to death and judgment, oh! what deep, heart-piercing thoughts wilt thou have of eternity! Methinks I foresee thee already astonished, to think how thou couldst possibly make so light of these things. Methinks I even hear thee crying out of thy stupidity and madness.

Poor sinners! We are in good earnest with you! Can any man be in jest with you who believeth God? Our object is the saving of your poor souls. What else do we study for, labour for, suffer for, live for? Come, then, and help us, who are seeking to help you! Give over striving against God and conscience. Give over fighting against Christ and his Spirit. Take part no more with the world and the flesh, which, in your baptism, you renounced. We offer you nothing but what we have chosen for ourselves. O increase not your guilt, your pain, by refusing these calls. O turn not our complaints to God against you. Turn us not from beseeching you to be reconciled to God, to tell him that you would not be reconciled. Force us not to say, that we invited you to the heavenly feast, but you would not come. Poor sinners! your case is not yet desperate. O make it not desperate! Heaven may yet be yours if you will. O will you not be saved? Will you prefer the world and the flesh before your Saviour and your God,

before a sure and everlasting joy? O retire for a little into thyself, and use the reason of a man. Look before thee whither thou art going, and look behind thee how thou hast lived; look within thee and see what state thy soul is in, whether it be ready to enter on eternity; look above thee, what a heaven of glory thou dost neglect, and what a God thou hast to be thine everlasting friend or enemy; look beneath thee, and think where they are that have died unconverted. When thou hast soberly thought of these things, then do as God and thy conscience shall direct thee. And is this an unreasonable request?

Pity, O Lord, and persuade these souls! Let not Christ's blood, his doctrine, his example, his Spirit, be lost unto them, and they lost for ever! Let not heaven be as no heaven to them, while they dream and dote on the shadows of this world. O save this land from the greater destruction, than all plagues, and famines, and divisions, and wars, which our sins and thy threatenings make us fear. O Lord in thee have we trusted, let us never be confounded?

"SEEK YE THE LORD WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND, CALL YE UPON HIM WHILE HE IS NEAR."—Isaiah 53:6.

[Abridged from Baxter.]

"HE THAT IS UNJUST, LET HIM BE UNJUST STILL: AND HE WHICH IS FILTHY, LET HIM BE FILTHY STILL: AND HE THAT IS RIGHTEOUS, LET HIM BE RIGHTEOUS STILL: AND HE THAT IS HOLY, LET HIM BE HOLY STILL. AND, BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY; AND MY REWARD IS WITH ME, TO GIVE EVERY MAN ACCORDING AS HIS WORK SHALL BE." Rev. 22:11.

THE WHITE ROBES

A TRACT FOR SABBATH SCHOOL CHILDREN

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—Rev. 7:13–17.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,—You have perhaps read the Pilgrim's Progress; and you remember that when the pilgrims came to certain mountains called the delectable or delightful mountains, they saw through a glass the glory of the heavenly city to which they were going. You remember also that before Moses died, God took him up to mount Pisgah and showed him the land of Canaan lying before him in all its beauty. Now this book of the Revelation is just like these delectable mountains;—it is just like Pisgah. It shows the glorious land that is afar off. When good Mr Rutherford was dying he cried out, "glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land." Now this book and this passage show you not merely Immanuel's beauty and glory, but the glory of Immanuel's city, the glory of Immanuel's kingdom, the glory of Immanuel's land. Oh, if you but saw the glory of that country where he reigns, you would long to be there; you would weary of being here!

The people that John saw in heaven were the saints (verse 9); a great multitude that no man could number, out of all nations on the earth,

and of all generations from the beginning. There would be righteous Abel, and Seth, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Melchizedek, and Moses, and Joshua. All the prophets would be there, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Elijah, and all the rest. The apostles would be there, Paul, and Peter, and James, and others who were all gone to glory before John was sent to Patmos and wrote this wonderful book. Oh, what a company! Holy, happy, glorious! Should you not like to be with them,—safe in glory too,—far away from the wicked company of a sinful world like this? But let us notice four things about these saints in glory.

1. How they are clothed. They have white robes,—whiter than the snow, purer than the wool, more shining than the sun. It is said of the Levites (2 Chron. 5:12,) that "they were arrayed in white linen;" but the raiment of the saints is whiter far than theirs. It is said of the angels who appeared at the resurrection of Christ, (Matt 28:3,) that their "raiment was white as snow." Such are the robes of the saints above! It is said of Christ himself on the Mount of Transfiguration, (Matt. 17:2,) that "his raiment was white as the light." Such are his people's robes, for he clothes them with his own raiment. Once they were as filthy as any, as black as any, but now they are white. In Zechariah (3:3–5,) we read how God took off the filthy garments from Joshua the high priest, and put clean linen upon him. Such is the change that must take place in every soul. No tongue can tell how filthy a soul is by nature. It is as black as hell itself. When Mr. Whitefield was preaching to the Indians about their sinfulness, he told them that "their hearts were as black as their faces." So it was with these saints in heaven at first. They were no better, no purer than others. But now how different! Once their souls were unholy, now they are holy. Once their robes were black, now they are white. Oh how white, how pure, how perfectly beautiful! Ah, my dear children, it must be so with you! You must be changed too. You must

be made clean and white. You must get Christ's glorious dress; you must be made beautiful with Christ's perfect beauty, before you can join that holy, happy band!

2. What makes them so white. It is said "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." It is this that has taken out all the stains of sin, and made them so white and fair. Nothing can make a soul clean but the blood that cleanseth from all sin. It is in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness that we must wash our sins away.

I was once conversing with a dying woman, and among other things she said this:—"People say there is nothing whiter than snow, but I think there is one thing whiter, and that is, a blood-washed soul." It was the blood that flowed from Calvary that made the robes of these saints so white;—the blood of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Oh, my dear children, should you not like to be as white as they, as holy as they? Then you must go and be washed in the same fountain; you must go and be sprinkled with the same blood. Nothing else will make you clean. Oh, put up this prayer just now,—*"Lamb of God, wash me, and I shall be clean."*

3. Where they are, and what they do. (1.) They are before the throne of God. What a glorious place to dwell in! More glorious by far than the palaces of kings. What an honour to stand before the throne of the King of kings! Some of them when on earth had not where to lay their head. Some of them were cast into dungeons; some of them lived in mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth. Now they are in the New Jerusalem; in their Father's house with many mansions; in the palace of the King, and standing as kings themselves with crowns upon their heads, and palms in their hands before the throne of God! What a mighty, what a blessed change to them!

(2.) They serve him day and night in his temple. They are not only kings, but priests too, like Melchizedek. They stand in his temple for ever, and go no more out, (Rev. 3:12.) they praise him without ceasing. They serve him without growing weary, day and night; for, O eternity's too short, to utter all his praise! How different are they from most of you! You are soon weary of serving God. You are soon weary of praise, soon weary of prayer. You are weary of your Bibles,—weary of the Sabbath,—weary of hearing about God for a single hour. Oh how unlike you are to those who serve him day and night,—who rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. How unfit for heaven, if you are thus so soon weary of God! That holy man, David Brainerd, who was a missionary to the North American Indians about a hundred years ago, mentions in his account of himself, that often, when forced by the weariness of his body to go to rest at night, he grieved to think that he could not want sleep, that he might pray the more. How unlike you are to him!

(3.) God dwells among them. He who sitteth on the throne gathers them all round him as a father gathers his family at night round his knee. They are "for ever with the Lord." They were pilgrims here, now they have gone home to God. They behold his glory; they are full of his love; they live under his smiles; they see his face, and his name is in their foreheads, (Rev. 22:4.) Are you not all saying, O that I were there!

4. How happy they are. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." They are the happy ones, their race is run? Former things have passed away. Their winter is past, the rain is all over and gone. All that they suffered upon earth is only remembered like a dream.

(1.) It is said, "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." They were often hungry here, often thirsty, often faint and weary; but all these sufferings are over now. They have reached the city of their God, "Jerusalem, their happy home." There they have the tree of life to feed upon, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and the hidden manna which is given to all who overcome, (Rev. 2:7, 17): There they drink out of the fountain of life. What a change to them! They had come out of great tribulation, having nowhere to lay their head, no one to give them food to eat, or water to drink, (2 Cor. 11:27). Now they know none of these things. These light afflictions were but for a moment. They are all over now. When good Mr Baxter was dying, one of his friends asked him how he was, he answered, "Almost well." And soon after he became like these saints, not only almost, but altogether well, for he slept in Jesus. Happy saints! no man could count your numbers, and no man can count your joys! Happy children, who are already safe folded in their Father's arms above! Happy children, who are on their way to their Father's house, travelling to Immanuel's land! Oh, poor unhappy children, who are still like sheep going astray,—wanderers on the way to hell! Oh, what a place must hell be, if earth be so full of sorrow! All the sufferings of earth are nothing to the torments of the damned. There they are hungry, but never feed; they are thirsty, but have no water to drink; they are weary, but never rest; they say, Oh when shall my torments cease? Oh when shall these flames grow cool? but the torments are for ever, and the flames are never quenched!

(2.) The sun never lights on them, nor any heat. They had often been scorched with the sun,—many of them had been burned to death in the fire. But now the sun shall not smite them by day, nor the moon by night, neither shall the flame kindle upon them. The land in which they dwell is Immanuel's land, and they have no need of the sun at all, for He himself is their sun, their everlasting light. They need no

candle, neither light of the sun; and there is no night there, for the Lord God giveth them light, (Rev. 21:23). I read some time ago, of the death of a little girl,—a Sabbath scholar, who died in faith. It was evening when she lay dying. The setting sun streamed in upon her bed, and fell upon her dying eye. She looked calmly up and said, "I shall see that sun no more." Nor did she see it, for ere it rose again, she had slept in Jesus. But she had gone to the city where they need no sun. Happy child!

She sleeps in Jesus, and is blest;

How sweet her slumbers are.

But one thing you must remember, my dear children; though there is such a sun to scorch, and such flames to burn us on earth, these are nothing to the lake of fire and brimstone. Oh who can dwell with the devouring fire? Who of you can dwell with the everlasting burnings? Oh flee from the wrath to come!

(3.) The Lamb feeds them, and leads them to, living fountains of waters. Jesus, who loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood, still watches over them. And the good Shepherd who took them for his sheep on earth, and gave his life for them, still cares for them as his sheep in heaven. The same shepherd that led them through this wilderness, leads them through the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. He makes them to lie down upon the green pastures, he feedeth them among the lilies, (Song 2:16.) It is out of Christ's loving hand they feed; it his gentle hand that leads them on. He goeth before them and they follow him,—they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and they sing all the while the song of the Lamb. They drink out of the pure river of the water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, (Rev. 22:1).

(4.) God wipes away all tears from their eyes. They often wept on earth, they shall never weep again. They wept for their sins; they wept when death parted friend after friend from their side; they wept for the souls of others; they wept for the dishonour done to the name of Jesus; but all such weeping is done, all sorrow and sighing have fled away. Their eyes were dim with trouble. God brightens their eye and removes all dimness. Their foreheads were wrinkled with care, God smooths off every wrinkle from their brow. Their faces and cheeks were foul with weeping, God wipes all off with his own hand for ever. As a mother takes her weeping child into her arms and dries up its falling tears, so does their God to them. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so does God comfort them." Ah, my dear children, how often have you wept on earth; how many tears have you shed since you were born! You have many things that make you weep,—many things which make your young hearts sore till they are like to break. But if you are children of God, your tears will soon be done. There is no weeping in heaven. There are no tears ever fall from the eyes of angels; no tears ever fall from the eyes of the saints; no tears ever stain the golden pavements of the heavenly city. They sing there, but never weep. They praise, but never weep. They shout for joy, but shed no tears! Their death-bed tears were the last they shed, or shall shed for ever! My little children, would you not like to be with them? But this brings to my mind another place very unlike this, and other souls very different from these;—that place is hell,—these souls the souls of the lost. There, it is said, all is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. There, nothing is heard but the loud and bitter weeping of lost souls. Oh what burning tears are shed in hell! Bitter as are the tears of earth, they are nothing to the tears of hell. If this world be a vale of tears, O what must hell be! They fall in floods, yet they cannot cool the heat or quench the flames. And there is no hand to wipe them off. For who would do it there? Would Satan do it? No, he mocks their weeping. Would their lost companions do

it? No, alas! they have too many of their own to wipe away. They must weep for ever and for ever! Oh, my dear children, is it possible that any of you who are now sitting so peacefully before me on these seats, should ever be weeping in hell, that any of your voices, that have been sweetly rising in praise, should ever be wailing there? And yet I fear it will be so. Yet it should not,—it need not. Why should you not all be saved?—Oh, my God, canst thou not save them all? Wilt thou not save them all?—Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die. There is room in heaven for you all. There is bread enough in your Father's house and to spare. There is love enough in your Father's heart for all:—room for little children,—bread for little children,—love for little children! Oh, will you not enter in? Is not heaven far better than earth? Is not the new Jerusalem far better than the cities of the earth? And, oh, is not heaven far better than hell?

Come in, come in

Eternal glory thou shalt win!

I shall close this sermon with three remarks, which I do intreat you, my dear children, to remember. May the Holy Spirit write them on your memories, and seal them on your souls!

1. You cannot get to heaven without the white robes. You are not to suppose that you will get them after you get to heaven. No, you must get them here before you go to heaven. It is here that you must be washed, it is here that your robes must be made white in the blood of the Lamb. It must be done now! A little girl of whom I heard from a friend, was awakened and made anxious about her soul, by hearing her minister say at a prayer-meeting, "a soul must be pure and without a spot before it enters heaven." Nothing that defileth shall enter there. You must have the white robes before you can go into the company of saints and angels. You must have the new heart before

you can sing the new song. You are anxious to get fine clothes for the body, but though you had the finest that man could give you, they would not fit you for heaven. You must have the blood-washed robes! And yet I fear there are few of you have them,—very few among all the hundreds that are now before me. If you forget God, if you do not love Christ, if you lie, or cheat, or swear, or steal, or are passionate, or break the Sabbath-day by being idle, or by walking, or by staying at home when you ought to be at church,—then you may be quite sure that you have not yet had your robes washed white. You have still the old heart, the filthy soul. You are still the devil's children, and still wearing the devil's clothes. And if so, you cannot get to heaven as you are. Oh, how sad, how awful is the state of those children whose sins have never been forgiven, whose souls have never been washed clean in the blood of Jesus! The door of heaven is shut against them. Hell is ready to receive them for ever.

2. None but Christ can give you these white robes. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash your soul white. It is vain for you to try to cleanse yourselves. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? In the Pilgrim's Progress we are told of a place the pilgrims came to, where their guide showed them a man trying to wash an Ethiopian white, but the more he tried it the blacker he became. So it is with us when we try to make ourselves clean instead of going to Christ to be washed in his blood, and receive from his hand the white robe, the wedding-garment, the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. You cannot make these robes; nor can you buy them. Christ has made them for you. Christ has bought them for you. Christ offers to put them upon your poor naked souls!

3. Christ is willing to give you them just now. Though you cannot make them, and cannot buy them, still you need not wait for a single moment. You have just to go to Christ for them, and you are

sure of getting them. He wants you to do this, for he says, (Rev. 3:18.) "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed." And he wants you to come just now! Oh my dear children, come just now, or you may lose all! Come just now, for you may die to-night! Come just now, for you may die before this sermon is done! A minister was once preaching to a Sabbath school in England. When he was preaching, a thunder storm came on. The lightning struck a tree outside the church, so that it fell through one of the windows and alarmed the people. But there was one little girl, whose heart God seemed to have touched, who stood at the foot of the pulpit, and continued to gaze upon him. He went to enquire for her next day. She had been wanting to go to a fair before she heard the sermon, but now she would not go. She said, "I don't want to go to the fair, I want to get one of the white robes you were speaking of yesterday." The minister spoke to her for a while, and then left her, intending to call next day. Next morning a message came to tell him that the little girl was dead! But she was ready,—for Christ had given her the white robes before he called her away. Ah, my dear children, are you like her? Are you ready to die tonight, and to lie down in the grave as calmly as you would do in your bed? Have you the blood-washed robes? Are your sins all forgiven? Has the Holy Spirit taken old things away and made all things new? Oh, I beseech you, do not delay! Thousands are now weeping in hell because they put off these things for another night. Do not rise from these seats till you have gone to Jesus for the precious gift. The soul that lies down in a Christless bed, may next day be carried to a Christless grave. Christ said to the saints in the church of Sardis, "they shall walk with me in white." O then come to him, and you too shall walk with him in white. You shall stand upon the sea of glass. You shall have palms in your hands, and crowns upon your heads, and shall enter in with Christ through the gates of pearl, unto the glorious city, to be kings

and priests to God, and to reign with Him for ever! Oh, then, pray ere we close; say, "Lord Jesus, give me this white raiment,—give me it now."—Amen, and Amen.

[The above is the substance of a sermon preached to Sabbath school children, Sept. 13, 1840.]

THE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, PART II

AS RECORDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

"There were seven lamps of fire, burning before the throne; which are the seven spirits of God ... sent forth into all the earth."—REV. 4:5; 5:6.

READER, do you often consider your special privilege, and responsibility now, when there is more of the Spirit within reach of fallen man than before Christ's coming? The fact is stated in John 7:39, and the reason of it also.

The Spirit would not have breathed at all upon fallen man, unless atonement had been offered for sin. The love of the Holy Spirit is holy love; it waits for a holy channel through which to flow. Such a channel was opened by the promise of a Redeemer in Eden, and the Spirit forthwith began his work of regenerating man. Abel, Enoch, Melchizedec, Abraham, and thousands more, were renewed and

sanctified by him, long ere Jesus had died. But all was done on the understanding that Jesus was yet to die; the sins of those whom he sanctified were reckoned as suffered for, and the Lamb was reckoned slain from the beginning of the world. Still, keeping before the world the fact that the righteous God would never give up his demand for entire satisfaction, there was only a part of the Spirit's fulness given out, previous to the time when Christ actually came and paid the full ransom. The anxious world was kept waiting for the joyful cry, "It is finished!" "Because Jesus was not glorified, the Holy Spirit was not yet given." When we see only the hands and feet of a man, we do not say we have seen the man; for we have not seen his face and form; so, says the Evangelist, a right idea of what the Spirit is, was not yet given to man. But, as the time drew on towards Christ's actual death, more was given; and when the Saviour's work was declared to be accepted in his ascension, the streams of the full Spirit poured down upon the earth. Like the seven streams of the river of Egypt, this copious flood came down; the one infinite Spirit emptying himself on the earth in seven streams, Rev. 1:4. Let us, then, draw your attention, reader, to some of the wonderful things recorded of him, as he came forth in this fuller manifestation.

I. His wonderful work on the soul of John the Baptist

He entered the soul of the forerunner of the Lord, while yet an infant in the womb. John was thus sanctified from the womb; and the evidence of the Spirit's work appeared in him even then, inasmuch as a distinct intimation of the Saviour's coming made the babe leap for joy.

Little children, see how the Holy Spirit may love you. Look at John the Baptist, and you can say no more it is too soon for the Spirit to love you, or too soon for you to need him. Look at John, and tell us,

why you too should not be holy now? Look at this infant boy, filled with the Spirit, and tell us why you have not got him yet? Did you ever know that on the day that you were baptized, he showed willingness to come to you? Will you resist the Holy Ghost?

Parents, the Holy Spirit can sanctify souls in the womb: why are your children not thus sanctified? Some of you complain of your children's temper and conduct; but have you asked for them the Spirit, who showed good-will to you in baptism? And have you taught your children that he did offer himself to them? O for your own souls' sake, care for your children! Many pious parents are punished in the barrenness of their own souls for the carelessness of their families. Holiness in your seed would react upon yourselves. "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, when the babe leapt for joy at Mary's voice," and "Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied," when he recognised the work of God in his infant son.²

II. His wonderful work in the work of Christ

Gabriel was sent to tell Mary that Immanuel was to be born of her. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee." Mary's sinful nature was by him sanctified, that she might be a habitation for "The Child that was to be born to us." When Christ shall come and set up his throne on earth, earth shall be fully purified; so, when Mary was to receive the heir of that throne, she was fully prepared, and the child born of her was "The holy child Jesus," without spot or wrinkle of sin.⁴ What a moment was that wherein the Word became flesh! Reader, here is the "mystery of godliness!" The Spirit who at creation fashioned the unfallen earth and sky, prepared in that hour the human nature of Christ. The Father gives the word, and the Son responds to the Father, as he saw the Holy Spirit complete his work, "Lo! I come to

do thy will, O God—a body hast thou prepared me!" and forthwith he is on earth, in our nature, who was to be our sacrifice!

Learn here, 1. The sovereign grace of the Holy Spirit. His sovereignty is the same as that of the Father; he comes in free grace to whom he will. He is doing for man what he never did for fallen angels; he is giving his own nature to fallen man! O reader, may you be one of the vessels of mercy whom he fills!

2. The Holy Spirit's anxiety that a complete Saviour should be provided for man. It was on this account he so prepared the person of Immanuel. The sacrifice chosen for us was from the first spotless, and therefore sure to be accepted whenever it should be offered. And when this our great sacrifice was shown in the temple soon after he came, the gracious Spirit led in Simeon to behold him, and filled his soul with peace by that sight.

III. His work during Christ's thirty years' retirement

He continued to dwell in Christ's human nature, like the glory filling Solomon's temple. He daily breathed more and more wisdom into Christ's human soul, and brought out more and more grace into manifestation; rays of the indwelling glory were made from time to time to stream forth upon the surrounding darkness. "He increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man." All this, too, while Nazareth was the place of his abode. During nearly thirty years, Jesus lived in Nazareth, a city noted for its wickedness; the Holy Spirit carried on the holiest work ever seen on earth in the midst of the vilest city. The contrast made the work more evident and marvellous. How powerful the holiness of God! O reader, Christ's salvation is a holy salvation, it leads to holiness, and the Spirit shows you the possibility of being holy even in the midst of an evil world, "godly in this present world." The Holy One of God emerges from

polluted Nazareth. Are your neighbours evil? Are your friends ungodly? Are your parents enemies of God? Yet behold the Spirit's work in Nazareth, and be of good cheer.

IV. His work at the baptism of Christ

He came then to give his human nature all gifts for his office, and Isaiah's prophecy (61:1) was then fulfilled to the very eye of man. Anxious that nothing should be left undone for us, he fully anointed Jesus, of whom it is said, "he returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee." Jordan, when it overflowed all its banks, would be but a feeble type of the abundance of the Spirit poured that day on Jesus; for he was poured out on him without measure.⁵

And notice, reader, that the Spirit did this in a way that showed his intense desire for your salvation. Heaven opened—there was brightness above the brightness of the midday sun, and, while every eye was fixed on "the body of the heavens in its clearness," the Holy Ghost came down from the Father and rested on Jesus, "in a bodily form like a dove." He did the nearest thing to becoming visible, for he caused his presence to be marked by a "bodily form, like a dove." As at Pentecost tongues of fire rested on the disciples, so a bright form, like a dove, rested on Jesus as he stood in the streams of Jordan!

We see here, 1st, The Holy Spirit glorifying Christ in the sight of sinners. He points him out to the notice of a careless world. He recommends him to you by spreading attractive glory round him. Oh he longs to draw your attention to Jesus, that you may be forced to cry, "There is beauty in him that I should desire him."

2d, We see the Spirit teaching anxious souls that it is Christ who brings peace to the sinner. For he chose the form of a dove when he abode on Jesus, that so he might bring to our remembrance the

feelings of God toward the world at the deluge. Noah's dove was the messenger of peace, bringing good tidings that the flood of wrath was assuaged. And so on Jordan's waters, the Spirit points to Jesus, "who is our peace,"—whose olive branch is the plant of renown.

And, 3d, We see the Spirit teaching us that Christ brings in a new creation. He had never come in such visible energy since the day when he "moved on the face of the deep," but now he does, because the Creator is here, and a new creation begun.

V. His work during Christ's public ministry

As soon as he had publicly anointed the Saviour and fully furnished him, he led him to the wilderness to be tempted forty days of the devil. The Spirit thus showed his own power, for he kept the slightest breath of evil from the human nature of him whom he upheld, although every form of sin, in every pleasant disguise, was successively presented. But his special intention in this case was to let us see that our ark was well able to withstand the storm; that it was waterproof and indestructible. He was anxious that we should know this truth, and therein possess strong consolation.²

When our Redeemer was performing his miracles, he declared that he acted by "the Spirit of God." He said this when casting out devils, thereby teaching us that the Holy Spirit is Satan's grand opposer, and takes his place in the heart that Christ has cleansed. And when you see also how, being "full of the same Spirit," Jesus raised the dead, and healed diseases, remember that it may be through the direct operation of that Spirit "who made you," (Job 33:4,) that health is breathed through your frame, and refreshing sleep made to restore your wearied body.

But never were the Spirit's power and love to man more manifest than at Christ's death. It was "by the eternal Spirit," that he offered himself to God without spot. The sacrifice was all put in order by him. And all was completed when for our sakes the Spirit caused the communications of love towards the beloved Son to run so low, that he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" In the same anxiety of love, how fully did he show himself in Jesus at the resurrection morning—"the Spirit of holiness" raising him from the grave and declaring him the Son of God with power.²

VI. Christ's discourses, and promises concerning him

We have seen the Spirit's operation throughout the various scenes of Christ's life-time on earth; let us further see what Christ used to tell his disciples concerning Him.

When he first began to teach, he pointed to the Spirit—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." And the first of his recorded conversations is that with Nicodemus, wherein he fully declares that no man can enter the kingdom of heaven till he is born of that Spirit who was typified by the pure water under the Old Testament dispensation. Reader, Christ has seen all the souls that ever entered heaven, and he declares that not one has entered who was not first born again. To this truth he puts his seal "Verily, verily,"⁴ three times in the course of that one conversation; and says with awful solemnity, "We speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen!" Reader, has the Spirit come to you? Are you new-born? Has he quickened you? Has he renewed your will? Has he ever come to you, like "fire," to burn up the stubble? or as "the rain" softly entering your soul, while you read the Scriptures? or as a "quick two-edged sword," piercing you with deep convictions? and then descending as a dove, has he shown you peace after your many alarms? The time and manner of his coming it

would be interesting to know; but apart from this the all-important question is, Has he come?

During his ministry, Christ spoke of him as the "Spirit who quickeneth" sinners that are dead in sin, John 6:63, and as the great gift he would bestow upon his children. Often he warned those around him against blaspheming him. On one of the most remarkable days of his ministry—the great day of the feast of tabernacles, he held forth the permanent possession of this gift as the grand effect of believing on the Saviour.² But when the time drew near that he must leave the world, he spoke of him more and more. How full of him are his discourses in John 14. 15. 16. He taught his disciples to lean on the Spirit as their guide into all truth; and told them that it would be he who should convince them of sin, fixing the sinner's gaze on the special sin of rejecting the Saviour—and next, of righteousness, satisfying the sinner that it was to be found in the Redeemer, because after weaving that garment he had gone and shown it to the Father—and finally, convince them that judgment was given against Satan, the prince of this world, whose cause was ruined, the head of the serpent being crushed. He further told them that his office would specially be to take up the things that concerned the Saviour and show them to souls; so that doubting, dark, anxious minds might be relieved by him when no minister or guide on earth could help them (see 1 Cor. 2:12.) Already he had taught them that all their usefulness would depend on the measures they received of this Spirit, who would cause to flow out of them "rivers of living water;" and they found it so in their after experience. (See Acts 4:31, 33, and the account of Pentecost.) When just about to ascend, he said, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father."

Reader, observe, (1.) How our Lord, during all his ministry, led his disciples to the Spirit, even as the Spirit leads all souls to Christ. The

Spirit leads all coming sinners to the Altar, and when there they have met Jesus, Jesus sends them to the Spirit as the water in the Laver. (2.) The best gift that our ascended king could select for his beloved disciples, out of all the riches of heaven, and all its joys, was the gift of the Holy Ghost. Does it seem small in your eyes? (3.) Put together all that Jesus said of this gift, and can you forbear to covet it? Reader, if you are a believer you have access to large supplies of this Spirit. For Luke 11:13 declares the Father's heart toward you, and John 16:7 gives you a resistless plea—"If I depart, I will send him!" Say then, "He has departed—we are waiting for our head, for he is in the heavens—therefore, Lord send the Comforter!" If you have not large supplies of the Spirit, it is as much your guilt as thirst was in the case of any weary and thirsty Israelite who, though he walked beside the stream from the smitten rock, yet drank only sparingly, because he was reluctant to stoop down.

VII. His work—his full outpouring after Christ's death

We have seen why he was not fully poured out till Christ was glorified. But in the ascension, Christ was fully glorified: his person being the sacrifice once offered, that sacrifice during forty days after the resurrection, was shone upon by the Father's glory, as its resplendent seal, and thereafter presented in heaven. There was now no hindrance to the Spirit's full outpouring; he therefore prepared to come down. Ten days he kept the disciples waiting at Jerusalem. Meanwhile he brought all his fulness to the person of the now glorified Immanuel, and made him the fountain out of which the living waters were to flow. The Laver in the heavenly temple was thus placed beside the Altar—so that it is plain, sinner, you cannot be sanctified otherwise than by approaching the Saviour! Thus was fulfilled that ancient prophecy, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men." And in the

visions which have been granted to the Church, the full Spirit, abiding in the person of Immanuel, has from time to time attracted the notice of those who have been witnesses. John saw the seven spirits in Christ's hand,² and at another time he saw the Lamb "with seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth to all the earth." And since that day, it has been usual to speak of the Holy Spirit in his relation to the church as "The seven spirits;" because he is poured forth from Jesus in fulness, of which a sevenfold measure was the symbol.

Our ascended High-priest had no sooner thus got the oil poured on his head, than it ran off even to the skirts of his garments—as typified in Aaron. Can you number the drops of dew? or the copious rain? or the drops of the sea? as little can any tell the dew, the rain, the living water, that has come down from him. He began at Pentecost to refresh his heritage; ever since, he has from time to time repeated such showers; and he meditates a shower more abundant still, when he will empty out the blessing promised by Joel, the first drops of which fell in the days of Peter, and the rest of which is to be sent in "The times of refreshing."

The day of Pentecost taught that the gift of the Spirit is entirely in the hands of the Redeemer—none can be holy before coming to Christ; neither does the Spirit by whom men are born again, come to any from his hands. The Spirit's desire to save sinners of every kindred and people, is seen in bestowing the gift of tongues, and in doing so when men were present from every nation under heaven. The day of Pentecost teaches us, why there are few conversions amongst us. Through the fault both of ministers and people, there is little of the Holy Ghost amongst us. There is little of such preaching as that described by Peter, when he speaks of men who had preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—and there is

little of such prayer as Jude recommends, "praying in the Holy Ghost." But the day of Pentecost has taught us to pray, and expect reviving showers. Reader, if Christ has the Spirit in his hand,² will you not look often up to him, and cry, "Open thine hand, and satisfy the wants of living souls!" The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit; and no man calleth Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost. We must receive him that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. See 1 Cor. 2:12, 14; 12:3.

It was after this, that a regular ministry began. There never had been such before. The Spirit used in former times to raise up instruments on particular occasions; but now he was more fully given, and in his great love instituted a standing ministry. This is recorded as his work on Christ's ascension; and ministers are called, "Ministers of the Spirit;"⁴ and their office, "The Ministration of the Spirit;" and for their encouragement they are told that "the seven stars" are held in the same hand that holds the seven spirits. How full of gratitude ought you to be, reader, if you ever have been blessed in the house of God. All the profit you ever found under the ministry of any one, is a result of the Spirit's act in establishing this order of men. If ever you got light, or had conviction of sin, or were made joyful under the preaching of the word, it is all to the glory of the Spirit's love. Well may ministers themselves stand and adore. Their office is but the channel through which the living waters flow to others.

VIII. His great gift, the Holy Scriptures

There are some particular instances of his power which we have omitted, such as that day when 5000 souls were saved; and that other when he showed such patient kindness in leading the Ethiopian to the truth, and then such mighty energy where he caught away Philip.⁶

But now it was that he completed a revelation of the will of God to man. Long ere now he began to do this; but he never finished his work until the full completed work of Jesus was recorded. It was He who wrote the Old Testament, using the prophets as his instruments, and so entirely guiding and inspiring the record that every thing and every word therein, small and great, has his authority.² From the day when the book of Genesis was written, he was continually selecting events to be recorded, and matter for the use of the church. But he left the volume unfinished until all Christ's work was finished, and put in record in the gospels, and then he used apostles to write his will for coming ages. The whole word of God is now our perfect manual for all knowledge relative to the kingdom of God. He has thus given us a full river along whose banks we may walk. Reader, remember, he uses this word as his instrument for conversion and sanctification. Let John 17:17, never be a day out of your memory; "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth." Formerly, he converted and sanctified souls, by leading them to see Christ in the types of the temple; but now you are to "grow in grace" more directly, by growing "in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.";

IX. His daily work in the saints below

Here we shall merely point out the leading operations of the Spirit on the believer. He dwells in him and shall never leave him. Sometimes he is made to retire, by a believer's backsliding, into the deepest recess, and is scarcely felt; yet he never leaves a dwelling he has once come to possess. In the case of Samson, you see him in the solitary dungeon of Gaza, coming forth from his retirement and raising in that man's heart the cry, "O Lord God, remember me." In David's case, though retired far within for a year's space, at length he put forth his power, and the contrite prayer was heard, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!"⁷

Thus dwelling in his saints he calls them his Temple, even their bodies are reckoned his temple; and he says of their souls, "I will dwell in them and will walk in them."⁹ He it is that makes the walls of this temple strong, and then fills it with himself.¹¹ He cleanses it, as Christ cleansed the temple from buyers and sellers; "Ye mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit." Upon the walls of this temple he pictures the glories of heaven, and gives clear manifestations of truth—as in old times, palms, and flowers, and cherubims adorned the temple walls to regale the sight of the worshipper. He is in them as the "seven lamps" mentioned in Rev. 4:5, showing them their way into the heaven of heavens; just as the seven-branched candlestick showed the priest his way into the holy place, and let him see what was there. Above all he keeps the Altar conspicuous in their view, "glorifying" Christ,—and giving "wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."² Everything here is regulated according to the law of the holy God; everywhere this temple exhibits "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These are an "Earnest of the inheritance," Ephes. 1:14, first-fruits brought into this temple, along with "Love, joy, peace." Joy expresses itself in songs, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs,"⁵—such as were heard at Pentecost when they eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God," and such as the prophet Isaiah foretold Christ was to give, when the anointing Spirit sent him to put on "the garment of praise." If enemies assail or storms beat upon the walls, then especially are these songs heard, and this joy felt; they endure all things in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and are filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost."⁷ Yet many many are the cries and groans that are heard from this temple; but they are groanings after more holiness. Sometimes, it is a cry for deliverance from the body of sin;⁹ sometimes a cry for wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Christ; sometimes for faith,¹¹ or love, or perseverance in retaining the truth to the end.

Incense is kept continually burning on the golden altar in his temple, and the Spirit is he who keeps it burning; the Spirit himself raiseth the intercession within us. Christ's voice is heard in this temple through the Spirit. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Reader, remember this each Sabbath morning as you go up professedly as a worshipper to the house of God. Has he come to make you such a temple? Are his groans and cries ever heard within you?

X. His work on the saints at death, and onwards to the second coming of Christ

The interests of Christ and the Holy Spirit are one and the same. The saints are therefore precious to him even as to the Redeemer. He fulfils to them on the bed of sickness the promise in Psalm 41:3, even as he sustained Jesus in his closing hours of suffering. (Heb. 9:14.) As soon as the hour of a believer's departure from the body arrives, he makes him perfect in holiness. The Son presents the believer arrayed in righteousness to the Father; the Father seals his well pleasedness, saying, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," that is, in Jesus; and the Holy Spirit catches up the word, "From henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." He rejoices to perfect the holiness of believers; although they go before the throne, without their works, in order that their justification may be seen to depend wholly on Christ.

As soon as they are in glory, he begins to breathe into them stronger desires than they ever had before for the coming of Christ. He tells us these thoughts of departed saints. Christ's Bride, (that is, his church above), is stirred up by the Spirit to invite Christ to come speedily. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come;" these holy souls that form the redeemed church above, are not complete till they get their

resurrection-bodies; nor will they be fully satisfied till they get "The Grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ."³ The Spirit therefore, in his love to them and desire for their full blessedness, helps them to urge on the day of the Redeemer's second coming.

Reader, this is the last view given us of the Spirit in the word of God. And it shows the position in which he wishes every saint to be standing. It shows us that the church above is ever crying to Jesus, "Come, Lord," and that the church below should do the same. "Let him that heareth say, Come!" But there is a word for the sinner too. The church below, ("He that heareth,") has another duty besides seeking their own bliss and perfection by inviting Jesus to come quickly. They must stand and look on the unconverted world, and cry, "He that is athirst, let him come." We are to stand, with our eye upward on Jesus, but with our hand stretched out to you, bidding you come quickly to that Saviour whom we are entreating to come quickly to us. The Spirit who knows your secret thoughts, and is ready to bear witness against you at the great day,—he, he it is who stirs us up to cry to you most earnestly now, "O sinner, come and take the water of life freely." He places you within sight of the judgment-seat, and then cries, "Come, and take." He shows you the fountain full to the very brim, and thereby would provoke your thirst, while he cries, "Come and take the water of life." He takes away the possibility of your saying that he does not address you, for he cries, "Whosoever is athirst;" and you are surely thirsty for joy and rest. He would make it impossible for you to invent any excuse even for hesitation, and therefore he cries, "Whosoever will." And lest any shadow of excuse should remain, he makes the word "Freely, freely," be the word that dies upon your ear. He takes up the testimony of the Old Testament prophets, and unites it to that of the Saviour, uttered both on earth² and from heaven, and entreats you to take and live for

ever. As if he were holding the living water in one of the golden urns of his heavenly temple to your very lips, he cries, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." O reader, were you ever nearer bliss than now?

Meanwhile the church continues longing for the day of Christ. For on that day when Christ is fully glorified with his own and his Father's glory, then shall his people receive of the Spirit in ample measures. The Spirit shall flow forth in immeasurable streams on every saint, "and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." What understandings of God shall we have then! What attainments in holiness! How deep our love! How loud our praise! while in fellowship with all saints, we comprehend what is the height and depth, and length and breadth, and know the love of Christ that passes knowledge, and are filled with all the fulness of God! O then, let him that heareth join the Spirit and the Bride, crying "Come, Lord Jesus."

And now, reader, we leave you, gathering up all we have said into a prayer, which, after what you have read will not seem unmeaning or unimportant. It is that which your minister breathes over you every Sabbath as you leave the house of God—"The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you." Amen. May he communicate to your soul the saving experience of all the truth into which he delighteth to lead those who are out of the way. To Him be Glory and Dominion.⁶

LUTHER'S CONVERSION

"He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters."—Ps. 18:16.

"Their righteousness is of ME, saith the Lord."—Isa. 54:17.

LUTHER, the great Reformer of the church from popery, was born of poor parents in Germany in the year 1483. When he was eighteen years of age he began to study at one of the colleges; but it was not till he was twenty that he ever saw a Bible! After he had studied two whole years, he was one day in the library of the college, turning over one book after another, to read the names of their authors. At last he came to one which fixed his attention. It was a Bible! With eagerness and delight he read page after page, and book after book. "Oh," thought he, "if God would but give me such a book for my own." He soon returned to the library, and read again and again the wonderful pages of the new-found volume. A deep impression from that day remained upon his soul. But still he knew nothing of the gospel of Christ.

Sometime after this he became a monk. He thought he would thus separate himself from the world. He did not then know that there was more wickedness among the monks than in the world. But while in the convent, he found a Bible! It was fastened by a chain to a particular place, so that he could not carry it with him to study it in secret. But every day he came to this chained Bible to read the words of eternal life. At first it was dark to him; he did not understand its meaning. It was not only a chained but a sealed book to him. Yet he continued to study it with the utmost eagerness, and to meditate upon it night and day. The word of God "was precious in these days." It was very precious to the anxious soul of Luther. But yet he was miserable. He felt he was a sinner, and knew not how he was to be forgiven. His soul was in chains like the Bible that he read. As yet he

knew not the liberty of the gospel. He knew not the power of the blood of Jesus, nor did he understand the free forgiving love of God.

One of his friends tells us that about this time he was often under great terrors when he thought of the wrath of God against sin. Once and again deep anguish took hold of his soul, and it seemed as if he would sink under it. On one occasion he had been conversing with a friend upon the things of God. No sooner had the conversation ended, than the truths of which they had been speaking, struck home with awful power to the tossed soul of Luther. He left the room and sought the nearest chamber to give vent to the feelings of his bursting heart. He threw himself upon the bed and prayed aloud in agony; repeating over and over again these words of the apostle, (Rom. 11:32.) "He hath shut them all up in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." Reader! Have you ever felt what SIN is? Have you ever known what the law of God is? Do you remember that the wages of sin is death? Have you considered what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God?

Luther now began to try to make himself holy. He fasted for days together. He shut himself up alone in his cold cell. He passed many nights, sometimes for weeks, without sleep. He read, he studied, he prayed, he wept, he watched, he strove, but all in vain! He found himself as far from holiness and peace as ever! If ever any one could have gained heaven by his own merits, Luther would have gained it. To those around him he seemed the holiest man alive. But the light of the law showed him that within all was vile. His soul cried out for rest, but he found it not, for he was seeking it not in God's way, but in a way of his own. He wanted to be sure that his sins were forgiven him, for he felt that till he knew this he could not have peace. But his fear increased upon him, and he knew not what to do, nor which way to turn. He saw every thing that he thought and did to be sin, and

how could he rest till he knew that all was forgiven? His friends told him to do good works, and that would satisfy the justice of God. Miserable comforters!

"What good works," said he, "can proceed out of a heart like mine; how can I with works like these stand before a holy Judge?"

The terrors of the fiery law compassed him about and consumed his soul. His "sore ran in the night and ceased not." He saw nothing in God but the angry Judge. He had not yet learned the riches of his grace through Jesus Christ.

His bodily health gave way. "A wounded spirit who can bear." He wasted away. He became thin and pale. His eyes, which were peculiarly bright, looked wild with despair; and death seemed just at hand. In this state he was visited by an old priest. His name was Staupitz. He pitied the dying monk, and all the more so when he was told the cause of his suffering, for he had himself passed through the same conflict. But he had found the peace of Christ in his soul, and was therefore well fitted to give counsel to Luther.

"It is vain," said Luther to him, "that I make promises to God; sin is always too strong for me."

"Oh, my friend," said Staupitz, "I have often made vows myself, hut I never could keep them; I now make no more vows; for if God will not be merciful to me for Christ's sake, I cannot stand before him with all my vows and works."

Luther made known to him all his fears. He spoke of God's justice, God's holiness, God's sovereign majesty. How could he stand before such a God?

"Why," said his aged friend, "do you distress yourself with these thoughts? Look to the wounds of Jesus, to the blood which he has shed for you; it is there that you will see the mercy of God. Cast yourself into the arms of the Saviour. Trust in him,—in the righteousness of his life, in the atoning sacrifice of his death. Do not shrink away from him. God is not against you; it is only you who are averse from God. Listen to the Son of God. He became man to assure you of the divine favour."

Still Luther was dark. He thought he had not repented properly, and asked, "How can I dare believe in the favour of God, so long as there is in me no real conversion? I must be changed before he can receive me."

He is told that there can be no real conversion so long as a man fears God as a stern Judge. "There is," said his friend, "no true repentance but that which begins in the love of God and righteousness. That which some fancy to be the end of repentance is only its beginning. If you wish to be really converted, do not try these penances. Love him who has first loved you."

Luther listens and is glad. The day breaks,—new light pours in. "Yes," said he, "it is Jesus Christ that comforts me so wonderfully by these sweet and healing words." In order to true repentance we must love God! He had never heard this before. Taking this truth as his guide, he went to the Scriptures. He turned up all the passages which speak of repentance and conversion; and these two words which were formerly his terror, now become precious and sweet. The passages which used most to alarm him, now "seemed to run to me from all sides, to smile, to spring up and play around me. Formerly I tried to love God, but it was all force; and there was no word so bitter to me as that of repentance. Now there is none more pleasant. O how

blessed are all God's precepts when we read them not in books only, but in the precious wounds of the Saviour." Thus he learned that we are not forgiven because we love God, but we love God because we are forgiven. We cannot repent, we cannot love, till we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be the propitiation for sins. Weary souls, who are trying to repent, and trying to love God in order that he may love and forgive you, look at Luther, and learn the more excellent way! It is the free love of God to us that melts the heart,—that fills the eye with tears,—that constrains the soul to love in return! Trembling sinners, hear this and be glad. Careless sinners, hear this and turn!

Still Luther's darkness at times returned. His sins again went over his soul, and hid the face of God.

"Oh, my sin! my sin! my sin!" cried he one day, to his aged friend.

"What would you have?" said Staupitz. "Would you like if your sin was not real? Remember, if you have only the appearance of a sinner, you must be content with the mere appearance of a Saviour. But learn this, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of those who are real and great sinners, and deserving of utter condemnation." "Look at the wounds of Christ," said he on another occasion, "and you will see there shining clearly the purpose of God towards men. We cannot understand God out of Christ." How true! It is only when we feel that we are real sinners, that we prize a real Saviour,—one who really "made his soul an offering for sin." It is only when we see sin coming between us and God that we find the preciousness of him who "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." It is then also we see the face of the true God in the face of Jesus; and learn to read the love of the Father in the love of the Son.

But Luther's peace sometimes gave way, and his fears returned. He was taken ill and brought down to the gates of death. Terror again took hold on him. Death seemed full of gloom. It was a fearful thing to meet a holy God! An old monk visited him on his sick-bed, and in him God gave him another comforter and guide. Sitting at his bedside he repeated this sentence of the creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." These words, thus simply and sweetly brought to mind, were like balm to the soul of Luther. "I believe," said he to himself, "the forgiveness of sins." "Ah, but," said the old man, "we are not merely to believe that there is forgiveness for David or Peter: the command of God is that we believe there is forgiveness for our own sins." Luther's spirit was revived. He found on this rock a sufficient resting-place, and his soul rejoiced in the forgiving love of God. Believing in the name of Jesus, he found the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. He saw himself at once and completely forgiven,—at once and completely reconciled.

In one of his letters he thus refers to the struggle which had taken place in his soul. It was long, and made up of many parts. It was the struggle of a soul, seeking to get rid of sin,—groping after light,—fighting its way to God. "I had, in truth," says he, "a hearty desire to understand particularly the Epistle to the Romans. What kept me from understanding it was that single expression, 'the righteousness of God,' in the first chapter, (verse 17). To this righteousness, as I understood it, I had a great aversion. I thought it meant God's character as the righteous judge. Now, though as a monk I had lived a blameless life, I still found myself a great sinner before God, and I did not dare to think of pleasing him by my own works. On this account I did not love this just and angry God, because he punishes sinners. I hated him, and felt incensed against him. Still, however, I studied the beloved Paul, that I might find out the meaning of that

passage, for I thirsted greatly to know it. In these thoughts I spent day and night, until, through God's grace, I observed how the words are connected together in the following way, 'the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, as it is written, the just shall live by faith.' Observing this connection, I have become acquainted with this same righteousness of God, in which the justified person lives, only through faith. I saw that the apostle's meaning was this, that by the gospel is made known that righteousness which avails with God; in which God, out of grace and mere mercy, makes us righteous through faith. Upon this I felt immediately as if I was wholly born anew, and had now found an open door into paradise itself. The precious holy Scripture now at once appeared quite another thing to me. I ran quickly through the whole Bible, and collected all that it says on the subject. Thus, as I had before hated this expression, 'the righteousness of God,' so I now began dearly and highly to esteem it as my beloved and most comfortable word of Scripture; and that passage became to me the very gate of heaven."

Thus his weary soul found rest. He was now like a vessel that has reached its haven. No storm can reach or harm it. He was like the dove in the clefts of the rock. He was like the man who had reached the city of refuge. He found himself safe and at rest. Jehovah his righteousness was his song, and his joy. It was what he saw in Christ that gave him hope and confidence toward God, and not what he saw in himself. It was what he knew of Christ and his righteousness, that took away all fear, and filled his soul with peace. He believed and was forgiven. Nor did he reckon it presumption, to count himself a forgiven soul. He gloried and rejoiced in this. He counted it one of the most grievous of all sins to doubt it. He saw that the gospel was intended to bring us forgiveness, and to assure us of it. He saw that whenever we really believe the gospel, then that forgiveness is as completely and certainly ours as if we were already in heaven. This

was the very life of Luther's soul. It was this that made him so bold in the cause of Christ, in all his future life. He was assured of the favour of God, and that took away all fear of man.

There was one text of Scripture which seems to have been greatly blessed to him. It was very frequently on his mind during his many struggles. It was the text which Paul quotes from Habakkuk, to prove that we are justified by faith alone, "the just shall live by faith."—Once he was sent to Rome on some business, and he thought that good works done at Rome were better, and had more merit than those done anywhere else. He was told that if he would crawl up a very long stair, called Pilate's staircase, on his bare knees, he would acquire a great stock of merit. With great earnestness he set himself to do this miserable penance. While he was crawling up the steps, he thought he heard a voice like thunder, saying aloud to him, "the just shall live by faith." Immediately he started from his knees, and stopped in the middle of the ascent. The words went to his soul like the voice of God reproving me for his folly. Filled with shame, he instantly left the place. He saw that it was not by his works that he was to save himself at all, far less by works such as these. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us."

At another time he was appointed to lecture on divinity. After explaining the Psalms, he came to the epistle to the Romans. In studying this he took great delight. He used to sit in his quiet cell for many hours with the Bible open before him, meditating on that Epistle. The 17th verse of the first chapter fixed his eye, and filled his whole thoughts. "The just shall live by faith." In this he saw that there was another life than that possessed by man in general, and that this life was the fruit of faith. In the midst of much darkness these simple words were "a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path."

Clearer light soon dawned upon his soul, and through him the bright beams of the gospel shot forth upon the benighted nations of Europe. The conversion of Luther was the dawning of the Reformation.

Some of Luther's Choice Sayings

1. The law saith do this, and yet it never will be done; but grace says believe on Him,—and behold it is already done!
2. Nature will feel, and be certain before it believes; but grace will believe before it feels.
3. It is impossible for a man to be a Christian without having Christ; and if he has Christ, he has all that is in Christ. What gives peace to the conscience is, that by believing, our sins are no more ours, but Christ's, upon whom God has laid them all; and that on the other hand all Christ's righteousness is ours. Christ lays his hand on us, and we are healed. He casts his mantle over us, and we are clothed; for he is the glorious Saviour blessed for ever.
4. Within my heart Christ reigns alone! He only is the beginning, the middle, and the end of my thoughts day and night.
5. He who doubts of God's mercy, sins in so doing, quite as much as he who trusts in his own works.
6. Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to despair of yourself, and sing to him such a song as this, "Lord Jesus, thou art my righteousness, but I am thy sin; thou hast taken to thee what is mine; and given to me what is thine; thou hast taken upon thee what thou wast not, and given to me what I was not.
7. In order to be justified, we must do nothing at all, but only receive the treasure, which is Christ, and take hold of him in our hearts by

faith, although we feel ourselves to be ever so full of sin.

8. I have used many words, to declare that a Christian must assure himself that he is in the favour of God. This have I done that we may learn to cast away that devilish opinion of the whole kingdom of the pope, that a man should stand in doubt of the great favour of God towards him. If this opinion be received, then Christ profiteth nothing. This monstrous doctrine of doubting of God's grace, passes all other monsters.

9. What! are we then to do nothing? are we not to work for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer—No;—nothing at all. For this is perfect righteousness, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing of the law, or of works; but to know and to believe this only, that Christ is gone to the Father, and is not now seen; that he sitteth in heaven at the right hand of his Father, not as a judge, but made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

10. Moses with his law is a hard taskmaster. He requires that we should work and give. On the other hand, the gospel giveth freely, and requires of us nothing else but to hold out our hands and to take that which is offered.

11. This we must needs learn, that forgiveness of sins, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, are freely given to us by the hearing of faith alone, (Gal. 3:2.) notwithstanding our horrible sins and demerits.

12. A man is made a Christian not by working but by knowing. Wherefore, he that will exercise himself to righteousness must first exercise himself in learning the gospel.

13. All our doing, that is, all our endeavour to know and apprehend God, is to suffer God to work in us.

14. Faith is nothing else but the truth of the heart; that is to say, a true and right opinion of the heart as touching God. Truth, therefore, is faith itself which judgeth rightly of God, namely, that God regardeth not our works and righteousness, because we are unclean; but that he will have mercy upon us, look upon us, accept us, justify and save us, if we believe on his Son whom he hath sent to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is a true opinion of God, and in very deed nothing else but faith itself. I cannot comprehend, nor be fully assured by reason that I am received into God's favour for Christ's sake; but I hear this to be purchased by the gospel, and I lay hold on it by faith.

15. I am persuaded, that verily the day of judgment is not far off, yea, will not be absent three hundred years longer, for God's word will decrease and be darkened for want of true shepherds and servants of God. The voice will soon be heard, Behold the Bridegroom cometh. God neither will nor can suffer this world much longer, but must strike it with the judgments of the day of wrath, and punish the rejection of his word.

SIN OUR ENEMY AND GOD OUR FRIEND

"Know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God."—JER. 2:19.

Act but the infant's gentle part,
Give up to love thy willing heart,
No fondest parent's melting breast
Yearns like thy God's to make thee blest.

LUTHER.

MY DEAR READER!—You have perhaps at times wished to know who were your enemies and who were your friends,—whom you might trust and whom you were to shun. I have to tell you, that you have one great enemy, and that is sin;—one real friend, and that is God. Oh, reader, have you ever thought on this? Sin is your soul's enemy, and God is your soul's friend. That sin which you have delighted in is your bitterest enemy,—that God whom you have forsaken is your truest, tenderest friend! You have none in heaven or on earth like God; not one who takes such a deep and sincere interest in your welfare! You have forgotten him, but he has not forgotten you. His thoughts towards you are still most tender and kind.

Perhaps you think that the very reverse of this is true. Or at least, if you do not think so, you act as if it were so. You act as if God were your greatest enemy, and sin your peculiar friend. You do not love God. You hate God. You suspect God. You turn away from God. You distrust God. You discredit all his words and professions of friendship and good-will. You forget him days without number. Could you do more to him were he your bitterest enemy? On the other hand, you follow sin; you cling to sin; you delight in sin; you will part with heaven, with God, for sin; you will sell your soul for sin. Could you do more, were sin your best and truest friend? Your thoughts, your words, your feelings, your actions every day of your

life, shew that you really in your hearts think sin to be your real friend, and God to be your worst enemy. How fearful a state to live in! Haters of God! Lovers of sin!

Reader, believe me,—it is SIN that is your real enemy! It is an evil thing and bitter to forsake God. The way of transgressors is hard,—oh how hard! Their cup is gall and wormwood. It was sin that first drew Adam from God and drove him out of Paradise. It was sin that brought the flood of waters upon the earth. It was sin that called down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrha. It is sin that has filled the earth with misery and pain,—with sorrow and sighing,—with weeping eyes and broken hearts. It was sin that dug the grave and kindled hell, and brought man under the power of the devil.—Oh, then, must not sin be the worst enemy of man? It is sin that separates us from God, and unfits us for enjoying him. It is sin that robs our souls of peace, that spoils us of happiness, and fills us full of misery. It is sin that poisons the soul,—that lets loose our fiery passions and inflames our lusts. It is sin that disturbs and defiles the conscience, making us a terror to ourselves, and pressing us down with a burden too heavy to be borne. It is sin that grieves, and vexes, and quenches the Holy Spirit. It is sin that takes away our relish for spiritual things; our power of realizing God and holding fellowship with him. It is sin that darkens the mind and hardens the heart, till we become past feeling, and hate the light. Oh, then, must not sin be our real enemy? Could we have a worse enemy than this?

Reader, believe me,—it is God who is your soul's true and real friend. His thoughts towards you are most gracious and compassionate. He is the enemy of your sin, but not the enemy of your soul. You admit that he has the power of befriending you, and that all fulness of blessing is with him; but perhaps you doubt his willingness to bestow his gifts. You suspect his heart. You will not believe that he has any

friendly thoughts or wishes towards you, till you can bring a price in your hands, and prove that you are not altogether unworthy of his friendship. You think that he is the enemy of your soul, and will remain your enemy till you have made yourself fit for becoming the object of his regard. Now, let me ask, has God deserved this at your hands? Has he deserved to be doubted, and to be suspected thus? Are all his professions of friendly concern for us insincere? Are they mere random declarations,—mere words of course? No,—my friend,—no. God is your real, your true, your only friend. His interest in your welfare is unfeigned and true. In clinging to sin, you are cleaving to your worst enemy; in turning away from God you are forsaking your truest friend.

God did not send you to hell when first you sinned; he still keeps you out of hell, and gives you time to repent; he pities your misery and has no pleasure in your death. What greater proof of his tender mercy could he give, than in sparing you even for an hour? "Account that the long-suffering of our God is salvation." He waits to be gracious to you; he longs for the return of all his prodigals,—of all his wandering sheep. Does not this wear a most winning aspect towards you, even as you are? He sends his gospel to you,—the glad tidings of great joy,—he "publishes peace" to you through the blood of the cross; he makes known to you the work of his Son, in whom there is redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace;—he throws open to you the "new and living way" into his presence, a way in which there is not one stumbling-block, one hindrance;—he proclaims to you the infinite fulness of Jesus, that out of that fulness you may receive, and grace for grace! What could he do more? If he be not a friend, who can be? Has any one, either in heaven or in earth, done so much as this, or shewn such good-will to you, such an interest in your welfare? He strives in your heart by his Holy Spirit, awakening strange desires after himself

and after heaven,—or filling you with terrors as you think upon eternity and the judgment to come. He knocks at the door of your heart; he knocks unceasingly, day and night, that he may persuade you to open and admit him, that he may come in and sup with you, and you with him? Would an enemy do this? Would any but a real friend shew such long-suffering love,—such tender concern for you? He longs to make you holy; to renew you in the spirit of your mind; he cannot bear your unholy ways, and he would fain have you made holy and blessed. If you would but allow him, he would do this for you; he would give you his Holy Spirit to take old things away, and to make all things new. Would an enemy do this? He would rejoice over you if you would but turn and seek his face. It is said of the prodigal, that when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, welcoming him back to his house with joy and singing, "this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." Would an enemy do this? Are not these the actions, the feelings of a true and tender friend,—a friend whose love has been sore tried by your neglect, and coldness, and hatred, but who yet has never ceased to care for you, never ceased to yearn over you with the bowels of tenderness and compassion. Did not Jesus pray for his murderers, and was not that the prayer of a friend,—of one who really cared for their souls? Did not Jesus weep over Jerusalem;—and were not his tears those of real and tender pity? Did not Jesus say, "ye will not come to me that ye might have life;" and did not that shew that he really wanted to give them life? O, reader, have you any reason for saying that God is your enemy, and desires your death? Has he ever been to you a wilderness or a land of darkness?² Have you any reason for thinking God's thoughts to you are not thoughts of tenderness,—the thoughts of a real friend?

Reader, God is making proposals of friendship to you! The Most High God is asking you to become his friend! These proposals are

sincere! He is really and truly seeking your friendship, and offering his own in return! Precious offer! To a worm of the dust! To a sinner, a rebel, a hater of himself! He asks no price, no gift, no bribe! All he asks is that you would take his offer,—accept his proposals, and become his friend! It matters not how far you have strayed, or how guilty you have become! It matters not how long you have slighted his proposals, and rejected his friendship, thus freely thus warmly pressed upon you. Only now take his offer! Only return! The gate is wide open to you. The welcome is sure. "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me saith the Lord" "Wilt thou not, from this time, cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth." Be thou reconciled to God!

THE LORD'S SUPPER

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"—1 COR. 10:16.

"Take, eat; this is my body.... Drink ye all of it."—MATT. 26:26, 27.

"The king hath brought me into his chamber; we will be glad and rejoice in thee; we will remember thy love more than wine."—SONG OF SOLOMON 1:4.

"Let a man examine himself.... If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."—1 COR. 11:28: 31.

THE LORD'S table is spread for the Lord's people, and for them alone. The real followers of the Lamb are the only acceptable guests, whom the Master of the feast brings into his banqueting house, and over whom he stretches the banner of his love. It is a family-festival, and the family-table, is spread for the members of the family alone. No stranger may partake of this household-meal, nor intermeddle with the joy of its members. It is a feast for the disciples of the Lord; it is bread for the children; it is pasture for the flock. To each disciple, to each child, to each sheep, it is open; for them it is prepared, but for none else. It is not a table for the world, but for the church.

There is indeed a table to which the world's famished children are invited,—the table spread by WISDOM for the needy sons of men. To this all are welcome, according to the words of the proclamation "whoso is simple, let him turn in hither, as for him that wanteth understanding, come eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." It was at this table that the weary prodigal sat down to eat the fatted calf, when the glad father sung over him the song of full-hearted joy and love: "This my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." Weary sons of men, weary wanderers from your Father's house, your Father's longing eye is upon you in the wilderness, and your Father's loving voice calls upon each one of you to return to the family mansion and partake of the family feast! In this case the invitation is to all. It takes in each inhabitant of this wretched world in its universal call, "whosoever will, let him take the water of life FREELY."

But this is not the same as the table of the Lord. This latter is for the church, not for the world. No one has any right to sit down at the family-board, save a member of the family,—one who has been "born again of the incorruptible seed," and has by adoption been taken

from the family of the first, into that of the second Adam who is the Lord from heaven. The one table is spread for each weary sinner throughout this alienated world; the other is for those who have come out of the world and have been made sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Sinner! there is nothing between you and the Saviour. Go to him as you are. But there is something between you and the table. You must first come to the Saviour before you can come to his feast of remembrance. He only can admit you. None are welcome save those whom He welcomes. And. He has prepared this feast for those whom He calls his sister, his spouse, his bride, his love, his dove, his undefiled. These are acceptable and welcome. All others are forbidden and excluded. "Wherefore let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."³

Let us briefly consider the nature of this ordinance, that we may see our Lord's design in instituting it, and understand better the character of those for whom it is prepared.

1. The Lord's supper is a memorial of Christ. In instituting it He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." And again, "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." From these words it is plain that the great design of this ordinance is to be a memorial of Christ; to preserve in memory Himself, his sufferings, his work, his death, until he come again, with all his saints, and then there shall be no need of any such memorial, for we shall see him as He is, we shall see him face to face, without the intervention of emblem or sign. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we

know even as we are known." Meanwhile visible memorials are needed and visible memorials are therefore given.

A memorial implies Christ's wish to be remembered by us. He loves to be kept in memory by his saints. He is grieved at the thought of being forgotten by those whom he loves; for love is strong as death, jealousy, is cruel (or greedy, grasping) as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire which hath a most vehement flame." God himself mourns over Israel's forgetfulness, "my people have forgotten me; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." Thus Christ feels. And, moreover, he has a human heart and human sensibilities, like our own. He loves to be remembered by us. And because he does so, he instituted this feast of remembrance in the night in which he was betrayed.

A memorial also implies our need of something to keep our Lord in remembrance. We are prone to forget him. Our love is feeble, even at the strongest; our hearts are cold, even at the warmest; our memories are treacherous, even when we would fain keep a suffering Lord most constantly before our eyes. Hence, for our sakes, He has instituted this; that we might not be allowed to give way to forgetfulness, but have something set before us which may ever remind us of himself and his love. In this fallen world there is little to remind us of Him. His name is forgotten among the children of men. His own world has ceased to remember Him. He is a stranger here. There are few who think of Him or speak of Him one to another. The memorials which he has left should, in such circumstances, be especially prized by us. His word is one memorial; His Sabbath is another; His Sacraments are a third. And this, particularly, of the Supper, is a special pledge and token of his love. Let us joy when it is said, not only let us go up to the house of God, but, Do this in remembrance of Me.

The Lord's Supper is thus a full and express remembrance of Jesus. It is a memorial of the Man of Sorrows. It is a memorial of him who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and by whose stripes we are healed. It is a memorial of the crucified One. It is a monument of bleeding, dying love. It proclaims the Lamb that was slain. It sets before us his bruised broken body,—his shed and sprinkled blood,—his face marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. Its simple common elements speak of Him who was meek and lowly, as well as of Him who poured out his soul unto death. In all its parts it speaks of Jesus,—of Jesus alone,—of none but Jesus,—Immanuel, God with us,—Messiah the anointed One,—the Beloved of the Father's soul! It reminds us of his incarnation,—his life,—his humiliation,—his agony,—his cross,—his death,—his grave. It takes us back to the upper chamber in Jerusalem,—to the passover table,—to Kedron,—to Gethsemane,—to Gabbatha,—to Pilate's hall,—to Calvary,—to Joseph's tomb. It brings to mind the gracious words of him who spake as never man spake, and into whose lips grace divine was poured. It says to us, Behold your king,—behold the man,—behold the Lamb of God,—behold my servant the Branch! It brings to mind the mighty deeds of him who did all things well. It tells us of the grace of him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. It calls especially to mind the deace which he accomplished at Jerusalem,—the glorious work whereby he finished transgression, made an end of sin, brought in everlasting righteousness, and made reconciliation for iniquity.² The voice that proclaimed from the cross, "It is finished!" still proclaims the same from the communion table by the bread and wine. These symbols tell us that the way to God is open now, and the access free,—that the blood has been shed,—the sacrifice offered up and accepted,—the veil rent,—and liberty secured, even for the guiltiest to draw near with perfect confidence to God. They preach the gospel,

the glad tidings of great joy which are to us and to all people. All that Jesus did for us is represented in them. All the blessings of the new covenant are set forth to us. That table tells us of a full Saviour and a full salvation; a full Redeemer and a full redemption. A full Saviour, a free gospel, and a finished righteousness, are set before our eyes. There, truly, Jesus is "all in all." No name is heard but that of Jesus. The symbols speak of Jesus. The service breathes of Jesus. The praise is all of Jesus. The words are all of Jesus. And it seems as if the still voice of Jesus himself were heard in the silence of that solemn scene. Truly the Lord's supper is the memorial of Jesus.

In going to his table, then, is it to remember Him? Is this our object, our purpose, our delight? Do we prize that bread and wine, not because of anything they are in themselves, but because they are memorials of Jesus? Is it our joy to be thus reminded of a dying Lord?

If, indeed, we do come to remember him, then it is plain we must first have known him, for we cannot remember a person we have never known. To come to his table, then, is to say, I know Jesus: I know who he is, and what he is, and what he is to me. In knowing him, I have found salvation and eternal life, and therefore I come to remember him whom I know so well. He is no stranger to me, and, therefore, these memorials of him are precious in mine eyes.

How can any one come to remember a Saviour whom he does not know? What a contradiction to take into his hands the memorials of an unknown Redeemer! Besides, these emblems are not simply the memorials of the Saviour himself, but of the blessings which the Saviour brings. And how is it possible to remember blessings if we have not previously tasted them? How can we take into our hands the memorials of pardon, if we have never found that pardon? How

can we receive the memorials of eternal life, if we have never obtained that life at all? How can we handle these hallowed pledges of the coming kingdom and prepared glory, if we have not obtained the good and assured hope of that promised inheritance? That bread and wine look back to a Saviour known, and to salvation found by the soul; and, how strange, how sinful, for any one to partake of them, if he does not know that Saviour which they point to, and has not found that salvation which they proclaim. Surely this, of itself, might settle the question as to who should come to the table of the Lord.

2. The Lord's supper is a SEAL of the blessings of Christ. It seals these to us, as with Christ's own seal. It puts them into our hands, and says to each believing communicant, All these are thine. In it Christ says to the soul, I am thine; all my blessings are thine; all that I have is thine. He takes the bread and wine; he gives them to us; He stretches out his hand and puts them into our hands, saying, These are thine, and here is my signature,—my royal seal; take it, handle it, taste it, and doubt no more. Blessed pledges! can I ever doubt again? I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.

These symbols attest the reality and truth of all things connected with Jesus. As surely as that bread and wine are seen, touched, and tasted by you, so surely did Jesus die and rise again,—so surely was he delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,—so surely was his body broken, and his blood shed for us,—so surely it his flesh meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed. Nothing can be more real to you than these symbols which are in your hands; so nothing can be more real, more certain, more true, than these facts concerning Jesus. Both are true and real beyond the possibility of doubt. And it is the infinite certainty of these facts thus sealed to us that is the sure foundation of our peace and hope. For eighteen centuries that bread has been passing from hand to hand, and that

cup from lip to lip, in unbroken succession; and thus we are at once carried back to the time when Jesus gave the first to his disciples, as he ate the last Passover with them, before he suffered.

But, besides this, the Lord's Supper is a seal of the different blessings which are hidden in Jesus for us. These are endless, for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. But let us recount a few of them.

1. It is the seal of pardon. It says to us, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." "As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed all thy transgressions from thee." "Thy sins and iniquities will I remember no more." It seals to us a complete and perfect forgiveness through the blood shed for many, for the remission of sin.

2. It is a seal of eternal life. It says to us, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." "I have given my flesh for the life of the world; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." It is the voice of Jesus saying, I am the life of thy soul. Thy life is hid with me in God, and when I, who am thy life, shall appear, then shalt thou also appear with me in glory.

3. It is a seal of adoption. It says, Thou art a son, and I give thee the children's bread, and put into thy hands the pledges of a reconciled Father's love. Because thou art a son, I feed thee thus on the finest of the wheat. I have taken out of thy hands the world's husks, and have given thee angel's food to be the pledge of thy sonship.

4. It is a seal of union with Christ. Being one with him, we are admitted to the same table at which he sits, to share of the same feast of which he partakes; and that feast is none other than his own body and blood. One with him, we meet together, sit together, feast

together. One with him, we feed upon his own broken body, that thus the same spiritual life that is in him may flow through us, and circulate through all the members of his one body.

5. It is the seal of our union with the saints. Being one with him, we are one with each other in him, and this feast is especially the symbol and pledge of this blessed unity among the members of his body. As all the different crumbs or morsels, however many, form but one loaf, so all the different saints, though innumerable, form yet but one body. "We though many, are one bread, (or loaf) and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread," (loaf.) What an emblem and seal of unity is this!

6. It is a seal of love. It is Christ sealing his love to us,—setting us a seal upon his heart—as a seal upon his arm, by reason of the love that is stronger than death, and mightier than the grave. It is his own voice saying, "I love thee;" and we, in receiving it, respond, "Yea, Lord, and thou who knowest all things knowest that I love thee." It is the seal of mutual love,—the pledge of mutual and unchanging constancy.

7. It is a seed of the inheritance. This is yet to be revealed, in the day when Jesus shall come to set up his kingdom, and place us on his throne. But, meanwhile, He gives us this seal and pledge of that coming inheritance, and bids us, at the same time, look forward to his glorious advent.

8. It is the seal of Christ's second coming. We are to show his death till He come. And thus, in that very ordinance which commemorates his first coming, we are taught to look forward to his second. These emblems say to us, in his name, "Just as surely as I came the first time, to have my body broken and my blood shed for you, so surely

shall I come the second time, to be glorified in my saints, and admired in all them that believe."

In short, it is the seal of what Christ has purchased for us, whether past, present, or to come. It sets forth to us "grace and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come." It is the seal of the New Covenant. It is the seal of all the promises, which are thus strikingly set before us as all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. It gives us a special and personal confirmation of them all. It is the broad seal of heaven, attached to all that God has said and promised. It says, in our case, and to our hearts, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed."

3. The Lord's supper applies and conveys the blessings of Christ. It is more than a sign; it is more than a seal; it is a real communication of spiritual blessings to believing souls. By it "we are made partakers of Christ's body and blood, with all their benefits, to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace." Christ's body and blood are the two sources of blessing. His body, broken for us, is the storehouse in which all manner of food for the soul is treasured up. His blood, shed for us, is the fountain whence living waters flow to us, and out of which comes the "clean water" which is sprinkled upon us to wash away our sins. Both of these are at all times open and free. In believing we at all times are nourished, refreshed, and cleansed. But in the Lord's supper we receive fuller measures of blessing. The symbols of bread and wine are the channels through which God conveys to us the new covenant blessings. He makes use of them for pouring into believing souls all the blessings which flow from the broken body and shed blood of the Lord. "In the supper, rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined to us that he becometh very nourishment and food to our souls." The elements are to us what the hem of his

garment was to the woman who had the issue of blood. When we partake of them believingly, virtue comes out of them, to feed, to strengthen, to heal, to cleanse, to refresh, to nourish the soul unto life eternal. All that is in Christ, faith draws out of these symbols, and thus they become "a feast of fat things" to the soul. Out of them we draw new and more vigorous life,—spiritual, heavenly, everlasting life. At this table we especially find Christ to be the bread of life, and we feed upon him as such. Here all our graces are nourished and strengthened. The fruits of the Spirit are ripened in us. We "grow in grace," and are brought into nearer resemblance of our Lord himself. Sin is mortified; the flesh is crucified with its affections and lusts. The old man receives a deadly blow. The union between Christ and the soul is strengthened; and in all their parts the members of the body are drawn closer to their living head. The union between the saints is here cemented and confirmed. Here the bonds of love are gently yet firmly twined about believing souls, and we learn to love one another with a pure heart fervently, as one holy family, one blessed brotherhood. It is here we partake together of the "hidden manna," and the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. It is here we are fed with the finest of the wheat. It is here we drink the new wine of the kingdom, and are anointed with fresh oil. We feast with Jesus in the upper room. We lean upon his bosom like the beloved disciple. We sing with him the hymn he sang ere he crossed the Kedron. We go with him to Gethsemane, and with him we kneel, and agonize, and pray. We stand in Pilate's hall, and hear the voice which says, "Behold the man!" We take our place by the foot of the cross, and are sprinkled with the drops of the crimson shower. We are brought close to his very side, and from his precious wounds we drink in salvation, receiving into our souls the healing virtue that flows from his hands, his feet, his side.

Thus we see that the Lord's supper is intended to be to us a full storehouse,—an overflowing fountain of spiritual blessings. It is designed to furnish us with an abundant supply for our manifold wants. Let us mention in order a few particulars concerning these:

1. It strengthens our faith. For it holds up the glorious gospel of the blessed God to us in the most striking and impressive of all ways, namely, by outward signs. And also, it puts the seal and pledge of all blessings into our hands and lips.

2. It makes plain the truth to our minds. For by embodying invisible truth in visible signs, it renders it far more clear and easy to be understood. It illustrates the whole truth concerning Christ. It shows how free, how rich, how sufficient, how suitable is his salvation;—yet, like the common food of life, both absolutely necessary, and within the reach of all.

3. It nourishes the soul. Here we find how true are Christ's words, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Here we eat angels' food; we feed upon the bread of heaven. How can we be but nourished?

4. It pours new life into the soul. Here we not merely have life, but we have it more abundantly. Life pours into us from the fountain of life. We mount up with wings as eagles, we run and are not weary, we walk and are not faint.

5. It ripens our graces. We here bask in the rays of the Sun of righteousness. The fruits of the Spirit ripen apace;—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

6. It kills sin. Here we are taught to "reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We feel

as if nailed to the same cross,—buried in the same grave, rising, ascending, sitting with him at the right hand of God.

7. It kindles our love. It is truly a feast of love. It speaks wholly of love. The time when it was instituted,—the facts which it commemorates, the feeling which dictated the institution—every thing in it, breathes of love. It tells us of the love of Jesus, Immanuel, God with us,—love as real as the symbols which we touch and eat,—love as personal to us as these. How fitted to kindle love,—to warm the coldest bosom,—to soften the hardest heart,—to thaw the most frozen soul! How can we but love when seated at the feast of love,—receiving the emblems of love,—listening to the words and tones of love?

8. It unites us to one another, and separates us from the world. It is at once an ordinance of union and separation,—union with Jesus and his people, separation from an ungodly world. It is the badge of discipleship. It marks us out from the world. It is a banner of defiance raised against the world. Like Noah the preacher of righteousness, "we condemn the world." We confess that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth; without a rest or a home on earth, but looking for a rest and a home beyond it, when pilgrim days are over, and the perils of the wilderness are exchanged for the plenty of our Father's peaceful home; without a city here, but waiting for the new Jerusalem, that cometh down out of heaven from God; without honour or authority here, but expecting to reign with Christ for ever.

9. It gives new ardour to our hopes. It looks back to the first, and forward to the second coming of the Lord. It points to future glory. It carries us forward to the inheritance,—the kingdom,—the crown,—the restitution of all things,—the rest that remaineth for the people of

God,—the bridal day,—the marriage-supper of the Lamb. We sit here as at our eastern window to watch the first rays of coming day;—to see star after star fading from the heavens as the dawn approaches, and the sun prepares to rise,—"the sun of a morning without clouds," bringing in the splendour of the everlasting day. We seem to hear the voice which sounded over the lonely rocks of Patmos in the ears of John; "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." And with him we eagerly echo back the joyful words, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

But who are to come to this table, and who are not to come? It concerns us much to settle this. It was to his disciples that Jesus gave this bread and wine, and therefore none but disciples are to come. It is to remember Jesus that we come, and therefore we must first know Jesus; for unless we know him we cannot remember him. It is to have our souls nourished that we come, therefore they must first have been made alive, that is, we must be born again. We come to get the seal of forgiveness and adoption; therefore we must have been forgiven and adopted before we can come. We come to declare our love to Jesus; therefore we must first have learned to love him. The feast is for the followers of the Lamb, not for the followers of the world. It is for saints, not for the unholy and unconverted. It is not for the profane, or the prayerless, or the formalist, or the self-righteous. It is not for the drunkard, or the unclean, or the swearer, or the Sabbath-breaker, or the Sabbath-walker, or the Sabbath visitor, or those who only attend the house of God once a-day, or who buy and sell on the Sabbath. It is not for the lovers of gaiety and pleasure,—for the frequenters of the ball-room, or the theatre, or the card-table, or the race-course. All such, if they come, "eat and drink damnation to themselves." What have men to do at the table of the Lord who never shed one tear for sin,—who never had an anxious hour about their souls,—who never sought God, nor prized the

Saviour? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be a partaker of the Lord's table, and the table of the devils. Let unconverted souls stay away; or rather let them come immediately to Christ, and then without delay come also to his table. Come to Jesus, and then come to the feast,—none more welcome than you.

How are we to come? Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. If we judge ourselves we should not be judged. Let us wash our hands in innocency (in the blood of the innocent One, the spotless Lamb of God,) and so let us compass the altar of the Lord.² Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see.⁴

A few questions on the Lord's Supper

1. Q. By what names is the Lord's supper known? Ans. It is called the sacrament, because it is an holy ordinance. It is called the Lord's Supper, because instituted by, and in memory of, the Lord Jesus. It is called the breaking of bread, because of the bread there broken. It is called the communion, because therein we are made partakers of Christ's body and blood, and have fellowship with him and with the saints. It is called the Eucharist, because Christ gave thanks, and it is an ordinance of thanksgiving. It is called the feast, because Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, and we feed upon him.

2. Q. What do the broken bread and the poured out wine set forth to us? Ans. They are memorials of Christ bruised, bleeding, dying for

us; and do also set forth his body and blood as the whole food of our souls.

3. Q. Are they mere signs? Ans. No, truly; they also "seal and apply" to us all the blessings of Christ. They are efficacious channels for conveying these to believing souls; but to unbelieving souls they can be no channels of blessing.

4. Q. Is it not enough that we look at the symbols? Ans. No, truly; we must eat and drink of them; thereby signifying our partaking of Christ spiritually by faith,—our receiving him into our souls just as we receive the bread and wine into our bodies. Eating and drinking in faith draws out special blessings, just as the woman's touching the hem of Christ's garment in faith drew out special blessings to her. The mere act of eating and drinking can obtain for us no blessing, if not done by us believingly.

5. Q. Who ought to go to this table? Ans. Living souls; for dead souls cannot eat and drink. Hungry and thirsty souls; for otherwise what would a feast be? Loving souls; for without love, how can we compass the table of love? Believing souls; for without faith we cannot feed on Christ. Regenerate souls; for none but they have a right to the children's bread. In short, Christ's disciples,—Christ's people;—those whom he calls saints, beloved ones, his sheep, his members, his branches, his bride. None else.

6. Q. To what does the Lord's Supper point forward? Ans. To the second coming of the Lord, in glory and majesty, to set up his kingdom, and sit down with his people at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is in looking forward to that day that He says, "I WILL NOT DRINK HENCEFORTH OF THIS FRUIT OF THE VINE UNTIL THAT DAY WHEN I DRINK IT NEW WITH YOU IN MY FATHER'S KINGDOM." Matt. 26:29.

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."—HEB. 6:19.

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still; then are they glad because they be quiet, so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.—PSALM 107:29, 30.

Roar on, ye waves, our souls defy

Your roaring to disturb our rest;

In vain t'impair the calm ye try,—

The calm in a believer's breast.

THIS world is a sea of perpetual storm; yet in it there are many souls who have found "peace and safety." All these at one time heard the fearful howling of the tempest of wrath, and were tossed with its fury;—but yet they have not suffered shipwreck,—they have escaped it all. They hear the tempest still, and its ground-swell often heaves them in their safe anchorage; but their security is never shaken. These are sinners who have fled to the hope set before them, "which hope they have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." The world dislikes and despises these souls; for they were earnest in fleeing from the storm, and the careless world is sore galled by their unfeigned earnestness. They cast away all unnecessary lading, "counting it but dung that they might win Christ," and having so done, they found Christ an anchor, "sure and steadfast." But the world is not possessed of this, and therefore hates those who declare

it to be their only security in the time of storm. And while the sinner who has betaken himself to this hope proclaims the safety of the anchorage he has found, they who will not flee to it decry his confidence as presumption, pride, vain-glory!—The world feels that if he be completely safe, then they are altogether wrong:—if his hope be real, then they have no hope at all.

But come and examine the anchor, and the shore on which it is cast. There is a hope set before you,—a hope of escape. The voice of God in the storm urges you to flee to this hope. It is spoken of fully in Hebrews 6:19, 20. It is a hope which is an anchor of the soul. This anchor is itself sure and strong. It will not break nor let go its hold. The shore too on which it is cast is so solid and firm, that the anchor fixed therein will remain steadfast in spite of storm, and wind, and dashing wave.

The anchor of the soul is found in the glad tidings concerning Christ. The awakened sinner's question is, Will the holy God pardon my sins? He is tossed up and down till he gets this question answered. He feels as if he were the chief of sinners, and as if it were more difficult for God to pardon him than to pardon Manasseh, or Paul, or Magdalene, or any other sinner in the world. There seems to be the black gloom of wrath, the frown of severe displeasure, on the face of God. O who can tell the anguish of that soul! It wishes to be at peace, yet knows not how. It looks around for rest, but knows not where to find it.

Hear then, "O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest!" Behold it is written concerning the Lord Jesus, "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." This is the voice of one who has been cast like Jonah into the waves; and now he is in the lowest deep. The floods compass him about, and the billows pass

over him! Is this a shipwrecked sinner? No,—it is Jesus allowing the tempest to dash the billows of wrath against his own person. And to this he submits in order that he may show to all, that sin deserves nothing less than such a storm of the Almighty's burning wrath. To this he submits, in order that it may be seen how the Holy One abhors to the uttermost every sin of every form,—deed, word, or thought. But glad tidings now! Jesus who sank into the depths of this sea, and was buried under its mountain load, reaches the shore, and stands there declaring that "whosoever believeth in him shall not come into condemnation." Whosoever will agree that this Saviour be his surety, shall not need to plunge into these waves himself, but shall be treated by God as if his sins had been already punished in that fierce storm that spent its violence on Jesus. Is this not rest to your soul? It shows you how justly and holily God may turn his anger from you; how he expresses his utmost displeasure against your sins, and yet saves you! Is not this quieting to your anxious conscience? Is it not an anchor?

Jesus is the anchor. He has been at the bottom of the depths of wrath, and his strength was tried and found perfect. Nothing can keep your souls from being tossed but this only; for nothing else resists the storm of God's wrath. Your duties are not the anchor: can they endure the fierce blast of Divine displeasure? Your feelings and frames are not the anchor: can they stand the sudden dash even of one wave from the world, far less from the Holy God? The Spirit's work in you is not your anchor; it is the cargo, or the vessel stores, which the sure anchor preserves from damage. Some mourn and say, Ah, if I had sinned less I should have had less difficulty in finding peace. Now, are you not forging an anchor out of your supposed goodness? If you could put so many acts of holiness in the place of those many sins, you would straightway form an anchor out of these. Others say, O if I could only see that I had faith, I should then be at

rest. Now you are just trying to make your cable your anchor; for faith is the cable that connects the anchor with the soul. Instead of distressing yourself about your own faith, be occupied with observing the soundness and steadfastness of the anchor, and your soul will be no longer tossed.

The anchor must be something out of ourselves: not our duties, nor our saintship, nor our walk with God, nor our evidences of the Spirit's work within us, nor our strength of love;—not any, nor all of these together! The anchor of a ship is something that lies without, and by being without secures it. That which quiets and assures the uneasy conscience and troubled soul of a sinner, is what he hears in the glad tidings. It is something said or shown to him by God. It is something that tells him, not of the feelings of his own heart, but of the heart of God. It is something that shows him the face of God, that he may read there, "God is love." The work of Jesus, or rather Jesus himself, in this way becomes the sure "anchor of the soul."

The anchor is SURE. That is, it can never fail nor break, for its nature is divine. It is also STEADFAST. It remains fixed whatever storm assails, because it is fixed "within the veil." Let us survey the shore on which it is cast. This shore is the region within the veil. This adds to our grounds of faith, and brightens the confidence of our hope. This Saviour on whom our hope rests is an accepted Saviour. He is within the veil. The anchor has entered into that within the veil, that is, into the holy region within. The Father examined his work and found it faultless; and as a token of his well-pleasedness received him within the veil, and placed him at his right hand in all power and glory. O how great is the consolation here! Our anchor rests, not on shifting sands, but in the bosom of the Father. It is "hid in God." Sure anchor, and firm ground on which it is sunk! What storm will drag it up from that mooring? O my soul, keep to this anchor, and neither

earth nor hell shall ever move thee from thy safe station on the shore of heaven! True, the vessel is worthless;—my vessel with all its freight is worthless;—yet nevertheless it is safe! "He bringeth me to my desired haven, and I am glad because all is peace."²

"My anchor lies within the veil,

No wind can make it drive;

It lies where thou art landed, Lord,

And where we shall arrive."

Poor sinner, the night is near, and appearances are very gloomy on the face of sea and land. The sea and its waves are roaring. Men's hearts are beginning to fail them for fear. The whirlwind which the Son of man is to send over the earth, as the herald of his coming, seems ready to burst forth. At present there is an ominous stillness,—the stillness that precedes the thunder-storm. Are you meditating to flee? Is your hope this, that the storm will blow over at last? Alas! alas! it never will; for the Living God will never die. Is it your hope that perhaps you may be drifted on the shores of heaven, though you were not directing your sails thitherward? This, too, is vain; for this storm is sent forth in order to drive vessels to the shoals of hell. Do you hope that you may brave it out, because you are not so heavily laden as others? Ah! but it is too true that one sin attracts the lightning, and one stroke of the thunderbolt will make way for the rushing flood. O flee to the hope set before you! Flee from the wrath to come! Anchor on the sheltered shore! Rest on the Saviour, who rests on the Father's bosom! Return through Christ to God; and then, returning sinner, you will be welcomed to the Father's bosom with the very welcome that met the returned Saviour!

DO YOU GO TO THE PRAYER-MEETING?

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name."—MAL. 3:16.

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."—ACTS 1:14.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."—HEB. 10:25.

READER! is there a prayer-meeting in your neighbourhood? If there is, do you attend it? If you do not, have you good reasons for staying away? Perhaps there is one just by your door, or at least within a few minutes' walk of your dwelling. Do you go to it? I have known people walk many miles every week to a prayer-meeting. They did not grudge the distance. The way seemed short and pleasant. No wonder. They were in earnest about their souls! And if you neglect or despise such meetings, it is to be feared that you are altogether unconcerned about eternity and the kingdom to come. If you were thirsty for the water of life, you would be glad of such opportunities of drawing it out of the wells of salvation.

I ask then again, DO YOU ATTEND THE PRAYER-MEETING? If not, what are your reasons? If they are good reasons, you need not be

ashamed of them either before God or man, and they will serve you at the judgment-seat of Christ. If they are not, the sooner you give them up the better. Very soon the last sermon will be done, the last Sabbath will close, the last prayer-meeting will be over, the last message of salvation delivered, the last warning sounded, and the last invitation given! Then, what bitter regret and agonizing remorse! What will you think of your excuses then? Oh, you will give the wealth of worlds for another prayer-meeting, another day of hope. No more making light of such precious opportunities, nor scoffing at those who prized them! The follies and vanities of earth are all over then; and invisible realities are seen to be all in all. Will the memory of your days and scenes of pleasure or sin be soothing to your soul when they have passed away like a vision of the night? Will the remembered hours of carnal levity, the idle word, the thoughtless jest, the gay smiles of companionship, the halls of gaiety, or the haunts of sin, (all of which you once preferred to the prayer-meeting), will these breathe comfort to your dying soul, or bear you up when giving in your account before the Judge of all? Laughter shall then be exchanged for burning tears; nights of harmless merriment for ages of endless woe. Oh, waste not then one precious hour,—one precious moment! Thy eternity may hang on it! It may soon be too late to think of prayer. Up, sleeper, up! Turn, sinner, turn! Thy days are but an handbreadth;—flee! oh, flee from the wrath to come!

Let me speak to you, with all kindness, for a little, about your reasons for not attending the prayer-meeting. Let us weigh them in the balances of the sanctuary; and may the Holy Spirit, in this respect, convince you of sin!

1. Do you not care for prayer-meetings? Do you not like them? Do you count them a weariness, or do you call them fanaticism? Is this

your reason? If so, can your soul be in a right state with God? Can that man be a child of God who dislikes either private or social prayer? Can there be real or living religion in that soul that does not relish such meetings? Is it not strange and sad that you should relish the things of the body, the things of time,—and yet turn away from the things of the soul, the things of eternity? Is it not awful that you should love the society of sinners, the friendship of the world; and yet dislike so much the companionship of saints, the fellowship of God. If you prefer worldly company or pleasure to a prayer-meeting, this shows beyond all doubt that you are not a child of God, or a follower of the Lamb.

2. Have you no time to attend prayer-meetings? Is this your reason? Ah! think for a moment, is it really true that you have no time to spare for them? Can you say so honestly before God? Will you be able to plead this with the Judge in the great day of account? Do you never attend other meetings which take up more of your time? Or do you not waste more time idly, or in foolish company, than would be spent at the meeting? What! have you time to eat, and to drink, and make merry, but none to pray! Have you time for business, for company, for folly, for pleasure, for lusts, for sin, but none for prayer! Have you time for the shop, the market, the ball-room, the card-table, the public-house, the political club,—but none for the prayer-meeting! You can spare days and weeks for the things of time, can you not spare an hour for the things of eternity?

3. Are you ashamed to go to a prayer-meeting? Would your companions laugh at you? Is this your reason? what! ashamed to pray! afraid to be laughed at! You are not ashamed to be seen in idle, foolish company, yet you are ashamed to be seen in the society of the people of God! You are not ashamed to saunter about the streets, nor to "stand in the way of sinners," nor to "sit in the seat of the

scornful," (Ps. 1:1), yet you are ashamed to be seen at a meeting for prayer! Perhaps you are one of those who are not ashamed to be seen in a public-house,—who are not ashamed to swear, nor to get drunk,—yet you are ashamed to attend a prayer-meeting! Ashamed of God's service, but not ashamed of the devil's! ashamed to pray, but not ashamed to sin! Will God accept such an excuse at your hands in the day of reckoning? "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

4. Do you think it is being too religious? Now let me ask you what you mean by religious? Does it not mean loving and serving God? And can a man love God too much? Can he serve him too constantly or devotedly? Was the apostle too religious when he said "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"? Or was he too religious when he commanded us to "pray always," (Eph. 6:18); to "pray without ceasing," (1 Thes. 5:17.) Was David too religious when he praised God seven times a-day (Ps. 119:164). Are the angels and the redeemed saints in heaven too religious, who serve him "day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:15). With such a feeling as you have about prayer-meetings, it is plain that there is far too much religion in heaven for you ever to think of going to such a place, or even to wish to be there. The man that has no relish for a prayer-meeting, could have no relish for heaven. He is utterly unfit to be there. He would be wretched there. An eternity of prayer and praise would be hell to a man who is wearied with an hour of a prayer-meeting on earth.

5. Are you better employed at home? Can you honestly say so before God? If you can, I leave you to answer to God for the time thus spent at home or elsewhere. He will take a strict account of those hours. If you are one who loves to read the Bible and pray at home, I am sure

you will not object to a meeting for prayer. If you are not, can you really say that you are better employed, or even half so well? Oh no. You cannot be half so well employed as in preparing for eternity, in praying with God's people, in hearing of his dear Son. in making ready for the coming of the Lord.

Reader, are these your reasons? Then I ask you, are they sufficient? Does your conscience say they are? Or do you not see that the real reason is just your "carnal mind which is enmity against God"? You do not love to pray, therefore you do not like the prayer-meeting. You do not love God, and therefore you do not desire fellowship with him. You do not love his saints, therefore you do not wish to join them with in prayer. You do not care about forgiveness of sin, and therefore you do not go to hear how "in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." You have no relish for the things of Christ, no sense of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and therefore you do not desire to join his people in singing the new song,—WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN!

"The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." 1 Peter 4:7.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Col. 4:2.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Eph. 6:18.

"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10:25.

THE CITY OF REFUGE

"Appoint for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood."—JOSHUA 20:2, 3.

"That we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us."—HEB. 6:18.

"God is a refuge for us."—PSALM 62:8.

"Escape for thy life; look not behind thee; neither stay thou in all the plain.... haste thee, escape thither."—GEN. 19:17–22.

THERE were six cities of refuge in the land of Israel. These were so situated that any manslayer, when pursued, might find his flight directed and his escape assisted by the very nature of the ground where they stood. (1.) Three of them stood on one side of Jordan and three on the other. No river rolled between him and his place of safety. (2.) All of them stood in plains; Kedesh in the plains of Zaanaim, Sychem in the plain of Moreh, Hebron in a level wilderness, Golan and Ramoth-Gilead at the foot of their adjoining hills. The manslayer had no up-hill race to run in seeking deliverance; there was nothing in his way which might hinder his flight. (3.) Near each city (except Bezer, which required no further mark, being seen afar on the long spacious heath) stood a hill, that served the purpose of an ensign to guide the guilty man, and to invite him to the refuge. Kedesh had the hill of Naphtali close by. Sychem

had Mount Gerizzim. Hebron had those vine-terraced heights, on which Abraham once stood and saw the smoke of Sodom. Golan had the heights of Bashan; and Ramoth-Gilead stood under the lofty hills of Gilead. He who appointed these cities took care that they should be marked afar off, that the steps of one seeking refuge might without difficulty be guided towards them. For it was intended by all these peculiarities, to show the sinner's road to the Redeemer. No river rolls between him and Christ! No hills raise their barrier between him and the Saviour. The way is plain and open; it is broad and level; and while yet afar off his eye catches a glimpse of that ensign which waves on Calvary, over the city of refuge,—“As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die.” This, even while he is yet a great way off, kindles hope and keeps it alive.

One of these cities of refuge was Hebron—well known as being the place where Abraham long abode. Let us linger for a little at this city, and call to mind some of those sights often seen in other days from its walls and within its gates. The inhabitants there dwelt safely as in a “peaceable habitation, in a sure dwelling, and in a quiet resting-place.” The vines clothed the surrounding hills, and rich crops waved over the plains of Mamre. Not far off was the spot, where, under a spreading oak, Abraham, “the friend of God,” had held communion with his Redeemer. Oftentimes in the cool of the day, when the breeze of evening had begun to awake, the people might be seen on the flat roofs of their houses, or the top of their city walls, enjoying the scene and remembering former days. Many a song of praise ascended, many a holy meditation was enjoyed, many a thankful emotion kindled.

But occasionally the peace of this happy hour was suddenly disturbed by a piercing cry of alarm that resounded from the valley,—a cry of fear and a cry of rage and wrath. The citizens stopped their song and saw a trembling murderer, with horror on his brow, in full speed making for the gate, and behind him, with bare sword, the avenger of blood pressing on with relentless fury. Sometimes, it is likely, if for a moment the pursuer slackened his speed, they saw the weary manslayer incautiously sit down to rest, thinking that now he was so near his refuge, he might abate his anxiety; and then the avenger would seize the favourable opportunity, spring on him, and plunge the sword into his soul. Oh! the agonizing look the wretched man gave in death toward the city! and his awful cry of despair, as he yielded up his breath with guilt on his conscience, and remorse gnawing his soul! Sometimes too they saw one in his flight come close up to the gate; but he hesitated to enter, stood doubting, afraid to go in, though trembling for the approach of the avenger, until, ere ever he was aware, the avenger smote him to the dust, and he breathed his last with his dying head bent down on the very threshold of the gate! But oftener still they saw the pursued flying murderer come with full speed down the valley, reach the open gate, bound over the threshold, and stand in safety within! the elders of the city met him, and asked him how he had ventured in so boldly. "You are stained with blood, and your trembling frame testifies that you are a guilty man?" "Yes, I own it is true, but on that very account I fled for refuge." "But why have you come hither? No native of the city is like you; they are all children of Abraham." "True, but though no native be like me, yet many like me have got in, for God himself has called it a city of refuge." "But you bring no recommendation?" "God never spoke of any recommendation being needed." "Still, you have given no reason why you in particular should expect to be received?" "Yes, for the warrant is, that any and every man-slayer may come." The elders smiled well-pleased; the man-slayer was

secured in the place of refuge; and there was praise in all the city because another was saved. The delivered man soon joined in their hymns to the God of his life; but oftener still sang in their hearing some peculiar songs of praise, which none could sing but a man-slayer that had fled for refuge. (Rev. 14:3.) Frequently, too, the whole company of delivered men would meet together, talk over their dangers, tell of their escape, and unite their voice and heart in these songs of deliverance. (Acts 2:42.)

These events in Israel were intended as a type of what takes place in the kingdom of God on earth. The man-slayer, wet with the blood of his fellow, is the type of a sinner. And in choosing no other than a man-slayer to be the type of a sinner, God points out the murderous nature of sin. Sin brings death on the man himself, and thrusts the sting of the second death into his soul. The sinning soul crucifies Christ afresh; it quenches, or, in other words, tries to extinguish the life of the Holy Spirit; it wishes that there were no God, or, in other words, aims at the very being of God the Father. O sinner, how deep is the crimson-dye of your soul! How can you escape the damnation of hell? On the other hand, the avenger of blood represents or personifies the stern but most righteous demands for vengeance, made by the holy law, pursuing the unforgiven sinner, in order to execute the sentence, "Thou shalt surely die," (Gen. 2:17.) And the city of refuge is the salvation provided for the sinner in Christ Jesus, bestowed without money, and without price, without preparation and without delay, on every soul of man that flees to him as the refuge from the wrath to come.

From the walls and battlements of heaven, angels have seen many such sights as the men of Hebron used to see. Let us lead you to some of them.

1. They have seen many a man-slayer. They have seen many a soul—and you among the rest, stained with crimson guilt, yet sitting at ease. Have they not seen you destroy your soul? Then you are a man-slayer. Have they not seen you by your words, and influence of your example, prevent others from being saved? Have they not seen you wishing in your heart that God were away, or that there was no God? And is not this really wishing for and attempting to compass the death of God? You have wished there were no Christ, and no Holy Spirit! O blood-stained, murderous soul, you stand charged with murder, accomplished in regard to yourself; and your neighbours, and with designs against the life of the Holy God! Perhaps the devil keeps you at rest, and persuades you not to be alarmed. Eat, drink, and be merry! But, nevertheless, you are a man-slayer. You ruin your own soul, and your example ruins your friends; and you are an enemy that entertains murderous designs against God. The avenger has not forgotten you.

2. They have seen many a man-slayer awakened. Few sinners in our land remain unvisited by some convictions; yet few of them flee from the wrath to come. Some are left miserable by a sense of guilt, that hangs over them, like a black cloud, night and day,—“all their lifetime subject to bondage,” (Heb. 2:15.) They have many forebodings of danger, yet companions, and pleasures, and their dislike of a change, and the secret hope that perhaps all is not true that is threatened, stifle their feelings, and hinder them from fleeing. Is this your state? Are you a sinner aware of your danger? If so, surely you must flee? You dare not sit still. What though you repent, and are sorry, and shed tears, and reproach yourself for your folly?—all that is vain. The avenger of blood never ceases on that account. Indeed, you are more likely to be cut off suddenly than many others; for your convictions will make Satan afraid of losing you, and your delaying to flee will provoke God, so that he will wait no more. Up, up and flee

for your life! You dare not sit still. O if you would flee, there would be deep, deep interest in you, felt by the people on the walls of Hebron—the angels in heaven. To see you running to the city of refuge—that would be a blessed sight! Up, and run speedily! Many have run along that road to the city; the way to Christ has been traversed by thousands, some more, and some less guilty than you, who knew that he was their only refuge. "The kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it."

3. They have seen many fleeing towards the city. This is more than being awakened by a sense of danger and need. They have begun to seek deliverance; they flee! Are you a fleeing sinner? If you are, there are some marks that men will not fail to see in you. For example, you will be affected by a sense of your own personal guilt and danger; you will not be fleeing just because others are doing so. You will have a feeling of immediate need; you cannot put off the matter to a distant day. You will also feel engrossed to a great degree with concern to escape; a fleeing man-slayer would not be hindered with the trifles on the road, or the people whom he met. You will forsake the company of friends that hinder you. Above all, your eye will be ever looking toward the mountain-height that marks the place of refuge, and along the plain that leads to it; your thoughts will be occupied with the open door; and your delight will be to hear of those who fled and got in safely. You will be ever looking for Jesus, and rejoicing in whatever leads to a view of him, whether a sermon, or the Bible, or prayer. You will be meditating on his completed work, which opens the fountain for sin and uncleanness. You will delight to read and hear of such as Paul, and Manasseh, and those Jerusalem-sinners who, in every view, were even more than man-slayers, for they crucified the "Son of Man," "the fellow of the Almighty." But remember there can be no safety for you short of the city; none, none, till you are within it. It is not being "almost persuaded to be a

Christian;"—it is not being "not far from the kingdom of God,"—that will save your soul. It is not setting out and running toward the gate, nor even touching the threshold—but it is getting over the threshold, and getting in, that will be your safety. over the threshold, and getting in, that will be your safety. If the man-slayer stopped short of this, he might as well have never tried to flee. No sinner can be pardoned until a sufficient testimony is left against his sin, and this can be done only by his actual coming to Christ Jesus. No man-slayer could be forgiven until he got to the city, the very appointment of which was God's testimony against the man's guilt and deserved punishment. No sinner can be forgiven in a righteous way, except by being hid in Christ. Hopes, desires, wishes, convictions, fears, sorrows, in such a case, are no more than shrubs or flowers, that line the road to the city.

4. They have seen the joyful entrance of many into the city of refuge. Fearful, weary, faint, they came up to the open gate; and ventured in, because it was open for such as they. They believed Christ to be the sinner's way to the Father. They came to view his finished and perfect work in behalf of sinners; they examined it, and perceived both its fitness and its fulness; they saw that the Father considered it a wide enough entrance for any sinner; and so they ventured in. Jehovah had declared it to be sufficient, and that was enough for them. Let us ask them, and see their grounds of faith. "You are stained with blood," it might be said to them; "you have been guilty of trampling under foot the Son of God, and aiming many a blow at the life and heart of God; and your conscience tells you that you deserve vengeance; and nothing but filth appears on your person. How dare you come hither?" They reply, "For the very reason that we are blood-stained sinners we have fled to Jesus." Ask again, "How could you ever hope to see the King in his beauty; his people are a holy people?" They reply, "True, but blood-stained souls have

become white in his blood,—his precious blood was shed for this very end." "But you bring no recommendation? you say nothing of your previous efforts, prayers, tears, good deeds, sincere obedience?" "No, we say nothing of these, for they are not required to our being accepted in the Beloved." "Well, then, at least, show why you in particular venture to come?" "Our warrant is his own sure word, whosoever cometh I will in no wise cast out."

And now the gate closes them in. They shall go no more out. Angels welcome them with songs; and Father, Son, and Spirit rest over them in love. There is joy in heaven over them!

These redeemed, however, are nevertheless not yet perfect. Their iniquities are forgiven, and every sin blotted out; but their hearts retain much corruption. But to promote holiness they keep much in each other's company and help each other's joy. They often sing such songs as that of Romans 8:31–34, "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us!" O what peace and joy! No frown of a displeased God, for his anger is turned away, and he comforts them! With joy they draw water out of the wells of salvation. And as they survey and examine their city of refuge, they find new reasons for joy and enduring gratitude. Now that they are in Christ, they enquire freely as to the past; and they find that all along, from the first hour they began to flee, it was the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of Christ, who was drawing them, John 6:44. At the time that they felt alarmed, and yet lingered in their sins, it was a secret drawing of the Divine hand that enabled them at length to get away

from others, and really to flee for refuge. At the time when they had nearly stopped short, attracted by the golden apples which Satan scattered in their path, it was the Spirit that drew them on. At that moment, when, faint and weary, they had well-nigh sat down in despair, it was the drawing of the Father through the Holy Spirit that brought them onward still. And when at length they saw so clearly where to rest, and felt themselves able to rest satisfied in Christ alone, it was the Holy Spirit who caused the scales to drop from their eyes, and who effectually persuaded their souls. O how full now is their gratitude to Father, Son, and Spirit,—“Thou hast loved us with an everlasting love, and with everlasting kindness hast thou drawn us!” They are never heard to boast of any thing but of him; not even of their own faith, their eager running to the city. No; for that too was owing to the Spirit he sent into them, (Eph. 2:8) and it was not that, but the city, that saved them.

They reach farther still in their discoveries of God's wondrous ways towards them. They are taken into a chamber in the council-house of the city of refuge, and allowed to read its records. The Book of Life is shown to them, and they find now that they were elected from all eternity! and that it was in consequence of the purpose of God, that they were called and drawn by the Spirit of Jesus. Amazing grace! How deeply fixed is the foundation of their safety! They feel humbled at the same time; for they were chosen for no good in themselves at all, but wholly to the praise and glory of Him who called them. It was mere grace that made the difference between them and other man-slayers. Every new discovery yields matter for praise and adoration. They go down to the gates to praise the Lord among the assembled people. They forsake not the assembling of themselves together, but go to their own company (Acts 4:23) whenever opportunity occurs. Their life is a life of happy, cheerful faith in Him whose finished work redeemed them, and of unceasing love and devotion to Him who

called them out of darkness into marvellous light. Often are they heard singing, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gate, that the righteous nation that keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is the rock of ages." (Isaiah 26:1-4.)

But like the saved man-slayer who dared not be found beyond the gate of the city until the High Priest had gone to glory, (Numbers 35:25) they dare not for an hour go out of their place of safety. They abide in Christ. However holy they become, whatever reputation they have gained, however honoured and distinguished for spiritual attainments, they abide in Christ alone. Their first security was found in him, and it is their security to the last. Though laden with the fruits of righteousness, and filled with all the graces of the Spirit, they depend for safety on the enclosing wall of their city of refuge, as much as does the sinner that only yesterday came in. And so they will remain till their High Priest enter upon "his glorious rest" (Isaiah 11:10); and then they shall share with him in that joy, each one receiving his inheritance and possessing an unchanging love. For this they are always longing. Oftentimes they ascend the battlements and towers of their strong city to look out for any signs of the coming glory; or sitting at their windows, they turn their eye to the east to see if there be any streaks of the dawn. For when from the New Jerusalem the tidings shall arrive that Jesus our High Priest has entered into his rest, then shall his redeemed return to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"FEAR GOD AND GIVE GLORY TO HIM, FOR THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT IS COME!" Rev. 14:7.

NIGHT, DAY-BREAK, AND CLEAR DAY

"Awake thou that sleepest."—EPH. 5:14.

"Let us put on the armour of light."—ROMANS 13:12.

READER, are you one of "the people who sit in darkness"? And do you love the darkness, because your deeds are evil? Has a ray,—even one ray, from the glory of God, in the face of Jesus, ever gladdened your soul? Come and let us reason together. Perhaps you do not know whether you have passed from darkness into light? Come, then, and be not afraid to examine and decide.

1. If you are addicted to gross sins, you are a child of darkness, and therefore a child of the devil, and an heir of hell. If you practise any thing which you would not for the world that others saw you do, you are a child of darkness, for you feel a desire that these doings of yours may be hid in night.

2. You are a child of darkness if you do not perceive how the world lieth in wickedness. If the world is very pleasant to you; if its frolics, its gaieties, its dance, its song, are sweet to your taste, then, alas! all is night with you. If you are never grieved at observing forgetfulness of God in the world's business; if you are never made uneasy when reading the profane and ungodly attacks made in public newspapers on the cause of God; if you never feel shocked in hearing the oaths and seeing the covetousness of a market-day, or a fair; if your heart

was never made sad by the thought, that these multitudes are on the way to hell, then "the darkness has blinded your eyes."

3. You are a child of night if you reckon all points of doctrine very much alike. There are some doctrines which are essential to salvation. Thus it is essential to salvation to know your lost state as a sinner, and to lean on Christ Jesus alone. But if you see no greater importance in these truths than in a correct moral walk, and think that men may be safe if only they be sincere, you are a child of darkness. The equalizing gloom of darkness rests on you, for, like a man at midnight, you cannot distinguish the relative importance of the objects around you.

4. If you do not work for God, you are a child of darkness: for you are sleeping in inactivity; and "they that sleep, sleep in the night." Do you ever deny yourself for God? Do you give up this or that pleasure to prevent your mind being distracted or unfitted for his service? Do you rise a little earlier to obtain time for prayer, when otherwise you would be deprived of it? Do you redeem time? Do you visit the sick, send the gospel to the heathen, speak of spiritual realities to your friends, and all for his sake? If not, then you are not a child of light.

5. If you let convictions slip, you are a child of darkness; for you act as sleepy men do when roused during night. They awake at the loud knock, rub their eyes, move themselves, then fall back into their sweet slumber, and wish to be left undisturbed. You say like Felix, "Go thy way for this time;" and Felix was truly a child of the night, though awakened at the moment by Paul's loud appeal

6. Though you love believers, and approve of their holy life, yet still you may be of the night. Perhaps you are one of many in our land who love their pious parents and friends, but do not love their piety. You respect good people, for they are kind. But in all this, you are not

loving Christ in them. You like to see the stars shining in the dark night, but you do not yourself seek to shine with the light which they possess.

7. You are a child of darkness, if you do not see that Christ is the chief object presented to the sinner. A man during night may see meteors, falling stars, many flashes of light, yet all this proves the more that it is not day. He admires these, because all is darkness round; were it day-time, they would all be unseen in the flood of glorious light from the sun. And thus it may be with you; you may have had your convictions of sin, and your flashes of joyful hope; yet unless your soul has seen and felt Jesus and his finished work to be the source of all a sinner's hope—his SUN,—you are still in night. Whatever discoveries you have made in Scripture; whatever errors you have escaped from; however many sins you have given up; whatever sacrifices you have made; all this proves nothing regarding daylight in your soul, if Christ the Sun have not filled it with his surpassing glories.

8. If you have not seen your vileness, and the filth of your garments of unrighteousness, you are a child of night. An Ethiopian cannot see his own or his neighbour's blackness, if all is dark about him; and it is even thus with the sinner. If he sees not that his own corruption, and his fancied robe of righteousness are loathsome before God; if he think proudly of himself, have a good opinion of his heart, and trust that there is at least something worth in his deeds, he is in gross darkness.

9. Once more. He is a child of midnight who is unalarmed at sin. He is like a man in the depth of sound slumber; there may be death at hand, a sword may be hanging over his sleeping form; the earthquake or the fire may be levelling his dwelling, still he is

unconscious. O unconscious sinner, you are a child of hell! the less you feel your sin, the more evidence you give of being asleep; and "they that sleep, sleep in the night." Awake, thou that sleepest! Perhaps not the rising sun, but the lurid glare of hell, may give thee warning that thy time of rest is gone!

Come, then, and inquire how it is that day begins to take the place of night. Be not deceived! Remember the Son of man cometh as a thief in the night, and the surprise and remorse of the sinner overtaken in his darkness then, will never, never end! There are souls now passed into light, who were once as dark as you. There are sinners now become children of the day who once were as you. Are you beginning to desire a change? Like the shipwrecked crew (Acts 27:29), are you wishing for day? Look around and cry, even in the midst of your gloom, "Let the day break!" There is a day-spring from on high that visits souls, and guides their feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:79.)

Let us see a man on whom the light is dawning.

1. It is near the day-break with a sinner, when his conscience is awakened to feel sin. His sleep is done. He cannot rest quietly in sin any more. Perhaps, like Peter, his conscience was awakened by the cock-crowing—by some recollection of impressive warnings which he despised at the time, or it may have been some providence, some Jonah-storm, that sounded in his soul, "What meanest thou, O sleeper! arise, call upon thy God." Or it may have been a minister's voice proclaiming the Lord's call, "Awake, thou that sleepest!" (Eph. 5:14.) But remember, reader, this awakening is not itself the dawn of day, though it generally precedes it. For there are cases where convictions are strong and long continued, and yet the convinced sinner remains a child of darkness. Best not, then, in mere

convictions. They are hopeful appearances; but go on and see if there be other signs besides.

2. It seems to be near the dawn with a sinner, when his past days look like a dream, or a vision by night. Now, his pleasures, company, songs, and even his lawful business, seem trifling and utter vanity, compared with the new realities that are opening on his view. His past enjoyment in them he reckons "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh and his soul is empty," (Isa. 29:8); their folly, their rapid flight, above all, their debasing power, makes the man feel, "What fruit had ye then of those things of which ye are now ashamed?" (Rom. 6:21).

3. New objects begin to appear, and former things assume a new aspect. He sees the preciousness of his soul; the holiness and justice of God; the disgusting features of sin. As yet the greatest truths may be indistinctly perceived by him, as at early dawn when the morning is still grey, even hills and stately forests are dimly seen. Yet there is a beginning; the world seems far less attractive than before; its pits and marshes, wherein so many fall, are seen and dreaded. God, as revealed in his word, through the cross of Christ, begins to engage his whole soul. The people who know God become the objects of his love (Ps. 16:3), as in the case of John Bunyan, when just emerging from the shades of night—"How lovely now was every one in mine eyes, that I thought to be converted men and women; they shone, they walked like a people that carried the broad seal of heaven about them."

4. He is expecting light from above. He does not expect that the light that is to show him the way to the Father's open arms will come from himself,—no; he believes that it shines into the heart by command of him who at first said, "Let there be light" (2 Cor. 4:6). This Day-

spring is from above (Luke 1:78). Is it, reader, your convictions, and repentance, that give you comfort, and make you imagine that you are a child of light? Then, it is not yet dawn with you; for it must be Christ, the Day-spring, that gives true peace. If your feelings are the grounds of your hope, instead of the Saviour alone, beware lest you be satisfying yourself with the sun's reflected rays. If your holy life, as you fancy it to be, is the ground of your hope, you are preferring the beautiful scenery which the sun paints with his brightness, to the Sun himself. But a soul that is really advancing on to the full day is satisfied with nothing short of that ray from the face of Jesus which fell on the face of ransomed Abel, and faithful Abraham, and all the saved, (Rev. 22:4, 5). He might possibly kindle a torch for himself, but he knows that this would drop out of his hand when he came to pass through the dark valley. He will be satisfied with nothing but what the Holy God himself will be satisfied with. The light that the Father sheds on Immanuel's face is the light he seeks for.

5. There is a gradual increase of light. There is no going back; no returning to the world. Impressions are not effaced; truths are not forgotten; anxiety does not decay. A soul really led by the Spirit out of darkness can no more go back than can the sun once risen. Difficulty after difficulty is cleared away; cloud after cloud breaks up. The soul now feels an increasing anxiety for Christ, and sees more than ever that the reason why his wants are unsatisfied is his imperfect acquaintance with the work of Jesus. He can now distinguish between justification and sanctification: he sees that he has to do with the former first of all, and that a sinner must be washed with clean water before the Spirit will abide in him.

6. The Sun appears through the cloud. The full work of Christ appears to him to be the very remedy he needed for his soul. He sees the Sun of righteousness, and all is day. He lets that glorious Sun

pour its light over his uncomely soul; and, lo! he is now "altogether lovely." Mists still linger, but they are gradually dissolving; dark clouds float at times over his sky, but at such times he keeps looking to the quarter whence he knows light will break forth again. He obtains assurance of his salvation. As in the case of the natural sun, if the eye be in the line of the ray of light, then of course the shining ray will be perceived—so, he gives a steady, direct look to the Sun of righteousness, and feels that his free beams are shed even over his own vile soul.

It is now CLEAR DAY. Even the shadows of the dawn have passed away. He lives, expecting another rising of this same Sun in sevenfold brightness, when grace shall be changed into glory. He is searching much into God's character and ways day after day; but all his discoveries are dim compared with those that he looks for at his Lord's Second Coming. "To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise," (Mal. 4:2.) Yet, strange as it may seem to the world, the child of light is not gay, nor does he feel any tendency to levity in his joy. The reason is this; the bright sunshine he enjoys is the face of God; and he stands ever in his presence. The rays of favour are all from sovereign grace! He is humbled, therefore, under a sense of the enormous load of benefit conferred upon him; the weight of grace and glory bends down his soul. Holy awe regulates his communion with God, while, at the same moment, he possesses the joyful confidence of a child. He has reverence, like the seraphim, while he has a joy that sometimes springs up almost as high as theirs; and it is in such a moment of mingled reverence and rapture that he fully realizes heaven.

And many times, his God and Father deepens this awe and reverence, by giving him personal afflictions to bear. The child of light is despised by the world, that he may learn to bathe yet more in

the fountain of life alone; and that, when one earthly comfort after another withers, he may take all his light from the Sun that never sets. At other times, the Holy Spirit leads him to such awful views of his remaining corruption, and such deep insight into the mystery of sin, as would confound and crush any soul whose confidence was not fixed on Jesus alone, and on Jesus to the uttermost. Or, it may be, he is oppressed with anguish, not through fear of his own condemnation or suspicion of his personal safety, but by what he sees around him;—the contempt poured upon his God, and the hastening perdition of unconverted souls. Like his Master, he feels, "The reproach wherewith they have reproached thee is fallen upon me!" and, like David, he looks into the pit, and cries, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" He has hours of painful wrestling with his God in their behalf; his bitterest hours on earth are the hours wherein these sorrows because of his God, and because of perishing men, rush into his soul! Indeed, his joy would never return, were it not that he sees in Calvary how his God has been glorified to a degree that swallows up all the contempt of men and devils; and how, when Jesus comes again, his glory will burst forth even from hell, and hallelujahs ascend to his name even over the smoke of the everlasting burnings. At present it is a painful blessedness he lives in, the very joy of his Father's face often creating new sources of anguish: but then he knows that thus he is to be refined as gold. And instead of these trying moments causing him to doubt his Father's love, they rather tend to assure him of it the more; for his Father lays these hardens on him just because he has first given him the joy of the Lord as the strength in which they are to be borne.

O sinner, child of darkness, and of the devil, and of hell, come and be a child of light! Will you choose to lie with fallen angels in the blackness of darkness for ever? Will you love darkness, until it become your only portion? Will you indulge your dark deeds, secret

sins, black desires hidden in the heart, and black clouds of anger, sabbath-breaking, uncleanness, pride, covetousness, envy, evil-speaking, discontent, selfishness? O come, and be a child of light! Let the Sun shine on you; let his beams burst into that dark cave of your heart! This is God coming, in the person of Jesus, into the view of his creatures, like the sun after the gloom of night. It is God coming into the sight of his fallen and hell-deserving creatures! It is God coming in an aspect that invites you, and speaks holy love to you! For he comes to show you, how he may now be "just while he justifieth the ungodly." The various rays of his attributes are combined to form this "great light" that shines on those who sat in the valley and shadow of death. Shall it shine on you? or have you made up your mind to "sleep on and take your rest,"—to love darkness now, and dwell in darkness for ever—to be a sinner now, and a companion of devils hereafter? Is there nothing terrible in hell,—the devouring fire, the everlasting burnings? Is there nothing bitter in "the dregs of the cup of trembling,"—the vials in which is filled up the wrath of God? Is there nothing sweet in the light of heaven—the glory which God hath prepared for them that love him? Is there nothing desirable in the joy of the Lord,—the peace that passeth all understanding,—the rest that remaineth for the people of God? Is guilt better than pardon? Is wrath better than love? Is death better than life? Is damnation better than eternal blessedness! Are the burning names as pleasant as the cool waters of the fountain of life? Is the lake of fire and brimstone as safe and peaceful as "the sea of glass like unto crystal," on which the redeemed are standing in triumph? Is your father the devil, (John 8:44,) who deceiveth the whole world, more to be regarded than the word of him who is the faithful and true Witness? Lie down, then, in thy shame, and let thy confusion cover thee! "Walk in the light of thy fire, and in the sparks that thou hast kindled," (Isa. 50:11). But soon a bright gleam of glory, seen afar, from the children of the light and of the day, shall tell thee what they

have received from the Sun of Righteousness, and what thou hast lost for ever! "Yet a little while the light is with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light," (John 12:35, 36.)

HYMN

Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend,
Life and health and peace possessing
From the sinner's dying Friend.
Here I'll sit for ever viewing
Mercy's streams, in streams of blood;
Precious drops! my soul bedewing,
Plead and claim my peace with God.
Truly blessed is this station,
Low before his cross to lie,
While I see divine compassion
Floating in his languid eye.
Here it is I find my heaven,

While upon the cross I gaze;
Love I much? I'm more forgiven;
I'm a miracle of grace.
Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears his feet I'll bathe;
Constant still in faith abiding,
Life deriving from his death.
May I still enjoy this feeling,
In all need to Jesus go;
Prove his wounds each day more healing,
And himself more fully know.

BEHOLD HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS

"Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints."—
JUDE 14.

"Behold I come as a thief! Blessed is he that watcheth and
keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his

shame."—REV. 16:15.

MY DEAR READER,—Let me speak to you a few words respecting this solemn subject—the second coming of the Lord. In doing so, I shall confine myself, as much as possible, to the words of God himself, both because they are the fittest and the plainest—"quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword;" and because I do not wish you to evade the matter, by saying that I am pressing upon you the uncertain opinions of man. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Reader! "that same Jesus who was taken up into heaven shall so come in like manner as he went up into heaven." The heavens must receive him until the times of restitution of all things.² Then shall he come in his own glory, and in his Father's glory, and with all his mighty angels, to call you to account for the deeds done in the body. Are you ready for his coming? Can you abide his presence? Will you be able to stand before the Judge of all? He once came in meekness; he shall then come in majesty;—he once came in shame; he shall then come in glory;—he once came in weakness; he shall then come in power;—he once came to save; he shall then come to judge—to give to every man according as his work shall be.

I. He comes to take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not his Gospel. 2 Thess. 1:8. This is the day of grace; that shall be the day of vengeance;—this is the time of his mercy; that shall be the time of his fierce anger. His long-suffering shall then be wearied out, and his love shall then have passed away. His eyes—those very eyes that wept over Jerusalem, shall then be a flame of fire, piercing you like lightning, and consuming you with their terrible glance. His feet—those very feet that rested in their weariness upon the well of Sychar, shall be "fine brass," to tread you down, as in the wine-press of his wrath. "The day of the Lord

cometh; it is nigh at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."2 Are you prepared for that day of terror and darkness? Have you fled like the dove to the clefts of the rock? Have you found shelter in the man who is the hiding-place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest.4

II. He comes to raise the dead. "Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." 1 Cor. 15:23. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. That resurrection morning is the believer's joyful hope; for then he shall see Jesus face to face; and the last relics of sin and suffering be left behind him in his tomb. But is it full of hope and joy to you? Does the thought of that morning fill your soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Or are you of those who, when that day arrives, would, a thousand times over, wish to be allowed to remain for ever in the tomb, rather than be dragged up, as criminals from their cells, to hear their final doom? If so, oh then flee now to a risen Saviour! His resurrection tells you of a finished atonement—an open fountain—a rent veil—a free mercy-seat—a gracious welcome from an injured but still loving Father. Flee now—tarry not; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh!

III. He comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. 2 Thess. 1:10. Reader, are you a saint? Are you one of those in whom Jesus shall be glorified in that day? Are you one of those who shall admire him then? Ah! do you glorify him now? Do you admire him now? Or do you despise and reject him? All his saints admire him; do you admire him too? Angels praise him; do you praise him too? The Father delights in him; do you delight in him also? He is the Father's beloved; is he your beloved too? Oh "kiss

the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when once his wrath is kindled but a little."

IV. He comes to judge the world in righteousness. Ps. 96:13. He is now the Saviour; but he shall then be the Judge;—he is now upon the mercy-seat; he shall then be on the throne—the great white throne, before which the living and the dead, the small and great, shall stand. His judgment shall be just and wise. It shall be impartial and unchangeable. His sentences shall never be reversed or altered throughout eternity! All nations, and kindreds, and tongues shall be summoned to his bar. You shall be there. You, who are now reading these lines, and thinking perhaps but little of that awful day! How will you answer the summons? How will you give in your account? Do you not tremble? Does unforgiven sin fill you with alarm? Then look to Jesus now! Look, and be forgiven! Look, and be saved for ever!

V. He comes to make all things new. Rev. 21:5. He comes as the second Adam, to undo ail that the first Adam did. He comes to repeal and remove the curse to which creation has been subjected by the fall. We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.³ Reader! if all things are to be made new, your heart must also be made new. There must be a new creation within you, if you would possess or enjoy the new creation without you. There must be the new heart before you can sing the new song. Have you been renewed? Have aid things passed away? If not, you are as yet without any hope of, or meetness for the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away? Oh hear the words of Jesus! "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed." Then thou shalt walk with him in white,

and shalt eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

VI. He comes to bind Satan. Rev. 20:1–3. As the woman's promised seed he comes to bruise and crush the serpent's head. In this his saints rejoice. But, Reader, have you a share in that rejoicing? Are Christ's triumphs your triumphs? Are the victories of the Lamb your victories? Or, are you of the serpent's seed, who are all in that day to share its doom? If you are now in Satan's ranks, then your overthrow and perdition are certain. Oh quit these ranks for ever! Join the Captain of our salvation. Take up your cross and follow him. Then the conquests of Jesus shall be your conquests; and the spoils of Jesus shall be your spoils!

VII. He comes to the marriage supper. Rev. 19:7–9. He is the bridegroom. He is now "tarrying." He will not tarry long. He will soon be here, and the cry will be raised—Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Reader, are you ready? Have you oil in your vessels? Are your loins girt about, and your lamps burning? Have you the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints? Oh be warned, lest you be a foolish virgin! lest you should have no wedding garment! lest, ere you seek admittance, the door be shut. Oh remember, blessed are they that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.²

VIII. He comes to "sit upon the throne of his glory." Matt. 19:28. "He shall judge among the nations." He shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.⁴ He is to be the true Solomon—the Prince of Peace. All things are to be put under his feet. He is to reign in righteousness.⁶ His kingdom and his sceptre are a kingdom and a sceptre of righteousness. The kingdoms of this world

shall become his one glorious kingdom; and the crowns of earth be placed upon the head of Him who alone is worthy.

But into that kingdom nothing that defileth shall enter. Rev. 21:27. Respecting it he himself declared, "Verily verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3. READER! ARE YOU BORN AGAIN? If not, then the gates of that kingdom are closed against you. You cannot enter there. Oh "REPENT! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. 4:17. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. It is but a little, and you shall hear the last trumpet sound. It is but a little, and it shall be said to you, "Come to judgment, come away." He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

THE SINNER'S PLEDGE AND PLEA FOR EVERY BLESSING

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—ROM. 8:32.

THE apostle here first states a fact; and then he tells us what that fact warrants us to expect from God. He reminds us of what God has done, and then infers from this what God will do, "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" therefore there is nothing that he will deny us; "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Now God had every reason to spare his Son, and none to induce him to deliver him up. For, 1. He was the object of the Father's infinite and unutterable love. "The Father loveth the Son." "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."² And whom does an earthly father spare most, but his best beloved child? Whom is he most unwilling to deliver up to pain or infamy, but the son of his affections? And is not this unwillingness in proportion to the love he bears him? The more that he delights in him, the more does he desire to spare him. If such then be the feeling in the narrow frozen selfish soul of man, what must it be in the infinite bosom of the infinite God? Which of all the beings in the universe would he have most wished to spare; which of them all would he be most reluctant to deliver up? The Son of his love! That Son in whom his "soul delighted;"⁴—that Son whom he loved infinitely more than all the angels of heaven. 2. He was infinitely worthy of all that infinite love. He was worthy of the love of all creatures, worthy of the love of all angels, worthy of the love of God! Of no other being can it be said that it is worthy of the love of God, far less that it is infinitely worthy of it. Yet so it was with the Son; for in him there was infinite glory, infinite excellence, infinite beauty, infinite perfection. In him there was an infinitely worthy object for the whole infinite love of the eternal Father. 3. He loved the Father with an infinite love; and what more painful or bitter to a father than to part with a child that loves him tenderly, and clings to him fondly, and cannot bear the thought of separation? Here was another reason why the Father might have

spared the Son. 4. We had no claim upon God for such a gift as this. In truth we had no claim upon him for any gift at all. Even unfallen creatures cannot properly be said to have a claim upon God for his blessings, for what he gives to them even, he bestows of his free bounty. Much less then can fallen beings have any claims upon him. Even for his commonest mercies we have none. Even for a morsel of food or a drop of cold water we have none,—no claim at all! Our only claim is for wrath, for punishment, for hell! This is our only claim, as sinners; what possible claim then could we have for the gift of his own Son! Yet it was for those who had no claim upon him for anything but an eternal hell, that he delivered up his Son! Had it been for angels who had never sinned, it would not have been so marvellous. But for us!—for sinners, for enemies, for those who hated him,—how passing wonderful! We might conceive some reasons why he should give him for angels, but what reason can be imagined why he should part with him for us! The richest gift for the unworthiest of all! And then not only undeserved by us; but unsought, undesired, uncared for; nay, hated and spurned!2

Truly the Father had every conceivable reason to spare his Son, and none that we could have imagined for delivering him up. Yet all this did not move him to withhold the gift. "He spared him not."

And why does the apostle use the word "spare" in speaking of his gift? To show us it was an infinite sacrifice that he was consenting to make;—to teach us that it was no light, no trivial thing; the occasion of no light, no trivial emotion in the Father's bosom;—to imply that (to speak after the manner of men) it cost him an infinite struggle to part with such a Son! As if he would say that had it been possible he would far rather have spared him; far rather have allowed the cup to pass from him, or never put that cup into his hands at all. And to bring out this idea more strongly, the apostle adds, "delivered him

up," that is, he delivered him up as the judge does the criminal; handed him over as a victim to his relentless foes. He took him out of his bosom, where he had dwelt from eternity, and gave him over to the disposal of cruel enemies. How amazing! He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all! He freely consented to the mighty, the Infinite sacrifice!

And why was it that these weighty reasons availed nothing to stay his purpose? Why was it that the Father spared not his Son? That Son himself answers the question, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This was the one reason which prevailed against all those manifold and infinitely weighty reasons for sparing the Son. Though he was infinitely beloved of the Father,—though he was infinitely worthy of all the Father's love,—though he infinitely loved him in return, and had done nothing to deserve anything but love,—though he had no claim upon God for such a gift; yet God so loved the world that he gave his Son! He spared not him that he might spare us,—he delivered up him that he might not deliver up us,—he parted with him that he might not part with us,—he gave him up to the curse, that he might obtain for us the blessing,—he poured on him the vials of his infinite wrath, that he might pour out on us the full measure of his infinite love.

Yes, it was for us that he delivered him up! It was that he might take our place and bear our sins, that the Father sent the Son? And we know that the Son of God has come and stood in our place. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "He has finished transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness."³ He was made flesh and dwelt among us. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. He took not merely our nature, becoming bone of our bone,

and flesh of our flesh, but our place, our room, our state, our legal responsibilities. He is not simply a saviour; but a saviour as being a sacrifice, a substitute, a surety. Hence in the salvation of a soul, there is a complete exchange between the sinner and the Saviour.

He takes all that belongs to us as sinners, and gives us in exchange all that belongs to himself as the Father's holy and well-beloved Son. He takes from us all our sin, all our guilt, all our unworthiness, and gives us in exchange all his infinite righteousness, and innocence, and worthiness in the Father's eyes. He transfers to us what belongs to himself. Thus "He is made unto us righteousness;" and thus we are "made accepted in the beloved." "As by one man's disobedience many were sinners, so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous."6

It was for this very end that the Father spared him not. It was to bring about this transference, this complete exchange, that he delivered him up for us all. He placed him in our room, that he might place us in his. He treated him as we deserved to be treated, in order that he might treat us as he deserved to be treated. He dealt with him as a sinner, in order that he might deal with us as righteous,—perfectly, yea infinitely righteous. He inflicted on him all that should have been inflicted on us, in order that he might bestow upon us all that should be bestowed on him. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He made him to be sin for us; who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."2

And this exchange is free to all! It is infinitely glorious, yet it is entirely free,—free to every man as a sinner, just as he is, just as he stands! It is without money and without price. It takes nothing for granted, but that we need it. It requires neither price nor preparation, nor prerequisite on our part. It is absolutely and

altogether free. And herein are the glad tidings of great joy comprised. God addresses each of us, and asks us to consent to this exchange. This is all. He does not ask us to pay for it, or to endeavour to deserve it, or to qualify ourselves for receiving it; but just that we should consent to it—that we should "submit ourselves to the righteousness of God." All he asks is to allow him to clothe us with the righteousness of his Son: to take away our filthy raiment and clothe us with the fine linen clean and white!

Reader! are not these "good tidings of great joy"? Could anything be more fitted to gladden the heart of a sinner who knows that ere long he must stand before God in judgment, and has nothing about him but unrighteousness and desert of hell? And these tidings are as true as they are glad. If then you are not comforted or gladdened by them, it must be because you receive them not—because you will not consent to this blessed exchange. It is not because your sins are too many or too great to be forgiven; it is not because your heart is too hard to be softened, or your nature too corrupt to be renewed;—it is just because you put away from you the message of peace, and are too proud to consent to be freely forgiven. "I would have gathered you," says Christ weeping over Jerusalem, but "ye would not." And so it is still. "I would; but ye would not," is the perdition of those who neglect the great salvation.

Reader! The most high God, the God of heaven and earth, this day renews his entreaties to you. He proposes to you the exchange of which I speak. He comes to you and says, "Wilt thou consent to have my Son for thy substitute? Wilt thou consent to part with all that is thine own, and take in exchange all that is his? Wilt thou part with thine own fancied claims, and take as a substitute for these the claims of Jesus? In approaching me in prayer, wilt thou take his claims instead of thine own? In looking forward to the judgment-

seat, wilt thou take his claims instead of thine own? In all thy transactions with me, wilt thou consent to be treated upon the ground of his merits and not thine own? Art thou willing, that in dealing with thee I should remember what he has done, and not what thou hast done, or can do? I am willing that this should be the footing on which we are henceforward to stand, and that this should be the manner of our dealings together; art thou willing? If thou art willing, then all is well. Henceforth we meet on holy ground; henceforth I deal with thee as I deal with Christ; I count thee righteous as he is righteous, and I treat thee, love thee, listen to thee, delight over thee as such. But if thou wilt not consent to this exchange; if thou clingest to thine own claims either in part or in whole; if thou wilt not be wholly represented by Christ, and looked upon by me in him, and not in thyself; then thou must reap as thou art sowing; thou must be judged according to thine own standard, and take thy stand at the judgment seat in thine own name and not in his, and be dealt with to the uttermost according to thine own deservings, and receive the eternal wrath to which alone thou hast any claim."

Reader! Is not a proposal like this a most gracious and blessed one for you, as a child of wrath? Could any exchange be fairer or more profitable? Why do you hesitate, as if you stood in doubt as to its fairness? Why delay, as if you thought it unnecessary? Ah! if such a proposal were made in heaven to the unfallen spirits above, would not the highest archangel round the throne rejoice to embrace it? Is there an angel there that would not welcome such an exchange? They are sinless and righteous, no doubt, and live under God's perpetual smile; yet their righteousness is but that of a creature at the best. How gladly then would they put off their own created righteousness, that they might be clothed with the uncreated righteousness of God! How eagerly would they part with their own creature beauty,

however glorious and dazzling, that they might shine in the infinite uncreated beauty of God's eternal Son? And shall a sinner be loath to part with his polluted raiment, his vile unrighteousness, that he may receive in return such an infinitely perfect righteousness, such an infinitely glorious garment, as that on which the Father gazes with delight unutterable?

But is the exchange really so free? It is. And is it free to me as I am? Yes, just as thou art. All things are ready, come then to the feast. "But my sins, my sins, so aggravated, so innumerable; are these no hindrance?" None. If thy sins were not great, thou wouldst not need such a righteousness; and the greater thy sins are, the greater thy need for parting with them without delay. "But my hardness of heart, my want of love, my imperfect convictions of sin, my dreadful insensibility, are these not reasons for doubting, and must I not get these in some measure removed before I can venture to welcome the proposed exchange?" What! must you have a soft heart, a holy nature, and deep repentance, before coming to the Saviour? Is the Holy Spirit to give you these in order that you may have some right or warrant to go to him? Are you not desiring these in order that you may go to him as something better than a wretched, hard-hearted, wrath-deserving sinner? Are you not wishing for some claims of your own to add to those of Christ, or to be your own plea in asking God to confer Christ's claims upon you? If you are utterly destitute of such feelings as you desire, then all you can say is, just that you are utterly destitute of any claim of your own at all. And is not that the point to which God wishes you to come? Is not that the very state of soul which makes the claims of Jesus appear infinitely desirable?

Reader! Listen to God's loving proposals and entreaties. Oh! defer not to make so glorious an exchange. It is freely set before you. If you have it not, it is because you reject it. It is not because God would not

consent, but because you would not. God says, "whosoever will;" and could any proposal be more freely, more graciously made; or could any proposal be more exactly suitable to you? "Whosoever will," is enough to answer all your objections, and to remove all your fears!

Such, reader, is the fact which the apostle states; now, let us observe how he reasons from it. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Such is the inference which the apostle draws from the simple fact to which he had alluded! And can any reasoning be more forcible or conclusive? He that has already given the greater gift, will he deny the less? He that has already given us the whole ocean, will he refuse us a single drop? He that has given us unfathomable mines of gold, will he deny us a single particle? He that has given us the full sun in the firmament, will he deny us a solitary beam? Will the God that has already parted with his richest and most precious gifts, refuse us his lesser ones? Will he who has given his own Son, deny us any thing? Is such a thing possible? Is it conceivable? Would it not be the greatest of all imaginable contradictions? The simple fact then, that God has given his Son, is of itself, and by itself, perfectly sufficient to warrant our absolute and unlimited confidence in God; so that it seems a thing impossible and incredible, that a sinner understanding and believing that simple fact, could have any thing less than the apostle's confidence.

1. The infinitely weighty reasons mentioned at the beginning, why God might have been expected to spare his Son, do not exist in this latter case. These reasons stood in the way of God's giving his Son; but they do not stand in the way of his giving us anything else. Now, if he gave his Son, his unspeakable gift, when there were so many reasons against it, will he withhold his lesser gifts, when there are

none of these reasons at all in the way? Impossible. "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

2. It cost him much to part with his Son; it costs him nothing to give every other blessing. He grudges not, but delights to bestow them. He is weary of withholding, but never weary of giving. Now, if he freely parted with what cost him such an infinite sacrifice, will he refuse us what costs him nothing but the delight of giving? He delights to give us his Holy Spirit. He delights to quicken us, to renew us, to sanctify us, to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. It costs him nothing to do all that. Will he then refuse us his Spirit? Will he refuse to make us holy? Will he need many arguments to persuade him to do so? Impossible! for he has already given his Son! and "how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

3. He gave his Son unasked and undesired by us. We did not ask him to give his Son. Nay, we cared nothing about such a gift. We cared nothing about God or his favour at all. He might justly have said, "They do not want to be saved. Why should I save them? They do not want eternal life; they do not want pardon, or reconciliation, or deliverance from sin. Why should I be at such a cost to obtain these blessings for them? Why should I part with my well-beloved Son for the sake of sinners who hate me and my gifts, who have never asked, never desired any such blessings; nay, who hate and scorn them?" God might well have said so; but his thoughts were not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways, and therefore, though we desired nothing of him, he gave his Son, his unspeakable gift! And having given us such a gift unsought, undesired, will he deny us any thing when we apply for it? In this light, how brightly does that glorious promise beam which came from the lips of the Son himself, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find!" And was it not in this very

way that he taught us to reason, when he said to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."²

4. When he gave his Son, there was no intercessor to plead for us; no name that could have been used to prevail with him to do so; yet he spared not his Son! What, then, will he not give us, now that we can go to him and plead the beloved name of the beloved Son? What is there that he can refuse, when we have that Son for an intercessor at his right hand above?

5. When he gave his Son for us, he saw nothing in us but sin; yet he did not refuse his unspeakable gift. Is it possible, then, that we can be denied anything when we appear before him in the righteousness of his Son? If our unrighteousness did not prevent him delivering up his Son, what is there that we may not expect when he looks upon us as altogether righteous in him?

6. The fact of our being sinners did not hinder him from freely giving his own Son; is it possible, then, that the fact of our being sinners now will lead him to refuse his other blessings? Our sinfulness was no barrier in the one case, can it be so in the other? If our guilt was a sufficient reason for refusing us any gift, then surely it should have hindered him from giving us his richest and most glorious gift; but if it was for us, when we were ungodly, that Christ was given—if it was when we were enemies and rebels that the Father delivered up his Son for us—if all our ungodliness, and enmity, and rebellion, did not keep back "the unspeakable gift," is it conceivable that any or all of these together can keep back his lesser gifts?

God's gift of his Son is thus the pledge, the sure and infinite pledge of every other gift; a pledge so sure and so infinite as to make it the

greatest of all impossibilities that he should bestow the one and deny the other; a pledge thrown down freely to sinners, and which, therefore, every one who hears of it may take up and go at once with it to God just as he is, in the assured confidence, that he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will with him also freely give us all things. This simple fact, that God has not spared his own Son, is of itself sufficient to assure us of every thing. What more do we need to call forth the most unbounded confidence towards God? What greater or surer pledge could God give us; and if this is not enough of itself to awaken the sinner's confidence, what is there in heaven or earth that can do it? Is there not in that simple, but infinitely glorious fact, a foundation laid, broad enough, and deep enough, to sustain the full confidence of the chief of sinners? Can anything be added to it so as to make it more secure or suitable for the guiltiest of the human race to build upon? Can anything in us, or done by us, or felt by us, or wrought in us, make it more sufficient or suitable? If, then, we can hear of it, and yet feel no confidence or assurance, is it not plain that we do not fully understand its meaning, or appreciate its glorious sufficiency? There must be some mistake in our minds about the matter, if we can admit the fact here stated, and yet not draw the apostle's conclusion. That fact of itself is sufficient to dispel every doubt and banish every fear. That God, who spared not his Son, is surely a being whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, and whose ways are not as our ways, and to whom, therefore, however guilty, however worthless, we may come "boldly," nothing doubting. Nay, to come with less than boldness must be sin, for it is just telling him that his gift of his Son is not sufficient to give you confidence, without some addition, which you hope in due time he will confer on you, or which you may work out for yourself.

But you will say, it was an inspired apostle that reasoned in this way, and his example is not exactly suited to your case. This might do for

him, but you do not think it is enough for you. But, let me ask, does he speak here as an apostle, or simply as a sinner? Does he say, I am an apostle, therefore God will deny me nothing? No. Though he was the chief among the apostles, he reasons as the chief of sinners—as one who knew nothing in himself, nothing in the whole world to give him confidence, but just the fact that God spared not his own Son. He reasons from a fact which is as open to you as it was to him. He rested his confidence on a truth which is the same to you or any sinner, as it was to him. Why not then draw the same conclusion, and with the triumphant confidence he did?

But you will say, this way of reasoning may be right for advanced Christians, but it does not suit my case, who cannot venture to call myself a Christian yet, who am nothing but a sinner. Well, but was it as a saint or as a sinner that Paul reasoned thus? Did he say, because I am an advanced saint, therefore God will freely give me all things? No; he did not rest his confidence on the fact of his being a saint, but simply on the fact that God did not spare his Son! Go thou and do likewise.

But you will say, Oh! if I were but conscious of the Holy Spirit's work in me, I would have no hesitation in reasoning thus; but till then it would be presumption in me to do so. Now I know, that it is the Holy Spirit that alone can teach and enlighten you, and that, if he do not show you the things of Christ, my showing will be vain. But remember that the Spirit works, not by giving something new in yourself as a ground of confidence, but by showing you the fulness and excellence of the Father's gift, as an infinitely sufficient ground of confidence for the chief of sinners. The Holy Spirit does not show you something good in yourself to rest on or take peace from, but he leads your eye to the Divine resting-place for weary souls. And remember Paul did not say, "He who has given me his Holy Spirit

will not refuse me anything;" but "he who spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" It was the Father's gift of Christ, and not his gift of the Holy Spirit that the apostle built upon; and why should not you go, and, just as you are, do the same?

But you will say, Oh! I have no evidences of grace, no deep convictions of sin, no true repentance, nothing but a hard heart, a blind understanding, a seared conscience, a stupid and insensible soul. Well, but was it because he had got all these evidences that you desire, that the apostle exclaimed so boldly, "how shall he not freely give us all things?" No, he did not get his confidence from these, but from the simple fact, that God spared not his own Son. Go then with all your hardness, and deadness, and coldness; go just as you are, and take refuge in the same cleft of the rock in which the apostle found shelter for himself. It is as free to you as to him; it is us free to you this moment, as it ever will or can be.

But you will say, It may be so, but the state of my soul is so bad, my heart so hard and insensible. I am altogether so carnal, sold under sin, that I often despond, and think it impossible that even God can do such a mighty work in me, or effect such a glorious change. Ah! and is it thus you reason, with regard either to the power or the willingness of that God who has already given his own Son? Has he given his Son, and do you think, after that, it is too much to hope that he will change your heart? Is the renewing of a single soul a greater work or wonder than the gift of his Son? Give up such dishonouring doubts. Is anything too hard for the God that has parted with Christ? Is anything too much for the love of him who spared not his Son? Has he given his Son, and will he refuse his Holy Spirit? Has he given his Son, and will he refuse to renew you in the spirit of your mind?

Oh! think of this! Ponder the apostle's glorious and resistless argument. Remember that the fact of your being lost, worthless, ungodly, hard-hearted, an enemy, a rebel, did not hinder him from giving his Son. And if they did not hinder that, will they hinder anything? Nay, so far from these being reasons against God's sending Christ, they were the very reasons that led him to send him to save us. How perverse then, how unkind, to suppose that he will take advantage of your guilt or enmity now, to turn you away from the mercy-seat, and put your confidence to shame! Can any amount or any kind of unworthiness in you, make it less true that God spared not his own Son? So long, then, as that simple fact remains the same, you are not merely warranted, but bound to come to God with confidence, whatever may be the extent of your guilt, or the depravity of your heart.

Two things then are plain from the apostle's words, first, that we cannot ask too confidently; and, secondly, that we cannot ask too much.

First, We cannot ask too confidently, for our boldness comes from our knowledge of a fact, of whose certainty there can be no doubt. That fact properly understood, is enough to assure us of everything. This simple fact, if it be sufficient to assure you of anything, is sufficient to assure you of everything. Nothing less than this could have given you the shadow of a hope, and nothing more than this is needed to give you the most perfect confidence. To have less than this full confidence, is just to say, that God has given us the greater gift, but grudges us the lesser. To have less is to dishonour God, and to slight his gift. It is just saying, that this pledge is not enough for you: that the love implied in this gift is not sufficient for you to rest on, without some inward pledge for which you are waiting! Less than this confidence then must be presumption on your part; it must be

self-righteousness and pride. This is the only way in which your doubts and suspicions can be accounted for. For are you not reversing the apostle's argument, and saying, that though God has not spared his Son, but delivered him up, yet you are not sure whether he will, notwithstanding this, give you anything?

Secondly, We cannot ask too much. It is not possible to expect too much from one who has already freely bestowed such a glorious gift. The whole universe is nothing in comparison with this. Nay all spiritual blessings are as nothing when compared with this infinite gift; so that it is not possible for us to desire too much, or to ask too much so long as we know that the God of whom we are asking, is he who spared not his own Son. Is anything too hard for him? Is anything too much for him? Is anything, therefore, too great or too glorious for you to ask and to expect at his hands? The conclusion then, to which we are brought in regard to this whole matter, is just that in which the apostle in another place sums up his argument, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated through the vail, that is, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Here, then, is the sinner's hope, the sinner's welcome, and the sinner's peace! Come, sinner, come! Come, wanderer, come! There is room enough for you in the heart of him who spared not his own Son. It is an infinite heart, a heart whose dimensions are altogether boundless, and can take in millions such as you! It is to the embrace of the everlasting arms that we invite you to hasten, and their infinite circle is wide enough to compass myriads such as you! The bosom on which we ask you to recline, is that bosom of love out of which the

eternal Son came forth, as the Father's gift to man, and could there be any pillow softer or safer on which to lay your weary head? Return then, thou banished one,—thou "captive exile," to thy Father's house! Come, lost one, come! Come now; come just as you are; come without price or preparation. For Father, Son, and Spirit unite in proclaiming, "him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out."³

SALVATION TO THE UTMOST

"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."—HEB. 7:25.

IT is of Jesus, the great High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, that these words are spoken. It is He who is the "Surety of the better covenant." It is He who hath the "unchangeable priesthood."² It is He who having "offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." He therefore is a Saviour to the uttermost; and this not only because of what he did on earth for the putting away of sin, but because of what he is now doing in heaven as an ever-living intercessor, carrying into effect that glorious work which he completed on the cross. It is in the knowledge of this Saviour that we have eternal life. Let us then inquire what God has taught us in these words concerning him. And may the Holy Spirit testify of him to us, enlightening the eyes of our understanding, that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God!

I. Christ is a Saviour. "He is able to save." It was on this account that he is described by the prophet Isaiah, as "mighty to save;" and for this he was named JESUS, because "he saves his people from their sins." This was the purpose for which he was sent;—"the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." This was the errand which he fulfilled,—"the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." It was for this that he spoke to the people when on earth,—"these things I say that ye might be saved." For this he was born, for this he lived, for this he died, for this he rose again, for this he ascended up on high,—"Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour." And from what does he save? He saves from sin, from guilt, from wrath, from the curse, from a present evil world, from hell, from Satan himself. From all these he is a Saviour, a complete Saviour, the only Saviour, a Saviour not for those who deserve salvation, but for those who need it.

But how is he thus "able to save"? (1.) Because he is GOD—the Lord God Almighty, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. All authority and dominion are his; all power either to save or to destroy. (2.) He is "able to save," because he is the GOD-MAN, God manifest in the flesh, Immanuel, God with us; and thus he has all power, created and uncreated, human and divine, finite and infinite, centred in himself. Who could be more able to be a Saviour than he who is God? and who could be more suitable to be our Saviour than he who is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, our kinsman, our brother? (3.) He is "able to save," because of the WORK which he has done, by coming into our place, taking upon him our responsibilities, and bearing our sins. It was not mere power, though infinite, that could save us. It must be power put forth in a righteous way. And until there was a righteous way opened up for its exercise, it could do nothing for our salvation. Therefore it is in his work that his great power and strength as the Saviour may be said to lie; for

had there been no sacrifice or atonement, not even an infinite arm could have saved us. As long as infinite righteousness was against us, it was in vain though infinite power were for us. But Christ's atoning work has brought infinite power, and righteousness, and holiness, as well as infinite love and grace, all over to the same side. None of these are against us now. Our salvation is in full accordance with them all. Through the "blood of his cross" he has made reconciliation for iniquity, and on that cross provided a place where God and the sinner may meet in peace. He has taken out of the way that which hindered God from having any dealings with us; and thus it is now as righteous and glorifying a thing in God to pardon, as before it was to punish transgressors. He has magnified the law and made it honourable, so that the dishonour we had done to that law by our disobedience, is far more than made up for by the glory which he has put upon it through his perfect and Divine obedience. Christ's work is thus a full treasure-house of every thing the sinner can need or desire. In it there is full provision for pardon, for cleansing, for renewing, for eternal life, for holiness, for complete restoration to the image, the character, the kingdom of God, and to every blessing included in the term salvation, that is, to the complete reversal of and deliverance from every thing which made us lost, and the full bestowal of every blessing from the hand of God, which a saved condition can possibly imply, from the lowest degree of mere deliverance from hell, up to the highest glories of which a created being can be heir. (4.) He is "able to save," because of the offices he sustains. As a priest he saves from sin; as a mediator he brings us to God; as an intercessor he pleads our cause; as the shepherd and bishop of souls he seeks and saves the lost, as well as watches over them when found; as Messiah he anoints us with the Holy Spirit, bestowing gifts on men, even on the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them; as a prophet he teaches the ignorant, and makes the foolish wise unto salvation; as the captain of our salvation

he fights our battles and leads the array against our enemies; as a king he rules in us and over us, making us more than conquerors over earth and hell,—over the power of this ensnaring flesh, with all its deadly lusts, which war against the soul,—over this gay seducing world, with all its pomp, and pride, and bravery,—over principalities and powers, and all the banded legions of the prince of darkness.

II. Christ is a Saviour to the uttermost. He is not only able to save, but infinitely able. It is the ability of Omnipotence. It is the ability of one who has all power in heaven, in earth, in hell. It is the ability of one who has shed infinitely precious blood, who has paid an infinitely precious ransom, who has laid down an infinitely precious life, in order that there might be salvation to the uttermost. It is the ability of one who has accomplished an infinitely glorious work, and thereby made infinite provision for every thing that sinners could require. It is the ability of one who has not only mercy and grace upon his side, but righteousness, holiness, and truth. Every infinite perfection is now upon the side of salvation. A Saviour's death did this. Before that, they were against it. Nothing therefore can be beyond the reach of a Saviour such as this. No sinner upon earth, no sinner on this side of hell, can be beyond his power to save. His salvation goes to the very uttermost extremity of human ruin, to "the very ends of the earth," up to the very gate of hell.

(1.) This salvation is "to the uttermost" with respect to a sinner's state and character. It goes to the very extremity of ruin and death. There is no degree of guilt for which it has not provided a full pardon. There are no sins too many,—there is no burden too heavy for a salvation like this. Though our sins be truly infinite in number; though they be more than the hairs of our head, or the sands on the sea-shore, or the drops of the ocean, or the leaves of the forest, or the stars of heaven, or all of these multiplied together, yet still this

salvation goes infinitely above and beyond them all. Though they be awfully heinous and aggravated, like scarlet or crimson, unspeakably abominable and loathsome, nay, black as hell, yet still this salvation goes far beyond them. Nor can any sinner be too vile and polluted to, be saved. He may be sunk deepest of all in the horrible pit and the miry clay; his soul may be a cage of unclean birds, hateful and filthy beyond human conception, yet still there is salvation for him here. Here is blood even to cleanse such a soul, nay, to make it whiter than the snow. No soul is too vile for Jesus to cleanse. Nor can any soul be too dead for Jesus to quicken. They may be lying in the deepest grave of trespasses and sins, yet the arm of Jesus can reach down to them and pluck them from it. The power of Jesus can awaken the soul that is sunk in the deepest slumbers of spiritual death.² Let no one then say, My soul is so dead, that I despair of its ever being quickened. Here is life for the deadeast; life to the uttermost. No degree of death is beyond the power of Him who is the resurrection and the life. To speak thus despondingly of your deadness is not humility, but presumption. It is limiting the power and grace of Jesus. It is saying that he is not able to save to the uttermost,—that there are some states of death beyond his reach! Neither is there any heart too hard for Jesus to soften. It matters not how hard it be. It may be like iron, that nothing will break; it may be like adamant, that nothing will melt. It may be both of these together, or far more so than any figure can give you the least idea of. But still it is not too hard for Him. Neither is there any soul too needy, too poor, too full of wants for Him. It matters not how manifold be the wants, how deep the poverty, how great the need. Still he is able to save to the uttermost; and that surely is enough to assure the very neediest that there is abundant supply for them. His fulness is the fulness of God, and that is infinite. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." And he himself thus graciously addresses the needy soul, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be

rich." None are too empty for Jesus to fill; and that in no scanty measure, but even to overflowing; "he that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." Neither is there any soul too miserable for Him to make perfectly blessed. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He has peace for the most troubled, rest for the weariest, light for the darkest, joy for the most sorrowful, calm for the most tempest-tost, perfect blessedness for the most wretched of all! He gives beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Truly he is a Saviour to the uttermost!

Take your station on the highest eminence of earth, which commands the widest prospect that man's eye can reach. Look around on this fallen earth. Look backward on the condition of sin and wretchedness in which its millions have been involved for these six thousand years; look forward and conceive the guilt in which it is yet to be more fearfully sunk ere the day of its glory come. Look on every side of you in this present generation. See the pollution, the guilt, the abominations, the enormities with which it is flooded. Take a wider circle, and conceive what lie beyond these,—the crimes, the atrocities, perpetrated in secret, unseen by the eye of man, deeds done in darkness, and fit only to be named in darkness,—everything conceivable on this side of hell. Take a yet wider circle, and imagine, if that be possible, how much more than all that, God's eye discerns, and God's soul abhors in what has been done and is yet doing on the surface of this fallen earth. Take the very widest possible circle of human guilt, the deepest mire of mortal sin; and imagine, in addition to these, all possible difficulties and hindrances; still beyond that widest circle,—yea, infinitely beyond the farthest that man's guilt has compassed, is the power of Jesus to save! For his is salvation to the uttermost; his is the salvation of God. The sinner may indeed have gone to the very extremity of guilt,—to the very ends of the earth in

his wanderings from God. Yea, he may have gone to the very gates of hell, and be knocking for admittance there. He may be a brand already set on fire of hell; yet even from thence the arm and power of Jesus can pluck him; even from the gates of hell can the outstretched hand of Jesus save!

(2.) This salvation is to the uttermost in respect to the completeness of the salvation. It is a complete deliverance that Jesus brings to the soul. The first thing he does is to justify the sinner; and this he does at once and entirely, so soon as we believe in his name. Our acceptance with the Father, through his beloved Son, is a perfect and immediate acceptance, without any reserve. It is not partially or by halves, that he forgives. He forgives fully, and without limitation; so that not so much as one sin remains unpardoned. He forgives not merely until seven times, or until seventy times seven, or even until ten thousand times ten thousand, but without number or bound. Whether our sins be known or unknown, felt or unfelt, remembered or forgotten, he freely forgives all to the uttermost. And as he forgives entirely, so he sanctifies wholly. Whatever be the hindrances or the enemies in our way, he will perfect that which he begins. Whatever have been our past lives, the sins or crimes of manhood, still he saves "to the uttermost," so as entirely to undo the evil of our former ways, and wash away the pollution of our former sins. Hence the salvation of one sinner is as complete as that of another, though the former may have lived much longer, and gone far deeper into sin than the latter. The salvation of Rahab the harlot was as complete as that of Joshua, her deliverer; nor would her long life of sin make her peace less perfect or secure than his, though perhaps he had known the Lord from his youth. The salvation of Manasseh, whose sins, both in their own enormity, and by their aggravations, seem absolutely without a parallel, was as complete as that of his godly father Hezekiah, or his inspired teacher Isaiah. The salvation of Paul,

the blasphemer and persecutor, was not less complete than that of Timothy, who from his youth had sought after God. Nothing but an infinite salvation could have reached the case of such vile transgressors; but when it did reach them, it left nothing imperfect. It purged their consciences and cleansed their souls from guilt, even such as theirs. It brought them a perfect, not a partial or doubtful peace. It gave them as complete an assurance of God's love, and as sure a consciousness of reconciliation with him, as it could give to those whose past life had been stained with no such outward abominations. It preserved unruffled the steadfast calm of the soul, even in the full remembrance of all the enormities of other days. Oh, what a salvation must this be, that could accomplish all this so perfectly, even for the chief of sinners!

And then, all this is eternal. It is not a temporary salvation; neither is it one that can change or give way hereafter. No. It is eternally secure; for he who commenced it, ever liveth to maintain and perpetuate it. He preserves each saved soul, by his mighty power, unto his coming, that then he may present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Nay, their very dust is dear to him. Their body as well as their soul he saves, raising it up and making it like unto his own glorious body, that he may place them altogether perfect, completely saved; upon his throne in the day when he returns to reign. And throughout eternity these saved ones remain as trophies of a Saviour's grace and power; an undecaying memorial of the redeeming love of him who "is able to save to the uttermost." No stain of former sin can reappear upon their spotless raiment; nor can all the infinite abomination of their former ways prevent them from shining in their perfect brightness as the sons of light—it may be, the most resplendent of all! No returning mists of earth can ever again overcast their everlasting sunshine, or cloud the pure azure of their sky. No remembrance of guilt can ever draw one

darkening shadow over their brow of light. No consciousness that they are the very sinners who were once in the horrible pit and in the miry clay, can check their notes of joy, or do aught but add to the gladness as well as the loudness of the new song they sing. How truly is all this "salvation to the uttermost"—salvation that knows no bound—no end!

III. They that come unto Christ are saved.—He saves those who come unto God by him, or who come unto himself, for both statements are common in Scripture. Those whom he saves are those who come unto the Father through him as the way, who consent to take him as the way to God; to recognise him as "the way, the truth, and the life"—the new and living way into the presence of God. He saves none else. Not but that he has the power to save millions more, even of those who refuse to come; yet still he saves none who remain away. Their remaining away, their refusing to come unto the Father through him, seals their condemnation. To save such would be to proclaim his own work unnecessary, to declare that he had died in vain. Therefore he saves none who reject him as their Saviour; he leaves them to die in their sins. He saves none who persist in coming to God by ways of their own, who seek life by methods of their own, who try to obtain pardon by doings of their own. He saves none who stand afar off, and turn away from God. None of these he saves, so long as they remain such. It is the coming ones that he saves; those who consent to take him and him only as the access into the holiest—the way unto the Father. Whosoever then persists in taking his own way of coming to God, cannot be saved. Whosoever comes without this Mediator or chooses another, cannot be saved. It is our taking him as the appointed way to God, and drawing near by that way, that saves us!

The special object of the apostle in making this statement seems to be to show that Christ is so infinitely able to save, that none can possibly bring to him a case too desperate—a case beyond his skill and power to cure. Such is his power, that if sinners will only bring the case to him, however helpless it may seem, still it must yield to his touch. All who will only put their case into his hands will find in him an infinitely sufficient Saviour. And yet how many are seeking to save themselves, before they come to him to be saved! How many refuse to come as they are, and try to do something, however little, in the way of saving themselves, before they count themselves entitled to come to him for the rest. How many think they must begin the work, and then come to him to end it. They think it would be presumption to bring a soul so diseased as theirs, a heart so hard and dead as theirs. They count it humility to stay away, or at least to come doubting and fearing. They do not see that it is not humility but presumption to stay away, or to come doubting, as if he to whom they were coming were either unable or unwilling to receive and save them.

Whosoever thou art then, only COME, and thou shalt be saved. Come unto God by him! Whatever be your sin, only come! Whatever be your unworthiness, only come! Whatever be your hardness of heart, only come! Whatever be the peculiarity of your case, only come! Bring your oppressed soul to him! Bring your hard heart to him! Bring your troubled conscience to him! Do not stand afar off. Do not try to be your own physician. Do not try to make yourself better before you come. In the very state in which this message finds you, come! There is infinite fulness in him. There is infinite provision for you in that fulness. There is infinite love in him. There is infinite willingness to save you. He sends you this message; he stretches out his arm; he beckons with his hand; he lifts up his gracious voice to

you, saying, I am the way, and the truth, and the life—him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.

IV. Christ's intercession is the pledge of his infinite ability to save.—He ever liveth to make intercession for us. It is for this that he liveth. It is for this that he is exalted to the throne of the majesty in the heavens. And this is the assurance to us of his being able to save unto the uttermost; for it is by this intercession that he carries on our salvation. His work on earth, as the sacrifice, wrought out the atonement from which salvation flows; and his work in heaven, as the advocate with the Father, carries on and applies that work. On earth he finished his work as the bearer of sin, thereby taking it out of the way, and opening the access to God. In heaven he is now seated to effect the reconciliation for which he had prepared the way,—to introduce to the Father those that approach in his name. Let us briefly consider what this intercession implies.

(1.) He intercedes by presenting his sacrifice before the throne. He appears in heaven as "the Lamb that was slain." As such the Father beholds him, and is well pleased. And thus, by his presenting himself and his completed work before the Father, intercession is made by him, silent yet resistless. His appearance pleads—his attitude pleads—his blood pleads—his obedience pleads—his sacrifice pleads. Just as the altar might be said to plead for every one who laid his hands upon its horns, so the sacrifice of Jesus pleads for every one who lays his hand on him. Just as the lamb, though silent, pleaded effectually for him who brought it as an offering, so the Lamb of God pleads for every one who will take him as their offering, and lay their sins on him.

(2.) He intercedes by presenting HIMSELF in our name. "He appears in the presence of God for us." He was our substitute on earth, and

he is our representative in heaven. Hence God sees us in him, hears us in him, deals with us in him. By presenting his blood, he obtains forgiveness for us; but by presenting himself, his infinitely glorious self, he does far more,—he obtains for us everything that belongs to him. Everything that we say is heard of God as if he had said it; everything that we ask for is bestowed by the Father as if he had asked it; our petitions are counted as his petitions; our voice ascends acceptable in the Father's ears, as if it were the voice of his beloved Son. Thus entirely does he represent us, and by so doing plead for us irresistibly. He appears in the presence of God for us; and by so appearing carries on his mighty intercession. He invites us to come and be represented by him. He sees sinners coming to God upon their own footing, and he invites them to come on his. He sees men vainly presenting their prayers before God on the ground of some personal title of their own, and he asks them no longer to attempt such folly, but to consent to take him as their representative, assuring them that if they will but do so, all his infinite merit and acceptableness with the Father shall plead for them! O sinners, self-righteous ones, self-trusting ones, come and be thus represented and interceded for by him! His holiness will plead infinitely more for you, than all your unholiness can plead against you. His glorious righteousness will plead infinitely more for you than all your miserable unrighteousness can plead against you. The excellent beauty of his person will be a far stronger plea in your favour, than all the loathsome deformity of your own persons can be against you!

(3.) He intercedes by pleading for us.—When he was on earth, he thus pleaded, and doubtless he has not ceased to do the same gracious office in heaven. He pleaded for Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Thus he took up Peter's case; thus he prayed that his faith might be upheld. And as he did to

Peter on earth, so doubtless he does in heaven for those who come unto God by him. He takes notice of their case. His eye is always upon them. He sees their fainting faith. He marks their struggles with unbelief,—struggles to which no human eye is witness,—struggles maintained in the solitude of their closet, and expressed only by the tear, the groan, the sigh. He sees when they would fain come to him, and Satan keeps them back or casts them down, or whispers malignant doubts; and seeing all these, he takes their case into his hand and pleads for them with God. How comforting to believers to remember this! How encouraging to those who are but seeking the way to God, perhaps in fear and darkness, to see how ready this Divine Intercessor is to take up their case and plead in their behalf! Again, in the seventeenth chapter of John we have a specimen of Christ's intercession on earth, which is well fitted to give us a right idea of what it must be in heaven. Take such passages as these—"Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Again, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."² These are some of Christ's pleadings on earth; and oh! how consoling, how animating to think that these are still his pleadings in heaven! With such an advocate above, what can we fear? Whatever be the feebleness, the imperfection of our pleadings here, either for ourselves or others, his intercession is always perfect and prevailing. And it is his intercession, that is our confidence and hope. If he plead for us, who can plead against us? O sinners, come to him! Come and he pleaded for by this Divine Intercessor. Come put your case into the hands of this Divine Advocate! Allow him to plead for you. Do not continue to manage your own cause. Intrust it to him, and all shall be well.

(4.) He intercedes by presenting our prayers.—It is he and he only that presents our prayers to the Father; and being presented by him they are accepted and answered. As our High Priest, he both "bears

the iniquity of our holy things," and procures acceptance for them. Our prayers must pass through his hands ere they can reach the Father. As they leave our lips they are impure and earthly, being breathed from polluted hearts; but forthwith he takes hold of them, strips them of their impurities, purges away their imperfections, and presents them as a perfect offering to God. The hearts they come from are corrupt and vile; the desires they contain are cold, lifeless, wandering; the words in which they are expressed are poor and feeble; each petition seems to plead against us; yet still, being presented by him, they are well-pleasing even in the eyes of Him who cannot look upon iniquity. Hence prayer is likened to sweet incense, and in heaven the four and twenty elders have in their hands "golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of saints."² Thus also Jesus as our High Priest stands with his golden censer full of incense, to "offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne." Into that censer he calls on us to put our prayers. He stretches out his hand; he lets down that censer to earth; he brings it to our very side; he asks us to put in our prayers! Then he will draw up that censer; and, fragrant with rich incense, he will present them before the throne. How much we overlook this! How prone either to present our prayers without any censer at all, or in censers of our own fashioning! How apt to look aside from Jesus, even when looking up to God! How apt to undervalue the efficacy of this Divine censer, and to cherish doubts whether our petitions may find their way safely to the throne! How apt to make censers of our own, and to attempt with these to approach the Father! How apt, for instance, are we to make our acceptance depend upon our earnestness, and say, "Alas! we are so cold in prayer, how can we expect an answer?" or, on the other hand, to congratulate ourselves, and take courage from an opposite state of feeling, saying, "Ah! we have been earnest, we have had much enlargement, surely we shall be accepted." What is all this but just making a censer of our

earnestness? forgetting that it is not our frame in prayer, but the censer into which it is put, that secures its acceptance! The most fervent petition that ever rose from earth needs this censer with its incense, to prevent its being an abomination to God; and the feeblest cry that ever left a sinner's trembling lips needs no more! O sinners! put in your prayers into this censer. The High Priest reaches it towards you, he presents it at your side; put in your prayers, and they shall be heard! Ye who have never prayed before, bring your first petition here, and even you are sure of acceptance. Ye who have been praying in doubt, lodge your petitions here, and cease to doubt. That golden censer is enough to remove your fears, and give you the full assurance of faith in drawing near to the mercy-seat!

Such then is the great High Priest of our profession! Such is Jesus! Able to save to the uttermost! Ever living to intercede! Mighty in saving—all-prevalent in interceding! How secure, how blessed is the state of those who have come unto God through him! How great the encouragement for sinners to come unto God through him! He is infinitely able and willing to save you! Do not stay away from him; but come at once, come now, come boldly, come without doubting, come as you are, and he will save you; he will undertake your cause, and all shall be well.

SALVATION TO THE UTTERMOST! This is the message we bring. Salvation for the vilest, the guiltiest, the most wretched of all. Salvation for every sinner on this side of hell. None can say their case is too bad, for it is salvation to the uttermost; and where is the sinner that is beyond the uttermost—beyond that which God calls the uttermost? Lost ones, come and be saved! Chief of sinners, come! Prodigals, rebels, wanderers, come! Whosoever will, let him come and be saved.

KELSO, Feb. 1843.

THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT

"Thy Spirit is good, lead me into the land of uprightness,"—
PSALM 143:10.

"The love of the Spirit."—ROM. 15:30.

NOTHING can be more necessary for a sinner's peace and holiness, than his fully knowing the character of that God with whom he has to do. The more perfectly we become acquainted with him, the more do we joy in him, and the more are we conformed to his likeness. In his word God has fully revealed his character. He has therein told us what he is. Especially in the living Word, that is, in Christ, do we learn the character of God. He is the perfect expression and manifestation of that character. But then, this character belongs equally to all the three persons in the Trinity. What is true of one is equally true of all. "God is holy," and this means that the Father is holy, the Son is holy, the Spirit is holy. "God is light;" and this intimates that the Father is light, the Son is light, the Spirit is light. "God is love;" and this declares that the Father is love, the Son is love, the Spirit is love. We are accustomed to admit this of the Father and the Son; but we are less used to consider it as equally applicable to the Holy Spirit. Thus we have lost sight of the Spirit's love; a love as real, as true, as tender, as infinite, as gracious, as that of the Father and the Son.

We are apt to think of the Spirit as a mere influence, like the air we breathe, diffusing itself around, and operating upon us by a vague and indirect process of contact. So long as we do so, our ideas of the Spirit must be confused and unsatisfactory. Till we realize his personality, it is impossible that we can rightly acknowledge him in any of his divine perfections; more especially his love. A mere influence cannot be felt as a thing either loving or loveable. Hence, till the Spirit's personality is kept in view, his distinct and peculiar love cannot be rightly understood or realized; and the personality of the Spirit's love must no more be lost sight of, than the personality of the love of the Father, or the love of the Son.

Again, even when recognising the Spirit as a person, we are apt to dwell exclusively on his power, or wisdom, or holiness, and thereby forget or overlook his love. It is true we can never magnify too mightily any of his divine excellencies, yet still we must not allow one to supplant another. We must not suffer the power or the holiness of the Spirit to withdraw our eyes from his love, a love which is as infinite and glorious, as his holiness or his power.

Again, when we acknowledge his grace and condescension in coming down into this fallen world to fulfil his errand of mercy, we are too prone to think of this merely as an act of obedience to the Father's will in sending him. When seen thus alone, it is the Father's love more than the Spirit's that is recognised. But let us remember that when he comes into this world, and into these souls of ours, it is not merely because sent by the Father and the Son, but because he loves to come. It is not merely because he is pledged in covenant to accomplish the work, but because he loves to do it. He works not merely because it is his office to convince, and comfort, and sanctify, but because he loves to do so. It is love that brings him down from heaven into a world like ours,—free unbidden love, love to the lost,

love as amazing and immeasurable as that of the Son of God, who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor. The Father is said to have loved us with an everlasting love; so has the Spirit. The Son is said to have rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and to have had his delights with the sons of men; and the same may be said of the Spirit. Every fact, or declaration, or promise, that proves the love of God, proves the love of the Spirit.

Again, we are apt to suppose, that because he is called emphatically the Holy Spirit, therefore holiness is so peculiarly his attribute, that it is not proper to ascribe such peculiar love to him. But there is nothing in this characteristic of holiness to exclude the idea of love. Surely no one would say that because he is called the Holy Spirit, the Father or the Son is less holy than he? If love therefore be so perfectly consistent with holiness in them, it cannot be less so in him. There is such a thing as holy love to the unholy, and it would appear as if this love were strong and intense in proportion to the holiness of the being who loves. The Spirit's infinite holiness gives him such a view of the misery of an unholy soul, as makes him yearn with compassionate love over such. His infinite holiness makes him long to see them delivered from their sin, and made holy as he is holy. Holy love yearns over the unholy. Holy love longs to save the lost. Holy love strives to deliver the unholy from the awful misery of a sinful state, and to replace them in the blessedness of divine purity, and the perfect image of God.

Again, we may imagine that it is the work of Christ, as the sacrifice for sin, that has brought the Spirit down to us. Now, it is true, that had it not been for that work, the Holy Spirit could not have come down to dwell amid unholy beings. Had the work of Christ not satisfied Divine righteousness, and glorified the holiness of the Godhead, even when dealing with sinners, the Spirit never could

have come down at all. Yet the work of Christ did not create or cause the Spirit's love. There was love in his heart to sinners before, just as it was in the Father's, but then it was pent up; it could not flow out till this righteous way was opened, this holy channel prepared, through which it might flow freely down to us, unstraitened and unobstructed. The Holy Spirit could have no dealings with an unholy soul, till the blood had been shed; still there was love in him before,—love which led him joyfully to undertake his part in redeeming man, love which led him to prepare a body for the Son of God, on which our sins might be laid. The Father so loved the world as to give his Son. The Son so loved the world as to give himself. And the Spirit so loved the world as freely and gladly to come down into it, and there carry on his gracious work in the sinner's soul.

But let us consider some of the proofs of the Spirit's love. These are manifold. "If we would speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." How precious are his thoughts to us! "How great is his goodness, how great is his beauty!" Let us attend to a few of them. And may he be our gracious Teacher in unfolding the things concerning himself.

I. The Spirit's love shows itself in his names.—He is called by many names, and set forth to us by many figures expressive of his tenderness and love. He is called "the good Spirit," thereby declaring to us his loving-kindness and compassion. He is called the "Spirit of grace,"² to show us that he is merciful and gracious, full of the same free love to sinners as the Father and the Son. He is called the "Spirit of adoption," because he imprints on us his own divine affections and sympathies, revealing to us the Father's mind and heart, creating in us all filial confidence, and teaching us to say, Abba, Father. He is called the "Spirit of liberty," because he undoes our heavy yoke, and breaks our grievous fetters, possessing our whole souls with the

blessed consciousness of divine liberty, delivering us from the bondage of fear and sin, making us "free indeed." He is called "the Comforter;"² "the helper of our infirmities," "the earnest of the inheritance,"⁴ "the Spirit of love." Then, again, he is set forth to us under the figure of "rain and dew,"⁶ mild and refreshing; as the "oil of gladness," because of the overflowing joy which he imparts; as a dove,⁸ because of his being so gentle, so loving, so peaceful, so tender, so easily wounded and grieved away. Such are some of the Spirit's names of love! They are poor indeed, and feeble to express the vast reality of deep love that is in his bosom. Yet they do give us sweet and precious glimpses of his tender love.

II. The Spirit's love shows itself in the Scriptures which he himself has written.—The word came to us not from man, neither by man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. So that in these Scriptures it is especially the Spirit that speaks to us. It was he who wrote them. It is his language that they speak. It is his mind they breathe. It is his feelings that they embody. A man's writings show us his mind and heart: so do the Scriptures reveal to us the mind of the Holy Spirit. And what is the feeling that pervades them?—It is love. What is their tone?—It is gentleness and kindness. He who wrote them must have had a heart overflowing with love. No one can mistake the feeling which pervades the whole from beginning to end. They breathe the tenderest compassion throughout. Love to sinners shines out in every page, and pours itself along every line. All is holiness, yet all is love. The words are the words of truth and wisdom, yet they are the words of love. Hatred of sin is stamped everywhere, yet love to the sinner is as deeply engraven on every leaf. Every invitation is the expression of the Spirit's love. Every call is the call of the Spirit's love. Every word of grace is from the Spirit's love. Every word of comfort is from the Spirit's love. All the words in season for the weary are from the

Spirit's love. It is he who saith, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." It is he who saith, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." It is he who saith, "thou hast been weary of me, O Israel." It is he who saith, "return, ye backsliding children." It is he who saith to the weak, "be strong,"—to the sorrowful, "rejoice,"—to the troubled, "comfort ye, comfort ye, my people." Oh how full is all Scripture of the love of the Spirit! It breathes like sweet fragrance over every page. It is like ointment poured forth. Were we to read Scripture in this light, how much more sweetness might we find in it. How much more of winning attractive power should we discover in all its words. We have often wondered at their weight and wisdom, but this would teach us to wonder still more at their love. This would take away all seeming coldness or repetition. It would fill every word with a meaning of love unknown, unimagined before. We should thus get fuller access to the mind of the Spirit;—a deeper insight into his gracious heart. We should learn not merely the grace contained in a promise, but we should be led more fully into the heart of the promiser. And we should thus see how the Spirit's love gives vent to itself in these sacred pages. The Father's love found its vent in his gift of the Son. The Son's love found vent to itself in the offering up of himself as our sin-bearer. But nowhere does the love of the Spirit get such full vent to itself as in the Scriptures which he has inspired. It is here that he pours forth all the treasures of his love;—love to the lost, the guilty, the wanderer, the backslider, the rebel,—love without measure and without change,—love that is not regulated according to the worthiness of the object loved, or the amount of love expected in return, but love that embraces the unworthy, and those who requite nothing but hatred for love, enmity for friendship. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

III. The Spirit's love shows itself in his anointing the Son of God for his work of love.—The "oil of gladness" with which he was anointed, was from the Spirit of love. It was by this loving Spirit that he was anointed to "preach the gospel to the poor." It was by this loving Spirit that he was "sent to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord; to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."³ It was by the anointing of this same Spirit that he was fitted for the gracious office to which he was appointed of the Father, as described to us in another passage of the same prophet. Speaking of him as his servant, his chosen one in whom his soul delighted, the Father says, "I have put my Spirit upon him." And what is the result? "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." It was by the anointing of the same Spirit that he has "the tongue of the learned that he should know to speak a word in season to him that is weary." All the heavenly gifts and graces of the Redeemer's character are declared to be wrought in him by the Holy Spirit, with which he was filled "without measure." His especial fitness and fulness for his mighty work of love are ascribed to the indwelling of the Spirit of love. Thus was he fairer than the children of men; grace was poured into his lips;² and hence never man spake like him, and men wondered at "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." As it was by the coming down and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, that he was formed in the womb, perfectly holy in soul and body, so it was by the indwelling of the same holy and loving Spirit that he was anointed for his work of love; and it was "through the eternal Spirit that he in love offered himself without spot to God" for us. Thus the grace of Christ teaches us the grace of the Spirit. In the love of the Saviour there shines forth the love of the Spirit.

Besides, what love to sinners is there manifested by the Spirit in his thus preparing the Son of God as the sacrifice for sin! It was love in the Father to send the Son,—to consent that he should suffer so much for us. But is there not the same deep love in the Holy Spirit, to undertake such a work as that of preparing a lamb for the burnt-offering,—binding the victim for the slaughter? What but infinite love is this? It was in one sense indeed a glorious work, for it was preparing a vessel for containing the full glory of Godhead in the form of a man. Yet it was an awful work to prepare that well-beloved Son for bearing all the Divine wrath against sin,—presenting him, (if we may so speak,) to the Father, to receive those vials of wrath which should have been poured out on us! What deep love is here!

And what condescending love to sinners to frame so many types and figures under the law, by which to show forth the Saviour's character and work! It was by the Spirit that Bezaleel and Aholiab were fitted for making the various utensils of the tabernacle. It was by the same Spirit that all the vessels of service were devised, and all the ceremonies ordained by which the fulness of a Saviour's work was to be shown forth to sinners; by which the ignorant were to be taught the knowledge of redemption. What love is thus manifested in all the pains thus taken by the divine Spirit to leave nothing, however minute, untold, by which the sinner's eye might be directed to the Lamb of God!

And again, what love was it in the Spirit, to record in the Book of Psalms the tears and groans of the Son of God!—to preserve on record the hidden life, the secret feelings of the Man of sorrows, when bearing the Father's wrath for us! How painful is it for us to record the agonies of a beloved friend! We would rather forget them. Yet for love's sake we might be induced to record them for the benefit of others. So is it with the Spirit. For love's sake he has put the tears

of the Son of God "into his bottle," and told us "all his wanderings."³ Had it not been for the Spirit's love in writing such a record as this, we should never have known the depths of that sorrow that was in the Redeemer's heart. What love then does the saddest word in all that book show forth, love not only of the Saviour, but of the Spirit too!

And then, what love to testify of Christ and his finished work! This is his especial office now. He testifies of Christ. He glorifies Christ. He takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to us. And all this is not only out of his love to the Saviour, but out of his love to the sinner. Not merely because he delights to see Jesus honoured, but because he longs to see the sinner saved! How deep, how vast, how free must be this "love of the Spirit!"

IV. The Spirit's love shows itself by his work in the hearts of sinners. —Now that the work of Jesus has been finished, he comes forth to do his office of love. And though he be the "holy one," he yet refuses not to work in the hearts of the unholy. He comes to us. He speaks to us. He strives with us. He draws us. He awakens us. He convinces us of sin. He quickens us. He opens our eyes. He leads us to the blood of sprinkling. Though he is resisted, grieved, vexed, quenched, he does not leave us, nor cease his efforts. For years he continues striving with the soul in his infinite love, unwilling to give it up, unwilling that it should perish. What hatred he meets with, yet he bears it all! What coldness and contempt he meets with, yet he bears it all! He would fain obtain entrance into the soul. He would fain deliver the captive one. And in seeking to accomplish this, he submits to every form of resistance, and enmity, and scorn. In his love he bears it all, rather than lose the sinner! And all this, though he be "the holy one," though his name is emphatically "the HOLY Spirit." Sinner, think what his love must be! Think what his long-suffering must be! To

strive so earnestly and so long in seeking to win us to life! To cherish so fondly a serpent's brood! To deal graciously with souls so full of hatred! So condescendingly, so patiently to continue his strivings, notwithstanding all our perversity and stubbornness! So graciously to seek to draw our hearts to the love of God, teaching us to love, who by nature know only how to hate! "Herein is love, not that we loved Him but that he loved us."

V. The Spirit's love shows itself by his work in the hearts of saints.—It is not less marvellous in the latter than in the former. True, he has won the soul. He has found entrance, and taken up his abode in it. Yet still, how much has he to bear! How much has he still to encounter of resistance, and coldness, and unbelief, which are not the less grievous because the heart in which they are manifested is one which he can call his own. No coldness, however, can chill his love; no unbelief can make him cease his workings. He meets with daily repulses, yet he ceases not. So unchangeable, so unquenchable is his love. Truly "many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it." Think what he does for saints. He leads them into all truth. He sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts.² He enables them to persevere. He mortifies corruption in them.⁴ He fills them with joy. He reveals the things of Christ.⁶ He helps their infirmities in prayer. In the discharge of this last duty he is spoken of as the intercessor. He intercedes within, just as Christ intercedes without. He stands at our side to prompt us, to suggest our prayers, to draw forth our desires. Yea, he comes into us; he takes possession of our heart; he identifies himself entirely with us, and thus he mingles his voice with ours, his cries with ours. He makes our organs of feeling and speech the instrument for expressing his own desires, making his prayers to seem as ours,—seconding and enforcing our feeble petitions with his mighty cries. And often when we are praying in our poor imperfect way, in wandering and weakness, he comes in

and lifts us up, and kindles the flame within. Then it is as if we were overpowered with the intensity of our longings, our whole soul goes up in vehement intercessions, till human language gives way beneath the pressure, and nought remains but the unutterable groan. How vast his love, thus to put forth such power in us, in spite of all our continued resistance, and unbelief, and sin!

Let us learn then to love him in return for this love of his, so marvellous, so free. Surely he has claims upon our love, for having loved so much. So long-suffering, so loving, so gentle! Let us no more grieve him, no more disappoint him. Let us allow him to take us by the hand and lead us onward, whithersoever he will. He will show us the path of life. He will be our strength in weakness, our light in darkness, our joy in sorrow, our comforter in the day of trouble. Let us not thrust away his hand, or meet his love with coldness. Whom have we on earth as our guide in the Saviour's absence, until he come again, but the Spirit the Comforter? "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Let anxious souls lay these things to heart. To them the doctrine of the Spirit's love ought to be unspeakably precious. He who is working in them is love. He who is convincing them of sin is love. He who is seeking to draw them to God is love. It is a hand of power that is at work in them, but it is also a hand of love. This physician is as loving as he is skilful. Whence then so many doubts, so many hard thoughts of God? Will the Father, who so loved us as to give his Son for us, turn his ear away from us? Will the Son, who so loved us as to die for us, cast us out? Will that loving Spirit, who has so long been striving with us, and so long seeking to draw us to God, will he overlook our suit, or deal unkindly with us now? How can they who know his name fail to put their trust in him? How can they who understand his love suspect his willingness to bless? Did we but know the full

character of that God with whom we have to do, the Father as love, the Son as love, the Spirit as love, should not our doubting cease? You mourn over an impenitent heart. Does the Spirit not love to soften it? You complain of inward deadness and insensibility. Does he not love to make you feel? You cry out because of unbelief. Does he not love to deliver you from that evil heart of unbelief? You tell us of the power the world has over you. Does he not love to make you spiritually minded, to set your affections on things above? You complain of your ignorance. Does he not love to teach you? You say you realize so little of the glory of Christ and his righteousness. Does he not love to remove the veil from your eyes, to show you the glory of the Saviour, to unfold to you, in all its infinite dimensions and spotless purity, the robe of his perfect righteousness? You mourn because you have so little of his indwelling life and power, quickening and sanctifying you. Does he not love to come in all his fulness; at the same time showing you, that it is not his own work in you, but the Redeemer's work for you, that is your peace and hope. You complain that you have so little of child-like confidence and love towards your heavenly Father. Does he not love to pour that love into you, enlarging your straitened souls, unloosing your stammering tongue, and teaching you with child-like lip and heart to say, Abba, Father.

You tell us of your doubts and fears; and you tell us moreover that these arise, not from any suspicion of God's willingness to save you, but from want of evidence as to your own progress in the divine life. Now in opposition to this we assure you that your doubts do arise from not understanding the grace of God. Did you but know the meaning of grace, your fears would cease. And it is this that the Spirit in his love is seeking to teach you. He wants to show you that there is such a thing as free love to sinners. And for this purpose he is seeking to strip you of every plea for anything good about you. His object is

to teach you that there is not one single thought in you, but what God condemns. Then he shows you that grace takes for granted that you are utterly ruined, and that if it did not do so, it would not be grace at all. If it supposed that there was any good thing in you, it would not be grace. If it supposed that before it could reach your case, some good thing must be wrought in you by God, it would not be grace. If it supposed that God did not meet you on the spot where you are, but asked you to make some advances towards him ere you could be assured of his mercy, it would not be grace at all. It is the especial work of the Spirit to make the sinner understand what free grace really is, and it is in teaching this that he meets the strongest resistance from man. It is on this point he finds the sinner most unteachable. He can believe almost anything sooner than grace. He discredits God's most solemn and explicit assurances of his free love. He insists on qualifying himself for receiving God's love, and till he has ascertained that he is properly qualified, he persists in doubting, nay, calls it presumption to do otherwise. He makes a merit of his unbelief, and calls it humility. He refuses to go boldly to a throne of grace till he has more of the Spirit's witness within himself, to entitle him to do so. How sad, how awful thus to frustrate the grace of God! How perverse and wicked to turn the Spirit's work within you into an instrument for frustrating that grace! The Spirit's object is to show you the free love of God; and you say that you must wait till you are conscious of that work in you, ere you are entitled to believe that love. The Spirit's object is to show you that grace meets you where you are; and yet you say you are waiting till you are conscious of making advances towards that grace, before you can believe it. The Spirit's object is to teach you that grace presupposes nothing but what is bad in you; yet you say you are waiting for some evidence of good before you will believe it. How dishonouring to the grace of God is this! How insulting to the Holy Spirit is this! What perversity and unteachableness does this manifest in you! Yet what deep love does it

display in him, still to go on in his loving work of teaching you the free grace of God. He sees how prone you are to disbelieve this, and therefore he strives to engrave it upon you. He sees how prone you are to seek for something good in yourselves before you will believe it possible that God can be gracious to you; and therefore he strives to show you that there is no good thing about you, that grace takes this for granted, and that if you could discern anything good in you, you would not be a fit object for grace at all. He sees how prone you are to suspect God, to think evil and hard thoughts of God; and hence his object is to lead you to think well of him, to banish your hard thoughts of him, and to teach you all the freeness and richness of his grace. Such is the Spirit's teaching. Such is the Spirit's love. Blessed teaching! Gracious love! Can the most disquieted spirit refuse consolation after this? Where is there room for doubting? Is it not excluded? And excluded by the same law that excludes works and introduces grace in the matter of acceptance with God.

Let careless sinners tremble. "My Spirit shall not always strive." What if he should soon cease to strive with you? what if he should turn away from you who have so often turned away from him? what if he should leave you alone in your impenitence? Then what a wilderness, what a hell would your soul become! It would be soon ripe for the devouring fire, like thorns dry and ready for the burning. Satan would come in and occupy it all, seizing on you as an easy prey. You strive to erase from your conscience, and banish from your memory the convictions and anxieties which he is daily stirring within you. What if you should never have another conviction, another desire awakened within you, but be left to reap what you have sown? The Spirit might well leave you. You have done nothing but grieved him all the days of your life. You have requited his love with hatred. You are doing so still. You cannot bear his workings

within you. You try to shake them all off; might he not well leave you to perish in your sins?

QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT! You quench him in many ways,—you quench him with your unbelief,—you quench him with the world,—you quench him with your folly,—you quench him with your lusts,—you quench him with your idle company. How awful! You quench your only light! You strive to put it out, and in doing so to make your destruction sure. For without it how can you find your way to heaven? Oh! beware of "doing despite to the Spirit of grace." Beware of disbelieving his testimony to the Saviour; beware of denying his love; beware of resisting his power!

QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT! For if you quench him, then what remains for you here but darkness; and what remains for you hereafter but the blackness of darkness for ever?

KELSO, April 1843.

WHO SHALL DWELL WITH THE DEVOURING FIRE?

"The sinners in, Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—ISAIAH 33:14.

THERE is a day coming when sinners shall be afraid, and when terrors shall overtake them as a flood. They are not afraid just now; they eat and drink and make merry, as if they had no eternity to prepare for, no danger to alarm them. But it shall soon be different. What is now for off shall then be near, and sinners shall realize too late the horrors of that wrath from which they refused to flee. In the agonies of despair, when the flames are kindling round them, they will burst forth in such bitter outcries as these, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?" O that shriek of agony! O that awful outcry of surprise and despair! Careless sinner! that cry shall soon be yours; these words shall soon be the very language in which your wretched soul shall give vent to its hopeless anguish when it sees itself shut in within the flaming walls, and feels damnation sure! O, then, flee from the wrath to come! Make haste to escape from the devouring fire!

I. There is such a thing as devouring fire.—It may appear a shadow now, but it shall soon be reality,—and O what a reality! It is fire, the most torturing and excruciating of elements. It is devouring fire; not merely fire that can pain or scorch, but devour, swallow up the wretched sinner in its undying flame. His abode is a prison-house of fire,—a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Hear how God himself speaks of this, and learn that it is no mere dark imagination of cruel men to torment you before the time. "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell."² "Upon the wicked he shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone, and a burning tempest." "Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger, the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them." "Behold the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the grievousness of flame; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire."² Ah! sinner,

these are awful words, and they shall soon be realized in you, except you turn and flee?

II. It is everlasting fire; burnings that shall never grow less intense or die away. They are kindled by God's own breath; and he who kindled them alone can quench them. But this he will never do. They must burn on for ever and for ever. It is called "unquenchable fire," "everlasting fire," whose smoke goeth up for ever and ever. It shall be kept alive, fanned, increased, watched over, but it shall never go out nor abate! Nor shall there be anything to make it tolerable,—not a drop of cold water to cool the sinner's scorching tongue. Long custom shall never make it less tormenting or more easy to be borne. A vain dreamer of earth might say, "This horror will grow mild, this darkness light;" but it shall not be. There shall be nothing to mitigate it, or render it less intolerable throughout eternity. That horror shall never grow mild; that darkness shall never grow light; that fire shall never abate! O what a dungeon, what a furnace! It is not called eternal solitude, though that would be awful; neither is it called eternal darkness, though that would be insupportable. It is called everlasting fire!

III. It is prepared for the ungodly—It is said to have been at first prepared for the devil and his angels, but it is also to be the abode of all who neglect the great salvation. It is for them that forget God.⁵ It is for them who have refused to turn to the Lord, and slighted the blood of sprinkling. Shut out of heaven and shut into hell; this is their doom. They turned away from God, and now he turns away from them! They rejected love, and now wrath comes on them to the uttermost. They obeyed the devil on earth, and now they are handed over to his company and his abode in hell for ever. They would not believe that God was holy, and did not care whether he was gracious; but now they are compelled to feel how holy he is, and at the same

time to feel how he has forgotten to be gracious! For them grace is past. They might have had it once, but they despised it; and now it is gone. It is all wrath and indignation now.

IV. They must dwell in it.—They cannot flee. Escape is hopeless, for it is the Judge of all that pronounces the sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." The sinner may shrink, but he cannot flee. He may struggle, but it is all in vain. The command is given; angels hasten to see it executed, and devils seize him for their prey, and drag him along to his eternal abode. As the sentence falls on his ear, "Depart, ye cursed," his spirit sinks within him, and he exclaims, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire?" As he is hurried away from the judgment-seat, with the sentence ringing in his ears, he cries out, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire?" As he nears the gate and sees the flaming walls, he cries out with a yet more bitter cry, "O who shall dwell with these everlasting burnings?" As the gate is opened, as he is thrust in, as it closes behind him, as he looks round upon the whole flaming circle, as he hears the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth on every side, as he takes his place among the damned, those "spirits in prison" who shall go out no more, he shrieks out the piercing exclamation, "O! who shall dwell with this devouring fire; who shall dwell with these everlasting burnings?" Yet dwell he must, and that forever. No opening of the gates, no scaling of its walls, no loosing of the chain, no ray of hope, no respite, no Saviour, no mercy now! His eternity is sealed. He has reached his everlasting dwelling-place, where all is "lamentation, and mourning, and woe."

Sinners of every class, especially sinners in Zion, to whom these words are spoken, listen to these warning words! You are sinners in Zion, not sinners among the heathen; yet this only makes your case more awful, and your doom more inevitable. You profess to be

Christians, but have never been born again. You do many things like God's people,—pray, read, hear, speak, observe ordinances, yet still one thing is lacking. You are not born again! Surely, then, it is time to search yourselves. It is time to be alarmed. The Judge is at the door. Your hypocrisy will not serve you then. You will be detected and unveiled, and all your hollow pretensions to religion laid bare. The day of his coming will be a terrible one to you. He comes with his fan in his hand, thoroughly to purge his floor, gathering the wheat into his garner, and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire. He comes with his sieve to sift you, and can you stand his sifting? He comes with his touchstone to try and to detect you. He comes with his balances to weigh you, to see what is the real value of all your professions,—whether after all you may be found wanting. He comes with his lighted candles to search you in every part. He comes with his flaming eye to penetrate at one glance your inmost soul, and to discover all its hidden abominations. With such a prospect before you, would it not be wise to take immediate alarm, and inquire whether all be well with your souls, lest you perish at the rebuke of him who is a consuming fire.

Why should wrath be your portion? It was the portion of Jesus once, just that it might never be yours. The pains of hell took hold on him, just that they might never take hold of you. He was forsaken of the Father that you might not be forsaken. In enduring the fire of that wrath for sinners, he was constrained to cry, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death."² Seeing that he has passed through all this that you might not pass through it, why should you reject such a substitute as this? The burnt-offerings and sin-offerings under the law, in all of which consuming fire was employed, tell us what the great sacrifice had to undergo when iniquity was laid on him. When

these offerings had been duly presented, then Israel was forgiven. In our case no question can arise as to the due offering of the sacrifice. We know that it has been duly offered once for all, and has been accepted of the Father. The one sacrifice has been offered, and now the worshippers, once purged thereby, have no more conscience of sins. Do we consent to take that sacrifice for sins? We do not need to offer it anew. It has been already offered. But are we willing that it be reckoned to us as a substitute? If not, then we must bear that wrath in our own persons,—the fire which otherwise would have passed over us, will descend with devouring fierceness on our heads. We must either take refuge under the wing of the Substitute, or bear the wrath eternally ourselves. Which is the wiser, safer way for a helpless sinner?

RIGHTEOUS RECONCILIATION

"He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made (or become) the righteousness of God in Him."—
2 COR. 5:21.

"BE RECONCILED TO GOD," was the Apostle's message wherever he came. To Jew and Gentile, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, to all alike he proclaimed it. As though God did beseech them by him, he prayed them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. This is God's message still to an alienated world. He is still as gracious and as sincere in his proposals of peace and friendship. He still stretches

out his hand all day long, to a disobedient and gainsaying people. He asks us and entreats us to become his friends, telling us how willing he is to forget all our past enmity, and to remember our iniquities no more. Be THOU reconciled to me, is God's own special entreaty to every sinner.

These proposals of peace are not mere well-sounding words. There is nothing indistinct or uncertain about them. They rest upon a sure foundation; a foundation deep and broad, laid by God himself, such as to assure us that the reconciliation proposed is as righteous as it is real. It is founded upon righteousness. In it there is no compromise of justice. The law is not annulled, but magnified and made honourable. The grounds of quarrel and alienation have been removed, and a solid foundation for agreement laid; so that it is not merely a gracious, but a righteous thing in God to be reconciled to sinners, to love, to pardon, to save, to bless them. Hence there is no possibility of this agreement giving way. The controversy between the sinner and God, once settled, is settled for ever. And these are the grounds of this settlement, "he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him." Thus we learn that God becomes reconciled to us, not by his passing by sin with indifference as if it were a trifle, but by his laying it on another, condemning it in another, punishing it in another, and so removing it clean away from between us and him, never again to be the ground of quarrel, or the occasion of separation between us. Thus there is not merely grace for us, but righteous grace, grace that condemns the sin, yet justifies the sinner, grace that pardons the transgressor, and yet magnifies the law he has transgressed. Thus God, who before was righteously our enemy, can now be as righteously our friend. That righteousness which was against us, is now upon our side. It is a righteous peace, a righteous reconciliation, a righteous settlement of the controversy between us and God, which

is now proclaimed to us through the finished work of the Divine Substitute, the mighty sin-bearer, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

I. Observe the author of the reconciliation.—It is God the Father. He hath made him to be sin for us. It is in the infinite bosom of the Father that it had its origin. It is from his eternal love that it flowed forth. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." The proposals of reconciliation came from him, not from us. He thought on us ere ever we thought on him. He sought our friendship when we thought not of seeking his. He formed the purpose, devised the plan, prepared the way, accomplished the end! And all at an infinite cost! It was he who saw us in our blood, and said to us "live." It was he who in the fulness of a love which is absolutely without measure, said, "I will reconcile them to myself, I will remove the ground of separation, I will level the mountain-barrier, I will suffer nothing to stand in the way of this my purpose of love, I will love them freely, I will receive them graciously."

II. The instrument of effecting the reconciliation.—The Son of the Father,—his holy Son, who knew no sin; in whom there was no spot, no stain, no shadow of iniquity. He was "holy, harmless, undefined, separate from sinners," infinitely pure, and immeasurably removed from sin. He was "acquainted with grief," but not with sin. He was holy from eternity as the everlasting Son of the Father. He was holy as Immanuel, God with us—holy in his conception, holy in his birth, holy in his life, holy in his death,—altogether holy, tempted like as we are, yet without sin. No language of man can express his infinite holiness, his irreconcilable opposition to all iniquity, whether as God or as man. In him dwelt all the infinite holiness of the Godhead, and all the perfect holiness of the unfallen creature. It was his infinite holiness that fitted him for being the instrument of reconciliation. By

none but an infinitely holy Being could sin be borne and put away. It was utterly impossible that any less holy being could accomplish this. And it was thus that God set up the highest possible standard of holiness in the very person of him who was bearing sin, that sin and holiness might be more strongly contrasted with each other, the hatefulness of the one exposed to view, and the beauty of the other set forth in its aspect of most loveable perfection. It was thus, too, that God declared his love of holiness and his hatred of sin, by means of that very instrument through which he was reconciling the sinner to himself.

III. The manner of accomplishing this.—He made the sinless One to be sin for us. It was thus that he laid the foundation of our peace. He did this, not by passing by sin or treating it with indifference, but by placing another in our room to bear its penalty, and that other his own holy well-beloved Son. "He made him to be sin for us."

1. He was made sin.—This cannot mean that he was in any sense or degree sinful, for he knew no sin. Yet it means more than merely that he was made a sin-offering. This would not be giving the word its natural meaning, it would weaken the expression, it would destroy the contrast between his being made sin, and our being made righteousness. Doubtless he was a sin-offering, a trespass-offering, a burnt-offering. He was all offerings in one, the sum and antitype of all. Yet this does not exhaust the meaning. The meaning evidently is, that God dealt with him as if he were really a sinner, such as we are. He treated him as if all iniquity was centred in him. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was clothed with our guilt. He bore the burden of our iniquities. He was dealt with as if under the curse; he was made a curse for us. He received upon his head the vials of the Father's wrath. He drank the cup of trembling which is the sinner's

portion. In all respects the Father dealt with him as guilty of our transgressions. "He made him to be sin."

2. He was made sin for us.—He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.² He bore our sins in his own body on the tree. He was treated as a sinner, because he stood as our sin-bearer, our scape-goat, our substitute, our surety. Our guilt, our curse, our chastisement, were all transferred from us to him. Our debts and responsibilities were all devolved on him. He met the law in all its claims, and satisfied them for us. He came under obedience to the law in all its duties, and fulfilled it for us. It was in our room and as our representative that he acted, obeyed, suffered, and died. He bore our sins that we might not bear them; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All this has been done. It is finished. The sin-bearer has accomplished the work which the Father gave him to do.

IV. The blessed consequences of this,—that we might be made, or, simply and literally, that we might be the righteousness of God in him. By Christ's bearing wrath for us we are delivered from wrath, and receive forgiveness. But this is not all. Through him we are accepted before God. Through him we are made righteous; nay, divinely righteous, obtaining "the righteousness of God in him." By this exchange between the sinner and the Saviour we get all that is his, and he takes all that is ours. We not merely get a righteousness, but God's own righteousness, a righteousness divinely perfect, divinely fair, divinely precious, divinely glorious. God saw in Christ all our guilt, and he sees in us all his righteousness. He saw in him all our unworthiness: he sees in us all his worthiness. He entirely beholds us in this light. He ceases to see in us any thing else than Christ's perfection; and hence we are spoken of as actually being the righteousness of God in him. It would have been much to have given

us what Adam had before he fell. It would have been more to have bestowed on us an angel's righteousness. It would have been more still to have clothed us with an archangel's beauty and glory; but he has gone beyond all this—infininitely beyond it all! He has bestowed on us Divine glory and beauty; nothing less than the righteousness of his own eternal Son! He looks on us in him, blesses us in him, loves us in him, and will hereafter glorify and reward us in him. We are "complete in him." It is not said we shall be, but we are complete! Complete in his completeness, righteous in his righteousness, comely in his comeliness, perfect in his perfection. "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." It is our connection with him through believing that gives us this completeness in the Father's eyes. To the end of our earthly course we are incomplete in ourselves; yet from the moment we believed we became complete in him. Paul refers to the same high standing when he speaks of being "found in him," and explains this as meaning "not having his own righteousness," but "the righteousness of God." Being "found in him," then, is being regarded by God according to what is in him, and not according to what is in us. Here self-righteousness stumbles, and suggests a thousand doubts and perplexities. It says, were I more holy, more penitent, more earnest, more prayerful, had I more evidences of the Spirit's work in me, I could be satisfied. Now, what is this but seeking to be found, not in him, but in your own holiness, or penitence, or prayers, or graces? What is it but saying, God cannot look upon me as righteous in Christ, except I have something of my own in addition, to recommend me to his favour? If God is to treat us in any measure according to what we are in respect of holiness, or grace, or love, then he must cease to look upon us in the face of his anointed Son. We must either be wholly found in Christ, or not at all. We must either be dealt with wholly according to what he is, or wholly according to what we are. There must be no mingling of the two,—no

adding of the Spirit's work to complete the work of Christ as our righteousness before God.

All this simply in consequence of our connection with Jesus! All this righteousness, this acceptance, this completeness, simply as belonging to him! But what forms this connection between the sinner and the Saviour? How is the exchange accomplished? What is the link that binds us to this righteousness, as our sins were bound to him, so that we get all its benefits? We answer, it is written, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Again it is written, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Again it is written, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."³ It is our believing, then, that forms the connection between us and Christ, not our working, or our feeling, or our deserving. When the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us, he does not so work in us as to give us something in ourselves to rest on,—something to prepare us for receiving the righteousness of Christ. He opens our eyes and shows us the glory of the Saviour, so that thereby we are wholly led away from ourselves to him. That which he shows us in Jesus is what we rest on, not that which he works in us; so that as soon as he shows us Jesus, straightway we are irresistibly drawn to him. We see how altogether suitable he is,—how excellent is the way of being saved through him,—how complete the provision made for our acceptance with the Father, and, believing we have life through his name. His mantle is thrown over us, and his beauty covers all our deformity. We become the righteousness of God in him. Thus, in point of acceptance with God, there is no difference between one believer and another, or between the same believer at the beginning and at the end of his career, just as in respect of condemnation, there is no difference between one sinner and another. So soon as we believe we are

entirely justified, and stand "accepted in the Beloved." The question is not, how far on are you in the life of faith, but are you believing at all? Is Jesus everything to you for pardon and acceptance? All turns on the one point of owning him to be everything,—saying Amen to the Father's testimony regarding him. Then "He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Such are the grounds on which God's message of reconciliation is founded. Without these, to have spoken of restoration to God's favour, would have been saying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. But with these we can say, Peace, peace, to the sinner when there is peace. Grace can flow freely forth now, because righteousness has had its due. On this footing it is, that God is now sending abroad his proposals of friendship to us. He stretches out his hand to all sinners, entreating them to be at peace with him, and telling them that there is nothing now to prevent a lasting friendship being established between him and them. God's gracious heart is now pouring itself down upon this guilty world of ours in a full stream of love, through this righteous channel. It is this that enables God to meet the sinner just as he is and just where he stands. And it is because of this righteous provision for peace between the world and God, that we go forth to tell men of God's gracious mind regarding them, and his proposals of friendship to them. It is because of this that we are enabled to go up to every man, and say personally to him, "be reconciled to God."

1. Be reconciled to God, for see how he hates sin.—Before he could pardon it, he must lay it on his own Son, and when laid on him it must be punished in him. He must bear the infinite wrath of God against iniquity. How infinitely he must hate sin,—how certainly and swiftly he will avenge it! In clinging to sin you are clinging to that

abominable thing which he hates, and on which his terrible vengeance is about to descend.

2. Be reconciled to God, for see how earnestly he seeks to be reconciled.—What infinite pains he has taken to secure this! At what a cost he accomplished it! If he had not been in earnest about this, would he have parted with his own Son? Would he have bruised him and put him to grief and shame? Would he have emptied the vials of his wrath on him? Would he have refused to let the cup of agony pass from his holy lips? How much he must have been bent on reconciliation, when he could consent to all this, rather than that we should remain unreconciled! How sincere and true must his entreaties of reconciliation be!

3. Be reconciled to God, for see what a righteous reconciliation this is.—Its foundations are laid on righteousness, and therefore they are immoveable. You cannot say, we are not sure whether it is a real reconciliation, or whether it will prove lasting. It is righteous, and therefore it is real, and sure, and lasting. What can ever occur to break up a friendship founded upon righteousness? What can ever renew the breach which has thus been healed, or sever the golden link by which the soul is inseparably bound to God?

4. Be reconciled, for see the blessed effects of this.—It puts you in possession of such mighty blessings. It accomplishes such a glorious exchange between Christ and your soul. It clothes you with raiment so divine. It provides for you such a righteousness, so spotless, so precious, so divinely perfect—better than Adam's, more excellent than that of angels,—the very righteousness of God! What a dignity, what a glory is the portion of believers! Not merely to be restored to what we lost in Adam, but to a glory far brighter, an inheritance far richer, a crown far more resplendent! To be exalted above angels,

and placed upon the very throne of God's eternal Son: "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

5. Be reconciled, for learn the awful consequences of remaining unreconciled.—If unreconciled, then are you still enemies, unrighteous, condemned, children of wrath, bearing your own sins and sinking under its weight to the lowest hell. No removal of the curse for you! No bearing of the wrath for you! No deliverance from the second death! Great is the inheritance of the saints in light, so great shall be your inheritance of darkness. Souls saved by grace are made heirs of an infinite glory and blessedness,—so you who reject this grace must be heirs of infinite shame and woe. Ransomed souls in heaven are raised far above angels,—so you who remain unreconciled must go down to a place in hell far lower than the devils. Yours must be the place in hell—lower than Sodom and Gomorrah, lower than Tyre and Sidon, lower even than Chorazin and Bethsaida,—for you have rejected the great salvation in a way such as no devil ever could do, and such as none of these guilty cities ever did. O dreadful doom of unreconciled sinners! The lowest place in hell; the very "blackness of darkness," in a region where all is night!

Be reconciled then, for now is the accepted time and the day of salvation. "This is the acceptable year of the Lord." "The day of vengeance is at hand." "Agree with thine adversary quickly, ere the day of reckoning arrive." Be reconciled, for time is short, days and years are flying swiftly on,—eternity is at hand. You may soon be beyond the region where it is possible for a sinner to be reconciled. Hope will soon be exchanged for despair. The possibility of being saved will soon pass into the utter and awful certainty that you are lost, for ever lost! Be reconciled, for days of darkness are near. The last days are already coming into view, if indeed we have not already

entered on them. The time of fearful tribulation is approaching, and what unreconciled soul will be able to abide it? Who but a child of light will be able to make his way onward in those days of utter darkness. "Give glory to the Lord your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." Be reconciled to God, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh! This world's history is rapidly nearing its close. It will not be long till the bridegroom come and the door be shut! It will not be long till the Judge descend and summon you to his bar. Jesus has long delayed his coming, out of long-suffering love to a rebellious world, but he will not always delay it. He will come at length. How soon I know not. It may be very soon. There is nothing that man knows of between us and his coming. It may be at the very door! His chariot may be already on its way. O then be reconciled to God! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when once his wrath is kindled but a little."

THE THRONE OF GRACE

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. 4:16.

JESUS the Son of God is our Great High Priest. He has offered his one sacrifice, whereby he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. His offering has been accepted, and he himself acknowledged of the Father. He has passed within the vail; He has gone into the heavens as our forerunner, to appear in the presence of God for us; He has taken his seat upon the throne of grace,—the mercy-seat above! This "High Priest of our profession" is altogether such an one as we need. Both his office and his character make him most suitable for sinners. In his office there is pardon and cleansing proclaimed to us; and in his character there shine forth the irresistible attractions of grace and love. He is an High Priest of good things to come.² He is a "merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.⁴ Such is the High Priest of whom the Apostle speaks. Seeing, therefore, we have such a friend above, such a condescending, compassionate, tender-hearted brother, now at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, let us no longer stand afar off, but, laying aside our guilt and fear, let us boldly approach the throne of grace, whereon this gracious one is seated, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The throne is erected, the High Priest is there; the way is open; the vail is rent; every necessary provision has been made; nothing is wanting for the

sinner's assurance; access to God is free; every thing invites us;—then let us approach—let us go up to the mercy-seat, with reverential feelings, yet with calm and trustful hearts. Jesus is there, why stand aloof? Jesus is there, why fear and doubt? Jesus is there, why be afraid to lay our whole case before him? Does he not say, "be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid?"

Looking then with the vail, we see a throne, and behold, it is a throne of grace! And for whom is it reared? For sinners. And how are they to come? Boldly. And what gives sinners such boldness? The throne itself. And what do they obtain by coming? They obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

I. The Throne.—It is a throne of grace. Elsewhere it is called a "mercy-seat." And it is placed in the holy of holies—the immediate presence of God, to show us that his mercy and his holiness flow from the same deep fountain, and that in order to get grace we must come as near God as to obtain holiness. Many speak as if grace were dispensed by God only at a distance from his holy presence, but here we are taught that its dwelling is the secret of his tabernacle—the innermost shrine of his temple—the very holiest chamber of his secret presence. It is into these we must enter if we would have grace; and these are all thrown open to us through the precious blood that is sprinkled upon the threshold.³ It is called a throne because it is the seat of rightful authority, the place where government is administered, so that whatever is done here is done by the authority of the King, and in a righteous way, according to the strictest laws of the kingdom. But why is it called a throne of grace? (1.) Because it is founded upon grace. It is upon the free, everlasting love of the Father that this throne is built. Every stone in its foundation is free love. And it is in the infinite depths of the Father's bosom that these foundations are laid. "God so loved the world that he gave his only

begotten Son." (2.) Because every part of it throughout is grace. Not only the foundation, but every stone in the entire fabric is of grace. It is cemented together by grace. The corner stone is grace. The headstone is grace. Every ornament wherewith it is adorned is grace. Its covering is grace. Nothing is to be seen in it, or about it, or upon it, but grace. (3.) It is erected for purposes of grace. Here grace is dispensed, nothing but grace, yet all in a righteous way. Nothing but grace proceeds from this throne. Every thing connected with it and coming from it is grace,—grace unmixed and pure. Not partly grace and partly something else, but grace altogether and exclusively. It is not called a throne of righteousness, nor a throne of judgment, nor a throne of merit; but in distinction from all these it is called a throne of grace. It is founded on grace. It is composed of grace. It is adorned with grace. It is erected for purposes of grace. He who sits thereon is gracious. Its laws are grace. Its transactions are grace. It has nothing to do with merit, or claim, or worthiness, but with the opposites of all these. It is grace to the uttermost, grace without mixture, grace which knows no bounds. It is grace without terms and conditions and qualifications; grace which takes simply for granted man's total worthlessness, helplessness, and sin.

II. For whom is this throne of grace erected?—For those who need grace, whose case can be met by nothing but free love. It is for sinners, for the lost, the helpless, the worthless, the undone. It is for those who have no merit, no price, no recommendation, who are utterly destitute of every qualification, who cannot point to one good thing about them, whose "whole head is sick, and whose whole heart is faint." It is for those who would not be allowed to approach any other throne; who would not be listened to for a moment any where else. They would be driven from a throne of merit, or righteousness, or judgment; but they are welcome to a throne of grace. It is the very place for them. It is expressly provided for such as they. Had they

any merit they might go to a throne of merit. Had they any righteousness, they might go to a throne of righteousness. Had they any hope of urging a successful plea in self-defence, they might go to a throne of judgment. But seeing they are utterly destitute of all these, whither can they betake themselves but to a throne which welcomes those who are rejected every where else, and which asks no claim but that of wretchedness, and want, and sin? This throne is intended not for those who have anything, but for those who are in want of everything. And it is just their having nothing that makes them welcome here. To whom does the physician come? Not to the whole, but to the sick. For whom is the hospital reared? For the diseased. It is their disease that constitutes their claim for admittance there. The worse their disease, the more suitable are they for it, and the more welcome should it be to them. It is their need of healing that makes them fit objects for it. So it is our need of grace that makes us fit objects for a throne of grace.

But further, all else are excluded from this throne but they who need grace. Not only is it intended for them, and suited to their case, but all, save they, are positively shut out from it. It is just the very place for a sinner, but for none else. Its gates are closed against all those who come with any other plea than their wants. Hence, so many are sent empty away. They acknowledge a throne of grace, profess to come to it, and to come to it earnestly, but they do not come empty—they do not come destitute. They try to establish some claim even when professing to have none. They are not content to be mere receivers, mere debtors to grace. They want to come with a price. They are too proud to come without it. Hence, they try to turn everything into a price. They turn their earnestness, or their convictions, or their terrors, or even their very act of coming, into a price, and hope, that because of these, they may be accepted. No wonder that they return as empty as they come; for they came as

those who had something, not as those who were destitute of everything. They came to it not purely as a throne of grace, or at least a throne of grace to them. They came to it as partly a throne of merit, which must be approached only by those who have some qualification to bring. Perhaps they admit that it is purely a throne of grace, and must be approached only as such; but then they think that they, individually, dare not expect to receive anything until conscious of some inward feeling, as a token from God that they are accepted. In other words, they profess to believe that all things are ready, only they are waiting for some personal invitation to the feast. Now, what is this but saying that the throne of grace is not open to sinners as such, but to those to whom God gives some additional token of welcome; and that no sinner ought to go with boldness to the throne, until he is in some mysterious way assured, not only that the throne is erected for sinners, but in a special manner for himself. We might as well deny that it is a throne of grace, and that we are sinners. For if it be such a throne of grace, and if it be erected simply for those who need grace, then it must be as free to each one reading these lines as to any saint that ever approached it; and each one who really knows this, will come without hesitation or suspicion. Though conscious of ten thousand wants, and ten thousand sins, yet here is the place where he is welcome, just because he has all these wants, and is loaded with all these sins.

III. How are we to come to this throne?—The Apostle answers, we are to come "boldly,"—not doubtingly, hesitatingly, uncertainly, but "boldly." We are to come confidently, "in the full assurance of faith," certain of obtaining an answer, not thinking it possible that we can be refused; not counting it presumptuous to come so boldly, but knowing that it is only when coming thus boldly that we come in true humility, and that all doubting springs from pride and self-righteousness. In another part of this epistle we read, "Let us draw

near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith:" and again, "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of all such as diligently seek him."² We are not only warranted to come boldly, but we are commanded to do so. It is our sin if we come doubtingly. It is as much God's command, to come boldly as it is to come at all. No one doubts that God invites and enjoins all sinners to come to this throne; no one, then, Can doubt that he commands them to come boldly. If we are warranted to come at all, we are warranted to come boldly. It is our sin to refuse to come, it is equally our, sin not to come boldly. God, in providing this throne of grace, calls on us to come to it as boldly as the innocent go to a throne of righteousness, or the worthy to a throne of merit. Nothing less than such a throne could have entitled us to come to God at all, and nothing more is needed to warrant us to come with entire boldness and confidence, even from the first moment that we draw near to that throne. A sinner coming for the first time is no more warranted to come doubtingly, than is a saint just stepping into glory. Both have the same throne to go to; both equally need it: both ought to come with the same boldness, for both come simply as sinners. All the graces of the saint cannot give him, boldness, and all the want of these in the sinner ought not to prevent it. Are we satisfied that it is really a throne of grace? Then let us come boldly: let us draw near in the full assurance of faith. It is the simple boldness that glorifies God. It is this that He expects and delights in. It is to give this that He has prepared such a throne. And it is this that honours that throne which he has erected. Why, then, should any sinner come with less than boldness to such a throne as this?

IV. What gives this boldness?—It is the simple fact that it is a throne of grace we are coming to, that emboldens and assures us. So long as we do not understand the real nature of that throne, or come to it with a price or claim in our hand; so long as we conceive it to be

partly a throne of merit requiring some qualification on our part, so long it is impossible that we can come with boldness. But when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see that it is entirely a throne of grace, then this sight alone and by itself, dissipates our fears and draws us in happy confidence to a throne so suitable and so glorious. Nothing more is needed to remove every fear than this simple fact. It was our not seeing this that first raised suspicions in our hearts, and made us come trembling and uncertain; and it is our seeing this, and this alone, that allays these suspicions and inspires us with the confidence of a child coming to a father's knee. Whenever we try to draw our boldness from any other source, immediately our souls are overclouded and our hands hang down. It is a throne of grace, and what more can we say? What more does a guilty soul need to know, in order to assure him, not only that he is welcome, but that it would be most dishonouring to God and to his throne to come with less than the assured expectation of being heard.

Our fears may whisper, "You are unworthy." True, but it is a throne of grace, a throne just for the unworthy and none else. Why, then, should our worthiness make us doubt? Still we may say, but alas we have no good about us, no evidences of grace, no deep convictions of sin, no repentance, no right feelings, no faith, no love, no humility. True, but it is a throne of grace, and why therefore should the want of all these make you hesitate to come boldly? The want of these would have disqualified you from going to any other throne. You might well have doubted, had it been a throne of merit or of righteousness; but seeing it is a throne of grace, all grace, nothing but grace, how is it possible for even you to doubt? To make those things reasons for not coming boldly would just be to deny that it is a throne of grace at all. It is the grace that is in the throne, and not the grace that is in us, that gives us boldness. Nor is it partly the one and partly the other, it is the former alone that can really do so. It is not what we see or feel

in ourselves; it is simply what we see in the throne that imparts confidence. Every other source of confidence is fluctuating and uncertain. This alone is steadfast. It changes not; neither can it ever lose its power. Nothing will suit a sinner's case but something without him and independent of him, something which abides the same amid all his manifold changes and uncertain frames, And here is the very thing he needs—a throne of grace, and that grace the grace of Him who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

He that is not satisfied with this simple fact shews either that he does not understand its meaning, or that he is too proud to be entirely a debtor to the free love of God. He who is not content with this, as of itself sufficient to dispel all his doubts, must just go on doubting; for how is it possible that the sight of any thing else can give him confidence when a throne of grace has failed to do so? And if at length the Holy Spirit graciously remove his fears, it will not be by turning his eyes to any objects within, but by showing him more fully the free grace of the throne, and the assurance which that of itself gives him that he is welcome, though the chief of sinners.

Are you then coming to this throne without boldness? Does not this show you that you have much to learn as to the nature of that throne you are coming to? If you understood this, it is possible that such uncertainty could remain? You say, but though I have not this confidence, I am earnest and importunate. Well, but you might be so, even though there were no throne at all to go to. It is confidence more than earnestness that a throne of grace calls forth. At the throne of judgment men will be earnest enough, but there will be no boldness then. Earnestness without confidence shows that you do not know that it is a throne of grace at which you are pleading. Your earnestness shews that you are anxious enough to secure the blessings sought; but it does not show that you know the way of

obtaining them. It rather shows that you are upon a plan of your own for buying them with your own fervent prayers. Your earnestness does not honour the throne nor Him who sits thereon. Nay, it dishonours Him, for it takes for granted that He is a hard and austere man whom you cannot implicitly trust, and from whom you can obtain nothing but by dint of earnest importunity and effort. It is your confidence, your expectation, your trust, that honour both the throne and the God who erected it for sinners such as you. The sooner, therefore, you trust, and the more implicit is your confidence, the more are you giving glory to God.

Our expectation of receiving should be a confident one, just because it is not founded upon any thing in our character or doings, but upon something altogether independent of us, which is not affected by our fluctuations in the least, and abides ever the same. Yet, strange to say, there are many who think it unsafe to have this boldness till some foundation has been laid for it in the improved condition of their own souls. What! is it unsafe to build upon the rock alone? Is the fabric insecure unless sand be mingled with the foundation rock? Is the garment not wide enough to wrap us unless eked out by tatters of our own? Are we to doubt so long as we have merely the throne to embolden us, but to cease our doubts so soon as we discover some good thing in ourselves?

But may we not be Christians without having this boldness? I am not careful to answer a question like this. This, however, I may say, that matters have come to a sad pass indeed when a man's only comfort is that he may be a Christian and yet not know it,—that he may be a believer and yet have no confidence,—that he may be a child of God and yet not be sure whether God be his Father or not.

Do you say then, tell me what I am to do? Ah, are you bent upon doing something,—thereby proving that you are not satisfied with what has been already done by another. You want me to put you upon doing something in order to get this boldness; whereas I want to put you off doing anything in order to get this, and simply to take it from what another has done. But you say, tell me how I am to trust? Ah, do I need to tell the child how to trust its parent, or throw itself upon the bosom of its mother? Is it not enough that it knows its parent's heart? And is it not enough that you know the heart of God and see the throne of grace he has erected? What a display of self-righteousness is the struggle to believe! What a manifest proof that all unbelief is the belief of a lie,—a lie which it costs such a desperate struggle to part with!

Such then is the nature and meaning of that voice which speaks to you from the Throne of Grace, that it leaves you no other alternative but either to doubt God's word and deny his truth, or else to enter upon immediate peace and assured reconciliation.

V. What do we obtain by coming?—Every blessing that we stand in need of and that to the full. Here is the fountain of all blessing, from pardon of sin up to the fullest amount of holiness and joy. These the Apostle sums up under two heads "mercy and grace." He says, "let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." These two words comprehend every thing. First there is mercy, then there is grace.

1. That we may obtain mercy.—Mercy is tender love to the miserable and guilty, shewing itself in forgiving and blessing them. It is the feeling called forth by the sinner's lost estate, and therefore regards him simply as a sinner, a lost one. Now this forgiving love is just what the sinner needs at first. It is the first thing that he cries for

when awakened to a sense of sin. It is also the first thing which God bestows, and until he has given this he can give nothing else. Such is exactly the view of it presented here by the Apostle. It lies uppermost on the throne of grace, placed so as to draw our attention at once. It is the first object that attracts our eye and invites our hand. Hence the words of the passage literally are "that we may take mercy;"—take it as a thing held out to us;—take it as a thing pressed most fervently and freely upon our notice and acceptance. It is mercy that the sinner needs, for he is guilty, condemned, under the law, under the curse, under wrath; and it is mercy that is first extended to him that he may be delivered from guilt and condemnation, sheltered from the curse and wrath which were his due, and brought out from being under the law to be under grace.

Sinner! there is mercy for thee! It lies upon the mercy-seat inviting thee to take it. It is mercy to the vilest, mercy to the uttermost, mercy which embraces every sinner on this side of hell! And it is mercy now; mercy to thee as thou standest in thy sin, mercy in which there is no delay, no uncertainty! Take it and be forgiven. Take it and enter into peace with God!

2. That we may find grace to help in time of need, or more literally, "grace for all needful help." Having obtained mercy, it is grace that is next presented to us; that is, not merely the free love of God, but that full measure of infinite blessing which that free love bestows. Hence it is written of Christ "of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace." Hence also in the apostolic salutations "grace" is the whole sum and burden of all then-prayers in behalf of their brethren. Hence also it was said to Paul in his hour of trial "my grace is sufficient for thee,"² and hence Paul exhorted Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." So here it seems to be used as

comprising all fulness and variety of blessing, "the manifold grace of God."⁴

We enter into the Holy of Holies, we go up to the mercy seat. Its covering is mercy. We remove the covering and wrap it round our guilty wrath-deserving souls. Then are we safe, for the covering which wraps us is divine. Not a drop or ray of wrath can penetrate it. But having obtained this, we begin to discover that we need much more than this. This is enough to shield us from wrath; but we need to have our emptiness filled, our hunger satisfied, and our thirst quenched. We need to be delivered from a body of death; we need to be made holy, and strengthened in the inner-man. How are we to obtain these? We look around, and behold the mercy-seat itself contains the fountain of all these needed blessings. Beneath the covering which we had removed, we discern this precious fountain; and now we are put in possession of every thing we require. We take our stand at the side of this well of water, and drink without ceasing from its exhaustless stores. We have found supply for every want,—free provision for every various state of our souls. It is just with us as with some poor bankrupt, whose debts some friend has undertaken to cancel. He gets his past debts paid, but what is he to live upon? His compassionate friend steps forward, and tells him that he is welcome to draw upon him at any time, and to any amount he pleases. Such is the manner in which we first obtain mercy, and then have the fountain of grace opened to us, that out of it we may draw continually and without limit or condition.

In this infinite fountain of the manifold grace of God, there is every needful provision for a saint during all his pilgrimage. There is something here for all times and seasons, for all states and circumstances, for all times and trials. We are unholy; iniquities prevail against us; the flesh lusteth against the spirit. But here is

grace to enable us to be holy. We walk too much with the world, too little with God; our walk at the best is uneven, distant, changeful. Here is grace to enable us to walk with God, like Enoch; to have our conversation in Heaven, even when dwelling on the earth. Our souls cleave unto the dust; the things of earth engross and depress us. Here is grace to enable us to set our affections on things above, to live as those who are already seated with Christ in heavenly places, and from these look down upon the earth. We have daily infirmities, both of body and spirit, to struggle with. Here is grace to enable us to be strong in the midst of weakness, yea, to glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on us.² We have a race to run. Here is grace to enable us to run it well,—to run it with patience. We have enemies to war with, not only flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. Here is grace to make us more than conquerors through him that loved us. Here, in short, is grace for everything, for every want, for every time:—grace wherewith to live, grace wherewith to die. Why then should we be poor so long as God is rich? Why should we be weak so long as He is mighty? Why should we be empty so long as He is full? Why should any necessity or trial ever be too great for us, seeing we have Him to undertake for us, and seeing we have grace like this to help us in time of need? Why should we ever either fear or doubt, seeing we have a fountain of free love like this to draw from continually? O folly, passing all other folly! O wickedness incredible and inexcusable, for the child of faith to give way to perplexity and fear! Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.⁴

Such is the THRONE OF GRACE! Such its freeness to every sinner. Such the boldness with which he ought to come: such the sure ground of confidence in coming: such the blessing to be obtained. Come then, sinner, come! The throne invites you, and says COME!

The High Priest that is seated on it, invites you, and says COME! God the Father, who erected that throne for such as you, says COME! The Word says, COME! Ministers say, COME! This tract says, COME! Each passing hour says, COME. Each trial that afflicts you says, COME! Every voice above you and around you, says COME. COME boldly to this throne of grace.

Remember that this throne will not remain for ever. It has its set time. After that, it must be removed, and in its room the throne of judgment will be set up. And oh! how different the one from the other! The one is all grace together. The other has no grace at all. All about it and proceeding from it, is righteousness, judgment, condemnation! Hear the description of it:—"I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them: and I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." How soon the throne of grace will be taken down, and this awful throne set up, you know not. It may be soon. Time cannot always last. Christ will not always tarry. He will come. Then time shall be no longer. Then grace shall be at an end. Then the acceptable year of the Lord shall close, and the day of vengeance begin.² Then you shall hear no longer the gracious invitation of the Saviour, "Come unto me." All that you shall hear will be the sentence of the Judge, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Stand no longer without. Tarry no longer by the way. Enter into the sanctuary. Come within the vail, for behold it is rent. Go up to the mercy-seat. Go as thou art. Go boldly, even though the chief of sinners. Remember it is a throne of grace thou art going to; therefore

let no amount of sin in you, lead you to despond, or to draw near uncertainly. Go up to it. All that thou needest is there. Take the full measure of everlasting blessings. Fear not. Shrink not. It is just for such as thee. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

KELSO, Jan. 1844.

THE TRUE HEART

Let us draw near with a true heart.—HEB. 10:22.

MAN'S heart, by nature, is not true. It is neither true to himself nor to God. In some respects it may be said to be true to himself and his fellow-men, when it is true to his own interests and true to his usual character, or when it is true to the friendships and affections of earth. In the last of these respects we often hear of the heart's truth. We hear how truly hearts beat in affection for each other. We hear of friends being true to friends, so as to maintain their mutual constancy unshaken amid distance, suffering, and peril. But in all this, how seldom is it that we hear of hearts that are true to God and to Christ.

What is a true heart? It is not a perfect heart, for where is that to be found on earth? It is not a heart where sin has no place at all, and where all is holy and spiritual, for who, save the spirits of the just made perfect, have reached this stature? It is not a heart that never

wavers, never saddens, never droops, never languishes, never grows cold, for that we must seek a brighter world and a more genial clime.

A true heart is one that has ceased to misunderstand and mistrust the character of God, that takes that character simply as it is revealed in grace, and rests where God would have the sinner to rest, on his forgiving love. A true heart is our that has ceased to suspect God or to look upon Him as an austere and hard master. The trueness of the heart consists in its right apprehensions of the character of God; in "knowing the Fattier" as he has made himself known to sinners in Christ Jesus. To be true to God is to know Him as the gracious One, as the pardoning One, as the sin-hating, yet sinner-loving God. He who has not yet seen enough of Him in the Cross, as to dispel all his wicked doubts and guilty fears, is not yet true to God.

A false heart is one which does not know the Father. Its views of God's character are distorted and dim. It seeks, in self-righteousness, to do something or feel something which may draw towards it the favour of God, and it cannot rest or trust without finding this. It does not understand the entire freeness of the grace revealed in Jesus, and will not believe that this grace is so free and wide as to meet it, even as it is, without one particle of good about it either in feeling or in action. It suspects God, because it is not satisfied with itself. It thinks it right to cherish doubts and fears, nay, and it thinks it wrong to have confidence so long as there is so much of evil and so little of good about itself. All this is being false-hearted to God. It looks like humility, but it is pride. It looks like dissatisfaction with self, but it is just a trying to get something in self to be satisfied with. It looks like a sense of unworthiness, but it is just self-righteousness, and a refusal to be content to be so altogether unworthy, as to be indebted for entire salvation to a grace that has to do with none but the unworthy. Some may think that though we may call this false-

heartedness to God, it is at least being true to his holiness and true to his law, for it is a dread of these that produces this despondency and keeps the soul from rest. But this is not even being true to his holiness, for it is supposing that God's holiness is at variance with his grace, and that we best magnify his holiness by distrusting his grace. And is not this being false to God—false to his holiness as much as to his grace? Is it not just saying, that God has taken so little care to guard his holiness that it is necessary for the sinner to do something for this end, and that the best way to do this is just to continue doubting until evidences of being holy can be discovered in the soul. But God has taken care of his own holiness and has not left it to us to do this. He has so fully provided for it in the gospel, that, the more we trust his grace, the more we honour his holiness, while, on the other hand, by distrusting his grace, we refuse to give to his holiness the honour that is its due.

What, then, is the cure of false-heartedness? How is a true heart to be found? I need not say that all must come from the Holy Spirit. The same mighty power that wrought in Christ, when He was raised from the dead, must be put forth towards us. But how does the Holy Spirit produce this true heart? What is that He shows us which removes our falseness of heart and makes it true? How does God set hearts right with Himself?

God does all this by showing us what He really is. He shows us how much we have mistaken his character and how little we have done justice to his love. He shows us that He is not what our false hearts have supposed him to be. We have sadly misjudged Him, and imagined Him to be such an one as we ourselves, that will give only as He gets and loves only as He is loved in return. Now, the Holy Spirit withdraws the veil and reveals the gracious countenance of God. He shows us how much we have wronged Him, how little we

have understood either the freeness or the largeness of his grace, and then it is that the suspicions of our false hearts give way; then, instead of standing afar off, we draw nigh; then, instead of cherishing fears and doubts because of our sinfulness, we lay all these aside, seeing that, since God has not made these a reason for not loving us, we should not make them a reason for doubting that love. When thus we get "acquainted with God," we are at peace. We feel that nothing more is needed, for producing perfect peace, but this acquaintanceship with God in his true character. It was our not knowing Him that filled us with trouble, and it is our knowing Him that fills us with peace. The knowledge of the Father is the sunshine of Heaven to our benighted souls. Thus our false-heartedness is removed, and we become true to God, and true to Christ. It is what we see in them that makes us true to them. When we see them as they are, trueness of heart springs up unbidden. We find the resting-place sufficient, and so we rest.

But do not our sins rob us of this? Perhaps, in point of fact, they often do, but, most assuredly, they ought not. For what amount of sin in us can make God less an object to be trusted? Can any sin that we have committed make it right for us to be untrue to God, untrue to Christ? Is one sin to be the ground for our committing another? Are we to be false to Jesus because sin has been found upon us? Dare any of us say it is right to be false to Jesus, because we have been guilty of sin? Ought we not rather to say, we have certainly transgressed, but still we dare not add to the guilt of these transgressions, the still greater sin of being false to Jesus. No degree of sin in us can make him less the sinner's Saviour and the sinner's friend. Nothing can alter his character of grace, or render less efficacious his infinitely precious blood. Should the consciousness of sin, then, make us false to Jesus? Was it the knowledge that we were not sinners that first made us true to Him? No it was not. In the full view and sense of all

our guilt, we were drawn to Him, because He was altogether such an one as a sinner might lean upon. And how, then, can the fuller discovery of our guilt make us lean upon Him less, or make us think it necessary to be untrue to Him? Has He deserved this at our hands?

The knowledge of immediate and complete forgiveness, through the belief of the gospel, is that which alone can give us true hearts. An imperfect knowledge of this keeps us untrue. A doubtful pardon, uncertainty as to our acceptance with God, cannot make us true. A gospel which brings us merely the hope of pardon, which makes reconciliation with God a future and distant privilege, cannot deliver us from the natural falseness of our hearts. But a gospel that assures us of God's gracious mind towards sinners, and tells us of sin put away by the sacrifice of God's own Son, does surely proclaim enough to disarm our dread, to allay our suspicion, and to inspire us at once with the most child like confidence. A gospel that tells us how true Jesus has been to us is the only gospel that can make us true to Him. Any thing which would awaken in us the very slightest doubt of His grace and love, tends to make us false to Him. And surely He has been true to us whatever we have been to Him. He was true to us when he said, "Lo I come to do thy will O God." He was true to us, when, in the fulness of time, He was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was true to us, when, during three and thirty years, He sojourned below in this world of sin, seeking the lost, and gathering those who, like sheep had gone astray. He was true to us when He went into the garden of Gethsemane and drank the bitter cup. He was true to us when He endured the cruel mocking and scourging and spitting, and when He allowed the hands of wicked men to place upon His head the crown of thorns. He was true to us when He died and when He went down into the grave, when He rose again, and when He ascended on high leading captivity captive. He is true to us now in heaven, as true as He was on earth, for He ever liveth to make

intercession for us. If, then, He has been so true to us, how can we be false to Him?

Look at Jesus, Believers, and that will keep you true to Him! Look at Jesus, sinners, and the sight of what He is and what He has done will make you ashamed of that false heart of yours. It will make you ashamed of your doubts, ashamed of your treachery, ashamed of your unkindness, ashamed of your unbelief, and make you fall at His feet, saying, MY LORD AND MY GOD! Looking at yourself may make you afraid to trust, but looking at Him will make you afraid and ashamed to distrust. Looking unto Jesus is the cure for a false heart, and the only way for producing a true one.

Kelso, August, 1844.

WITHOUT GOD

"Having no hope and without God in the world"—EPH. 2:12.

"Be astonished O ye Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord; for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."—JER. 2:12.

WITHOUT GOD! What a fearful condition of soul! What a state of misery, of gloom, of solitude, of dark and dismal emptiness. A wilderness at midnight is nothing to this. A world without a sun is nothing to this. It is the summing up of all that is forlorn and sad in a

sinner's lost estate. It can scarcely be called a picture, for it consists but of a single stroke, yet it conveys to us as full an idea of utter desolation and despair as could have been done by a thousand touches.

How awful the condition of an immortal being, of whom it can be said, that it is "without God." His presence is peace, his love is bliss, his fellowship the fulness of joy. There is no sunshine like the sunshine of his countenance, and no warmth like the warmth of his affection. What a dreary void, then, must that soul be that is "without God in the world,"—without God in such a world as this? Men feel this, though they will not own it. Hence they run from one occupation to another, from scene to scene, from pleasure to pleasure, in order that, by keeping their minds incessantly engaged, they may drown the consciousness of the dread emptiness within. Hence they prefer to be burdened with cares and toils, to be annoyed with the over-pressure of business, rather than be left to the feeling of this dreary void within the soul. They are like children afraid to be alone in the dark. All without is lonely, for God is not there, and all within is still more lonely, for God is not there.

But, then, even when brought to see this, even when brought to see, or at least to suspect, that all this uneasiness arises from the absence of God, they shrink from the idea of becoming religious. They cannot bear the thought of his near presence, of his coming in to fill and possess their souls. An absent God, no doubt, they felt to be the source of their misery, but still a near, a present God they cannot bear to realise.

Why is it thus? Whence this dread of God? Whence this unwillingness to re-admit him into their hearts? Because they are afraid of Him, and think that they can neither be safe in his hands

nor happy in his presence. They feel uncomfortable at the thought of his coming so near. They willingly go through a form of religion, because its whole design and effect are to keep out God. Strange as the statement may seem, still it is true, that the religious observances of all mere professors are gone through with the express end of keeping God at a distance. By paying Him the compliment of their devotions, they think to bribe Him to keep at a distance from them and not break their repose by coming too near. This preference of forms which create a sort of fence between the soul and God, and this dislike of a religion that would bring us into personal contact with Him, plainly arise from an aversion at his holy character, and a distrust of his intentions towards us.

It is awful to think that there should be such estrangement between the soul and the God that made it, and that there should be any jealous suspicion of Him in man's breast, or any unwillingness to have Him for our friend and father. No conduct can be more unnatural than this, no ingratitude more monstrous and inexcusable. When a son hates his father, shuns his company, and leaves his house, we call his conduct unnatural and abominable. But what is this in comparison with the sinner, who has ill-treated the God that made him? The earthly ties of blood, the closest, dearest, relationships of men are as mere threads of air when compared with the bonds which unite the creature and Creator together. Dislike of God, then, must be a thing so hateful and monstrous as to stand at the very top of human guilt, the sum of nameless crime! Surely He, whose offspring we are, in whom we live and move and have our being, is our nearest and ought to be our dearest relative of all in earth or heaven; nearer far than father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife. These, no doubt, are names of tenderness and affection. They are relationships both close and dear. Yet how weak are ail of them together, to convey even an idea of the near and

tender relationship that subsists between the Creator and his offspring. The love and endearment with which these beloved names are associated, are but as shadows when compared with the love, the tender, the profound, the unutterable love which ought to overflow in us towards Him who is so infinitely better, kinder, nobler, truer, tenderer, more loveable than all. If their love be so deep and warm, what must His be? If their sympathy be so sweet and pleasant that, without it, earth is a blank, and even home a desolation, what must His be? If their character be so endearing and attractive, what must His be who constituted all these relationships as emblems of the one blessed and absorbing relationship between Him and his creatures? If the things of earth, even of a fallen earth, be so very beautiful, what must He be who clothed them with all that loveliness, and who is himself the birth-place of all beauty, the centre of all perfection, and who scatters abroad all this goodness as a drop out of the infinite ocean of divine excellence and glory? How awful, then, must be the guilt, how desperate the misery of those who neither know nor love this Being of Beings, the ever-blessed, ever-glorious God and Father of all!

WITHOUT GOD! How awful the doom were such a sentence pronounced against any region of God's dominions. How awful when such is the state of the human soul!

Sinner! such is your present state. Is it not truly sad? You do not yet know what it means in all its reality, but there is enough in what you do know to make you feel how fatal to your peace is the existence of that aching void within. Terror is not yet revealed. Wrath is still in reserve. The sword still slumbers in its sheath. But there is something even now eating, like a canker, into all your enjoyments, and poisoning all your pleasures; something which makes life a weariness and death a terror. You feel that all is not right, that there

is a dreary blank in the midst of all that you enjoy. That secret undefineable want which you feel is the want of God's friendship. Nothing else will remove that sense of hollowness within, which casts a shade over your life. You are without God and, therefore, without peace. You cannot be happy so long as He is absent. There cannot be any true enjoyment so long as you enjoy nothing in him, and him in nothing.

But if such be the secret of your unhappiness, then you see where lies the secret of your peace. You see whence your joy is to flow. It must be from having the friendship of God;—from having his love shed abroad in your heart. Nothing but the knowledge of that love can remove the uneasiness that preys upon you, or put you in possession of that which will fill up the dreary void within and dissipate all your gloom. "Acquaint thyself now with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee. If thou return to the Almighty thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles, then shalt thou lay up gold as the dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy gold, and thou shalt have plenty of silver; for thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God; thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows; thou shalt also decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee, and the light shall shine upon thy ways."

Perhaps you are saying, "Who will show me any good?" You are looking round for some one to point out to you the way to rest. Well, Jesus stands before you, and says to you, what He did to the blind man in the days of his flesh, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Is your answer the same as that of the blind man? "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Like him, perhaps, you may know little of Jesus, little of what the light really is, little of what true joy consists

in; but are you putting your soul into the hands of Jesus? Then shall you receive your sight and be made altogether whole. As a sinner, blind, naked, miserable and vile, draw near to Him. He refuses none. He will open your eyes. He will relieve your weariness. He will bless you with the fulness of His own free love. He will fill up the aching void within. He will give you rest. He will satisfy your weary soul. He will lead you to the Father, and, in the fulness of the Father's love, you will learn to bury all your griefs and cares. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever."

Kelso, August, 1844.

THE FALSE PEACE AND THE TRUE

"They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying Peace, peace, when there is no peace"—JER. 6:14.

HAVE YOU PEACE WITH GOD? I do not ask, do you hope to have peace, or do you think you shall one day get peace, but have you, at this moment, peace with God? Perhaps you have not. Well then, is all right? Do you feel no uneasiness within you? Is there not a secret voice which says, there is something wanting still, and, until that something is supplied, I cannot be happy. The world may smile or frown, still cannot be happy. Riches may come or go, still I cannot be happy. It may be storm or sunshine, still I cannot be happy. There is a blank within, a feeling of dissatisfaction, a consciousness that all is not right with this soul of mine. It is to this feeling that the prophet

Jeremiah refers, when he speaks of "the hurt of the daughter of his people."

Israel was "hurt." She was smitten and wounded. Her sins had wounded her. God's chastisements had wounded her. There was a breach between her and her God. The whole land lay bleeding under the fearful wound. Her false prophets tried to heal it. They prophesied smooth things. They tried to persuade her that her case was not so bad, and that God was not so angry. Thus they skinned over the wound. They healed it slightly. It looked as if it were healed, but that was all. It soon broke out again, and brought the nation to utter ruin and death.

So the sinner is "hurt." He is wounded to death by sin, It is no slight bruise, no partial or transient sickness. No. the whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot unto the head, there is no health in any part. It is a desperate and deadly wound, incurable by the skill of man. When a limb is out of joint or wrenched from the body, there is a "hurt,"—there is pain most grievous and agonizing; so, when the soul is torn asunder from Him that made it, there is a still more terrible wound. The separation of the soul from God is our deadly hurt. It is this that puts the soul out of a condition for enjoying anything, just as, when, a limb is dislocated, the body is unfitted for any kind of enjoyment. It is not possible that the sinner can be happy so long as this wound remains unhealed. And besides, this alienation from God is in itself misery. It is the misery of being at enmity with God. It is the misery of having his wrath abiding upon us. It is the misery of being severed from the fountain of all blessedness, and of having no prospect before us but that of the everlasting vengeance of Him who is a consuming fire. What a deadly wound is this! It is surely enough to make every sinner tremble when he thinks that this is the hurt under which his soul is pining away;—

that this is the secret source of all that present misery which he feels, and of all that future misery which is in reserve for him throughout eternity. The sting of the second death is in his vitals already. The worm that never dies is wreathing and tightening its folds around him even now. The fire that shall never be quenched is already kindled within him and sending forth its intolerable heat.

There is a slight way of healing the sinner's hurt,—"saying Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Israel's false prophets healed her hurt slightly by prophesying smooth things, and uttering "false burdens;" so there is a way in which false teachers heal the sinner's wound slightly, or in which the sinner himself heals it slightly. It is sometimes said, Your sins are not so great, and there are many excuses for you. But this is unavailing, for conscience tells that our sins are great and that all excuses are vain. Or, it is said, The state of your soul is not so bad, not so corrupt as it is represented, and you can amend when you like. This, too, is unavailing. The sinner feels that his state of soul is really bad, and that he cannot improve himself. Or, it is said, God is not so angry and His law is not so strict. But this, too, is vain. It may soothe the soul for a little, but conscience tells that God does hate sin, and that his law is "exceeding broad." Or, it is said, future punishment is not so terrible as it is supposed to be, and there will be multitudes in the same condemnation. But neither does this bring peace. Still the soul hears the voice of God asking, "who can dwell with the devouring fire?" and it feels that no amount of companionship can make the flames of hell more tolerable. Or, it is said, Do good works, give alms, live well, and this will pacify the soul. Alas, no! Still it is felt that no good works or alms-deeds can ever make God forget that we have sinned, or blot out that penalty, "the soul that sinneth it shall die." In all these ways there may be a temporary relief, a transient ease, but that is all! There is a covering over of the wound, but nothing more. The hurt is

still unhealed. The wound is still there, as deadly and as desperate as ever. And why is it so? Because all these different methods of cure still leave the root of the malady the same. They do not touch the seat of the disease. They do not replace the severed limb in its original position. They do not bring back the soul to God. They all stop short of perfect reconciliation with God. Unless this is reached, all is vain. Any method which leaves the soul still uncertain as to its relationship to God and friendship with him, is vain. It is a slight healing of the hurt. It does not go deep enough. It does not embrace the whole disease. It says Peace, peace, when there is no peace.

But there is a true way of healing the sinner's hurt. There is a sufficient and suitable cure provided. There is balm in Gilead and there is a Physician there. The false cure was saying Peace when there was no peace. The true cure is saying Peace when there is peace. Right peace, in a right way, is the cure of the soul. Nothing will heal it but this. Peace with God, forgiveness, reconciliation, friendship, the assurance of his love, these are the means by which the wound is thoroughly and eternally healed. This is the removing of all distance, the bringing back the soul to its original state of blessed relationship to him who gave it being. This is the re-union of the soul with that God in whose favour is life, and whose friendship is the sunshine of eternity.

There is ground for this assured peace. Not because we are less than the chief of sinners, but because Christ died for the chief. Not because we can make peace for ourselves, but because God has made peace for us through the blood of the cross. It is the cross of Christ that heals. "By his stripes we are healed." From his wounds there flows a healing virtue, so that as many as touch them are made perfectly whole. His blood has opened a fountain whence the waters of life pour themselves, in healing streams, through this diseased

world. Israel was healed in the wilderness, by looking to the brazen serpent. So, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

"Acquaint thyself now with God and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee." It is simply acquaintanceship with God that brings peace, and that peace draws after it every good. It is what the soul sees, in the character of that God who has given his Son, that relieves the troubled conscience. It is this that unburdens the spirit and eases the heart. It is this that makes us feel at home with God, and assures us that there is forgiveness with him. It is this that makes us feel that he is just such a God as we can perfectly trust, just such a God as a sinner may flee to. This knowledge of what God is, and what God has done in sending his Son into the world that we might live through him, removes our suspicion and dread. It shows us how unkind and unjust it was in us to eye him as a hard master, whose presence could only disturb our peace. And this goes to the very root and seat of the disease. It says Peace, peace, when there is peace. This is the very health of the soul. This peace with God, through the knowledge of the blood that has been shed, acts like a new well-spring of life to the soul. It pours new joy, new energy, new strength into the whole man. It makes the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. It enlarges the heart, so as to enable us to run in the way of God's commandments. It makes the service of God, which before this was bondage, to become perfect liberty.

Why, then, so many doubts? Has God not done everything to take all these utterly away? Has he not told you of his love to sinners, and of that love pouring itself freely down through the channel which righteousness has made for it? Has he not sent to you the message of

love by the lips of incarnate love, his own Son manifest in flesh? Why, then, still doubt? You are hindering the healing of the hurt. Every such doubt is hindering this. For all these doubts cherish the disease and check the cure. They have their root in unbelief. They show the tendency of the soul to recur to the false methods of healing, and its unwillingness to receive the true. They are just so many attempts to mix up the false with the true, and so many grievings of that loving Spirit who is seeking to lead you at once into the free full grace of God, as the fountain of all health and joy.

KELSO, August, 1844.

GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

"To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus, our Lord.—EPH. 3:9–11.

"According to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."—2 TIM. 1:9.

"THE FALL" is a word with which we have become so familiar, that the event itself has lost its appalling magnitude of evil in our eyes. Yet what an infinite calamity was it in reality! What a triumph of the

evil one! What dishonour to Jehovah! What desolation to this earth! The flood-gates of iniquity had been burst open, and who could close them again or stay the overflowing waters? The torch which God had lighted upon earth had been extinguished, and who could rekindle it or dissipate the gross darkness now brooding over the desolate region, which had so lately been pronounced "very good?"

To the unfallen creation how fearful the disaster must have seemed! God's purpose appeared frustrated, his power baffled, his wisdom defeated, his very throne assailed. Who could now deem himself secure? Who might not in like manner fall? The highest creature-throne in heaven was no longer safe; for who could assure himself that this flood of evil now broken loose might not swell up till it left nothing but the throne of God untouched? What region, what station could be reckoned safe when this new creation had given way? What angel could feel secure, when man had fallen? Every thing created seemed on the edge of ruin, and it was as if even the Creator's arm had lost its hold over the work of his hands, and was unable to arrest the universal collapse of creation into its former non-existence, or rather into a state far worse and more terrible than that,—SIN!

For scarce had God finished his six days' work, fashioning man in his own image and providing for his habitation a world of beauty, than man revolted, and this rejoicing earth began to sink back into its former chaos. Scarce had the morning stars concluded their glad song over the new-formed earth, than they were called to weep over its ruins. Scarce had the sons of God done shouting for joy over their new-born fellow-immortal, than they were called to mourn over his untimely and disastrous fall. The event seemed like a death-blow to the hopes of the universe; and if some new-lighted star had suddenly gone out, it could not have left the circle which it enlightened in such hopeless gloom as did the apostacy of man. The former rebellion (of

the angels) had indeed broken in like a flood upon the region of blessedness above, and carried off with one sweep a whole host of God's happy creation; and fearfully strange seemed that dark event which thinned the ranks of heaven's rejoicing myriads, which first made a portion of God's universe acquainted with sin, and disturbed the unbroken harmony of heaven. But then by the formation of man that breach seemed to be repaired, and harmony restored, never to jar again. A barrier seemed placed immovably against any future invasion of a like desolating flood. When, however, this was swept away,—when the recovered harmony was marred again, the case might be deemed desperate. Each creative movement seemed only to end in more signal failure. Especially when this strange reverse was not the operation of ages or years, but the work of a moment, the case seemed doubly hopeless. What God occupied six whole days in building, was overthrown in the twinkling of an eye! It looked as if evil had the entire mastery over good, and the creature over the Creator,—and as if all things must be left to fall inevitably to wreck, the universe to drift away from the control of the hand that formed it, and sin to prove omnipotent.

But the Creator was still upon his throne, and his sceptre unwrested from his hand. He was still the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, GOD ONLY WISE, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. The time had now come for the forth-putting of his power, and the exhibition of the riches of his unsearchable wisdom and knowledge.

That very event, so appalling in itself and apparently so unforeseen, soon began to assume a very different aspect. Light broke, though but in a faint streak at first, yet sufficient to proclaim a blessed dawn and a glorious day. The creature's ruin, instead of appearing the result of accident, or as an irreparable disaster, began to develope

itself as the first indication of a marvellous purpose for manifesting the character of the Creator, and laying far deeper and broader than before the foundations on which a holy creation might be immoveably based. The darkness was permitted, not only that it might furnish a contrast to the light, but that it might afford an opportunity for bringing forth that light into sevenfold brightness and beauty. God's mighty, original, eternal design now began to unroll itself. It became evident that the fall was no unforeseen occurrence, and its remedy no after-thought, no sudden expedient devised for the purpose of arresting an unexpected calamity. The permitted entrance of sin, through man's apostacy, was seen to be part of an everlasting design on the part of God for accomplishing ends which could not have been fulfilled had sin not been allowed to enter.

When the angels kept not their first estate, they were at once consigned over to the judgment of the great day. There was no deliverance for them. Chains and darkness were their portion and inheritance. Once fallen, they were fallen for ever. Once condemned, they were for ever doomed to lie under wrath. In their case God showed himself a consuming fire. Nothing of his character was displayed save his displeasure against sin, and his swiftness to avenge it on all the workers of iniquity. Righteousness shone out in this prompt act of recompense, but no farther light was cast upon his character, no farther discovery made of his infinite mind. He had spoken out once, and let the universe know how he hated iniquity. But that was all. There was manifested no mercy, no pity, no love, no grace. It had been seen how "glorious in holiness" he was in punishing, it had not yet been known whether he could be glorious in love by forgiving. The infinite dimensions of his heart had not yet been seen. Neither had any security been given that sin should not infect the whole creation like a universal pestilence, seizing upon

every creature that either had been or might be brought into being. Now, however, by the second grand revolt, a scheme was to be introduced, which, while it was to unfold the character of Jehovah in a way which could not have been done before, was also to afford security against all future inroads of the dreaded pestilence, and stablish in holy peace for ever that universe whose very foundations seemed to be giving way.

In the creation of man, no more of God's perfections were displayed than in the creation of angels. Mercy had not yet been shown forth, nor, indeed, could be to an unfallen creature, for mercy is love to the miserable, and therefore could go forth to none but the fallen. Thus, the very goodness of the new-born creation appeared as if it would impede the display of the Creator's glory. Man, therefore, was permitted to fall. And then began the full display of God's character, by the manifestation of his infinite love; and then it was that sevenfold lustre began to be shed upon every other perfection, by the manner in which this love secured the deliverance of the object loved. The power, the wisdom, and goodness, the justice of Jehovah, rose up into new and awful grandeur, borne up by mercy, and with mercy crowning all. It was not the magnifying of one attribute at the expense of another—love at the expense of holiness; it was glorifying all the perfections of the Godhead together. It was a stupendous display of God's character. It was a marvellous insight into the bosom of the Father.

The grace, that is, the free love of God was the centre round which all this glory gathered. In redemption, we have the unveiling of this free love to sinners. In creation, it was seen that he could love the holy; in redemption, it is declared that he can love the unholy, and yet be holy himself; yea be glorified in holiness; that in the very act of loving the unholy, he could manifest more holiness than in punishing

them. The infinite dimensions of his paternal heart now began to disclose themselves. Until now, his character had only been partially revealed. But now in redeeming man, its hitherto undiscovered depths were displayed to view. Before the fall, the the question was, Can God love the sinner? At the fall this was answered by himself, and it was declared that he could; that there was love in him, even to those who had entirely forfeited it, and stripped themselves of every thing that could have attracted love. This was the dawn of day for a dark world. In this there was hope for the guilty. But the next question was, what will this love do for these worthless objects? Will it content itself with mere compassion? God's first promise proclaimed it to be a love that would rest satisfied with nothing but the salvation of its object. It was love that could not rest till it had replaced the fallen creature in its former condition of blessedness and favour. But is it a love that will encounter obstacles, that will incur sacrifices in order to accomplish its end? The answer to this was God's gift of his well-beloved Son. God so loved the world that he gave his Son. Thus it was proved that there was nothing too costly for this love to part with in order to get vent to itself in the salvation of the beloved object. This unspeakable gift is alike the pledge and measure of the love. What infinite depths of undiscovered love were thus laid bare! But, is it a love that can survive contempt and rejection? Is it a love that can love on, even when it meets with nothing but hatred in return for all this lavish kindness,—malignant enmity in requital of friendship so glorious, so amazing? The history of this world's six thousand years attests this. It has been proved that it is patient, unwearied, long-suffering love,—love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown.

It is thus, that through the fall of man, God's character has been opened up to us, and his name revealed in a way which otherwise could not have been accomplished. The exceeding riches of the grace

of God have thus been displayed to us by means of the utter worthlessness of the object on which that grace was fixed. Grace can only show itself in connection with an object in which there is absolutely "no good thing." Let there be one good thing about it,—one part not utterly naught,—and grace has no room to show itself. Grace steps in when every other attribute retires. Grace takes for granted not that we have any thing, but that we are destitute of everything; that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." With the righteous, grace has nothing to do. It hands them over to righteousness to be dealt with according to its decree. With those who can produce even one lingering remnant of goodness, one trace or token of holiness, it can have nothing to do. It has to do with the lost, the guilty, the helpless, the undone. These are its objects. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

From the beginning, God's dealings with fallen man have been such as to bring out the riches of his grace. At man's first sin, grace came forth. It does not matter whether the scene recorded in Genesis at the first giving of the promise, took place one hour, or many hours after the sin had been committed. The moment the sin was committed, grace stepped in to suspend the stroke of vengeance from the transgressor's head. Nothing but grace could have kept Adam one moment out of hell, or obtained for him the respite of a single hour. From that moment to this, grace has been flowing out to this fallen world; and in God's treatment of the sinner, its fulness has been displaying itself. One sin and one sinner were not enough for its development. It is "the manifold Grace of God;" and hence, there must be sins innumerable, and of every various form and name, as well as sinners in number countless, in order to show forth its manifold nature, as well as its infinite dimensions. In every variety of situation man has been placed, and sin of every shape allowed to develop itself, in order that grace yet more abundant might be

brought forth to meet it. Man has been permitted to wander to the utmost lengths to which it is possible for a creature to go, in order to show what resources of grace there are in God to meet the utmost extremity of sin. At each successive outburst of human wickedness, grace has come in and taken new occasion to display itself; and the more that sin has abounded, the more has grace "over abounded." The higher that the tide of iniquity has swelled, the higher has grace risen, far surmounting the utmost heights of sin; the wider that wickedness has spread its hideous circle, the wider has grace stretched her far ampler compass, proving that there is not one spot on this ruined world, even "the ends of the earth," nor one being of the fallen race on this side of hell, to which in its boundless reach it cannot extend.

Nor is it enough to say that every sinner is a monument of grace, and every sin an occasion for the display of grace. This is true, but it is not all. Each sinner is so in a way different from any other; and hence there is a different developement of grace in each. Each case is quite peculiar, and hence each case is a new, distinct, peculiar manifestation of grace. It is grace seen in a new aspect, and in a new light, such as it has in no other case ever been presented to us. It is not merely true, that the history of the ransomed multitude is a history of the "reign of grace;" but the story of each individual of all that glorious company forms of itself a distinct and peculiar history of the same. It is not as if we were merely called to contemplate and admire one dazzling blaze from one great central planet; it is the form and lustre of ten thousand resplendent orbs that we are summoned to gaze upon; learning from each a different story, and gathering from each a peculiar display of the infinite power of God. Thus, each saved sinner is a trophy of grace in a way such as no other sinner is or can be. Each has a wondrous story to tell of the grace that sought and found him; and each has a story of his own, such as no

other has or can have. It is of grace that all have learned to sing; but one has one thing to say of it, and another another; all marvellous, yet all different! And then each single sin of each of these redeemed ones has been the occasion of a separate display of grace! What a history of manifold grace, then, does the life even of one ransomed sinner furnish! What, then, must be that manifestation of it brought out by the whole history of the great multitude that no man could number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!

But how far has this grace come? It has come the whole length of a sinner's distance from God. It did not wait till the sinner sought it ere it came forth. It came unbidden and undesired. Nor did it wait till some of the distance had been removed, or some of the hindrances surmounted by the sinner himself. It traversed the whole distance itself, and overleaped, or rather levelled every barrier. It burst forth spontaneous from the bosom of eternal love, and rested not till it had removed every impediment, and found its way up to the sinner's side, swelling round him in full flow. It does away the distance between the sinner and God, which sin had created. It meets the sinner on the spot where he stands, and it approaches him just as he is. It does not wait till there is something to attract it nor till there is some good reason in the sinner for its flowing to him. No; unattracted, and without any reason in the sinner, it pours itself forth in all its fulness towards objects whose only title is their utter worthlessness, and their possessing nothing for the holy eye of God to delight in.

But what does grace expect from the sinner? Simply that he be a recipient of its boundless fulness. It asks no recompense afterwards, just as it sought no recommendation before. It does not calculate upon receiving an adequate requital in order to compensate for its freeness before. No. It never supposes anything in man but

unworthiness, nor could it do so without losing its character as grace. No doubt, when once it comes into contact with the sinner, it flings and fastens round him bonds of resistless love; it sets the whole soul in motion towards the God of grace, but this not as a matter of recompence, but simply a necessary and inevitable result. It is grace entirely from first to last. It was grace when it first thought of the sinner; it was grace when it found and laid hold of him; and it is grace still when it hands him up into glory.

But what is the extent of this grace? It is boundless. Like the heart of which it is the gracious out-flowing, it is altogether infinite. No amount of sin can impede its course, or arrest its resistless flow. Transgressions of scarlet and crimson in a moment disappear before it, and become like snow or wool. Mountains of iniquity are levelled at its touch as the small dust of the balance. An ocean of guilt evaporates as a drop before its glowing warmth, and becomes as if it had never been. No number, no extent, no enormity of abominations can withstand grace so free, so abundant, so omnipotent. Where is the sinner on this side of hell that is beyond its reach? What mountains of sin can it not level; what valleys of iniquity can it not exalt, till the highway between the sinner and God is made straight and plain, so that none need mistake it or stumble upon it, or imagine that it is not for him?

But how has the distance been removed? How have these mountains been swept away? How have mercy and truth met together? How have righteousness and peace kissed each other? The apostle answers, "he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that he might be made the righteousness of God in him." And again he tells us "him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." It is by the blood of sacrifice that the channel has been opened

up through which grace might find its way to us. Nothing but propitiating blood could effect this. Grace was from eternity in the Father's bosom, but it was, if we may so speak, pent up, and could find no vent to itself till the death of God's own Son opened up a righteous way. It is then through blood that grace reaches us, the blood of a sin-bearer, a substitute; blood that proclaimed God's infinite love of holiness, and infinite abhorrence of sin; blood whose shedding proclaimed to the universe that not one jot or tittle of God's inexorable law had fallen to the ground. It is by this accepted sacrifice that grace now flows freely down to the chief of sinners. It is thus that the distance between the soul and God is done away with. It is thus that God can speak peace to the unrighteous and be righteous still; yea, be more righteous than before,—be glorified in every holy perfection. The law has been magnified, and its uttermost penalty exhausted by another as our substitute, and thus the lawful captive is permitted to go free, and in his freedom God is glorified.

But how does this grace become connected with individuals so as to save them? It is free in itself, but may not its coming to the soul be a matter of merit or purchase? No! The link that binds it to the soul is as free as itself. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is by believing God's declaration concerning the grace that a way is opened for its entrance. And this believing is the result of the Holy Spirit's teaching,—the effect of his almighty power. In believing it we become recipients of it, just as by our unbelief we were rejecters of it; and this change, this reversal of our attitude in reference to grace is through the mighty power of God. There is nothing that the natural man is so unwilling to admit or so unable to comprehend as grace. In our dealings with each other, equity, law, justice are supposed to mingle, but grace is not admitted. Hence we are far more ready to introduce the former than the latter into our dealings with God, and we more easily understand

principles of legal right and claim than principles of simple grace. The natural mind is as much a stranger to the very idea of grace as the natural heart is opposed to it. Hence unbelief of this grace is our besetting sin. It is the rock upon which sinners stumble and are lost. They will submit to any thing for salvation but grace. They would do any thing to be saved, but take it freely they will not. They prefer to perish. Hence the necessity of the Spirit's taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the soul.

And what, then, is the effect of grace, believed by the sinner? Peace with God and a holy walk with him through this wilderness. Being justified by faith we have peace with God. The perception of God's gracious character, the belief of his forgiving love, removes the gloomy dread of him which the awakened conscience entertains, and we see in him a Being such as we can rejoice in, such as we can hold fellowship with, even in the full consciousness that we are the chief of sinners. Acquaintanceship with God produces peace as its immediate and sure result, and the soul being at peace with him delights to walk with him in holy fellowship and filial trust, seeking to be entirely like him whom he loves, and to spend and be spent for him who has removed his sins from him as far as the east is from the west.

But there are "riches of grace" in God, which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard;" riches of grace which, for their full developement, are reserved for the ages yet to come. (Eph. 2:7.) We are told of the "grace that is to be brought us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:13.) Eternity alone will unfold these unsearchable riches, and disclose all their unfathomable depths. What openings up are yet to be made of God's marvellous grace! What a reserve of rich discovery is in store for the ransomed multitude, when out of the bosom of eternity new treasures of grace shall unroll themselves, as if all that is past had been as nothing when compared with what is still to come!

If such be the "exceeding riches of the grace of God," past, present, and to come, what ample encouragement is held out to sinners! There is grace enough in the bosom of the Father for the chief of sinners. His love flows freely out like a full river, and all may come. WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE OF THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY. This love is free, and no amount of sin in us can straiten it, or make it insufficient to meet our case. It takes us just as we are, and brings to us its message of peace.

True, many refuse, but this does not alter the invitation or diminish the grace. Nay, all would refuse; not one would listen, or believe, or turn, were it not for the forth-putting of that mighty power of the Father, by which He wrought in Christ Jesus, when He raised Him from the dead. (Eph. 1:19.) It is the resurrection-power of God alone that can raise the dead in sin. And it is this that brings out the hidden depths of the love of God. It is this that shows us yet deeper riches of grace than could have been conceived. For it brings to light that deep purpose of eternal love which resolved to bear with all rejection and refusal; which resolved to put forth an overcoming power, and take possession of the very hearts that had resisted and scorned His love. The riches of grace seen in the glad tidings of great joy are unutterable; but the riches of grace brought out in subduing the very souls that had for years rejected these, are deeper—vaster still. And every soul that has been drawn by the Father owns and feels the amazing grace that sent from above, and took him, and drew him out of many waters. He owns the deep love that at first sent the message of peace; but he also owns the deeper love that made that message effectual,—that won his heart,—that subdued his whole man,—that wrought love in him in whom there had been nothing but enmity before. Take, for instance, a people to whom some faithful messenger of God has for many a Sabbath preached the glad tidings of the kingdom. Each message that he brought proclaimed the free love of

God. Long it was rejected. At length the Spirit was poured out, and the Father drew many sinners to Himself. Was not this a new store of love that had hitherto remained unopened? Was not this a fuller gushing forth of the fountain of love? There was love manifested before in the message, even when not a soul was converted; but the conversion of so many souls was an additional manifestation of love. This was bringing into view an inner circle of love,—the love that led not merely to the opening of a way of salvation, but of actually saving,—the love of the Father in "drawing," the love of the Son in "quickening,"² and the love of the Spirit in "renewing."

Oh, surely the God in whom there are such "riches of grace" is just the very God for a sinner to go to. The grace thus manifested is just the very thing that he needs; and the knowing this grace must be enough to dispel his fears. To know this free love, to go with assured confidence to that God in whom it is, as soon as we have heard that it is there, and to sit down among His children simply as those who have believed his love,—this, this is blessedness,—this, this is the foretaste of being for ever with the Lord.

To this we are invited. To this the gospel calls each weary child of Adam. It is into our Father's house, and into the fellowship of our Father's love, that the Spirit fain would lead us, knowing that there is enough and to spare. And, oh! who would not enter in and rejoice for ever? WHOSOEVER WILL, is the word that salutes the ear of the far-off wanderer, and beckons him home. WHOSOEVER WILL, is the inscription above the gate. WHOSOEVER WILL, is the word of welcome that greets him as he enters the long-forsaken dwelling.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blest us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the

world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."—Eph. 1:3–5.

KELSO, FEBRUARY, 1845.

THE CHOSEN ONE

"My Chosen One in whom my soul delighteth."—IS. 42:1.

"My Servant whom I have chosen."—IS. 43:10.

"The Christ, the chosen of God."—LU. 23:35.

IT is Jesus who is THE CHOSEN ONE. He is, by preeminence, the object of the Father's choice. Above all other beings in heaven and on earth, and in a way infinitely distinct from every one of them, He is the eternally chosen of the Father,—the chosen of Him whose divine wisdom knew well the value of that which it was choosing, and, therefore, could not choose amiss.

He alone was chosen for what was good in Him. God may have reasons for choosing objects, apart from what He finds in themselves; but in the case of the only begotten Son, it was the matchless excellence and glory found in Him that made Him the

object of the Father's everlasting choice. It was thus that He was "set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, being daily His delight." Other objects might be chosen for something good in them, and God, in looking upon these objects of His choice, might pronounce them "very good."² But still even these had only something that was good in them, Jesus had all. They were destitute of many things in which God delighted, Jesus was wanting in none. He had every thing that the Father's heart could desire. Every unsinning creature is good according to its kind, and may to that extent be the object of choice. But every creature is lacking,—lacking in many things, and, therefore, cannot be the object of full and satisfied choice to him who can be completely satisfied with nothing but what is absolutely perfect, not only without a sin, but without an imperfection or flaw. This perfection was found in Jesus alone; and because of this He was the Father's Chosen One. Jehovah's whole soul was satisfied in Him; and it must have been boundless excellence on which the Father's soul could thus entirely rest.

The saints are doubtless the objects of the Father's choice. Hence they are said to be "called according to His purpose." They are said to be "chosen before the foundation of the world." They are said to be "from the beginning chosen to salvation." But still they are not chosen as Jesus was. It cannot be that they should be the objects of Jehovah's choice as Jesus was. In their case it is an object altogether unworthy that is fixed upon; in His case it is the opposite. In their case it is not the good that is found or foreknown in them that causes them to be chosen; in Him it was.⁵ He could not but be chosen, for in Him there centred all created and all uncreated excellence. His claims to be the Chosen One are without a rival; for all was perfection in Him; divine perfection, without a defect, or blemish, or stain. He was the chief among ten thousand, as much in the Father's eyes as He is in the eyes of his saints. In this, as in all other things,

He has had from eternity the pre-eminence; a pre-eminence which shall remain undisputed and unrivalled throughout all the eternity that is to come. Blessed pre-eminence for us, for He is our Head! None can ever claim to be the Father's Chosen One, as He can do. Angels may stand exalted in power and unfallen excellence, but they come immeasurably short of His matchless claims. The Church, the Bride, shall be presented "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;" she shall be placed beside Him on His throne; but still His claims remain undivided and unapproached. In regard to these there can be no rivalry, no equality, no, not the most distant conceivable approach by any other. Oh, what an infinite and ineffable perfection of "glory and of beauty" must be in Him to render Him thus above all other beings, the supreme object of Jehovah's satisfaction,—the Father's Chosen One!

Doubtless, the Church is the eternally chosen of the Father,—given by Him to Christ before all ages. This is her glory and her joy. This is her dignity above all other creatures; and well would it be for her if she would keep in mind this her peculiar pre-eminence, and live like Jehovah's "called, chosen, faithful" one. But still she is not and cannot be the chosen one as Jesus is. He has everything about him to render him altogether worthy of this honour; she has nothing but what makes her utterly unworthy of it. It is not for what is good in her, either known or foreknown, that she is chosen, for what is there in her but evil? What has she to boast of as her heritage but sin? What has she to tell of in reference to herself but sin:—sin all over, sin within and without, the whole head sick, the whole heart faint; a body of death, corruption, pollution, and loathsome deformity. Her birth and her nativity is of the land of Canaan; her father was an Amorite, her mother an Hittite; in the day that she was born she was cast out into the open field, to the loathing of her person, "polluted in her blood." What claim had she? Yet she was chosen!

Notwithstanding all her unworthiness, she was chosen! O, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God,—how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! O, the exceeding riches of His grace! For it is through grace alone that she is chosen. Had it not been for this there could have been no hope for her. It was according to the eternal purpose of grace that she was chosen. It is grace that has made her to differ from the world in which she still abides. It is through grace that she is thus "known of God," and "apprehended of Christ Jesus."² It was by "the grace of God that Christ tasted death" for her. It is through grace that she believes.⁴ It is through grace that she is saved, and has "good hope;" for it is the God of grace who hath called her to His kingdom and glory,⁶ and it is to the praise of the glory of His grace that she is predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Yet, though it is of grace, it is as sure and real as if it had been all of merit. She is as certainly and as unchangeably the object of the Father's choice as Jesus is. No two beings could be chosen for more opposite reasons, yet still the certainty of the choice remains the same. Blessed thought! we are as sure of the Father's love as Jesus is. "As my Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.... I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." In His case, this love, this choice, cannot be altered, neither can it be in ours. Both are sure and unchangeable. Both are from eternity to eternity. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."⁹

But how is it possible that the Father's choice can fix upon objects so entirely different from each other? How can the same Being choose the holy and the unholy, fixing upon both in the same eternal

purpose, and embracing both in the same paternal arms? How is it that He can choose one object which possesses all excellence, and at the same time fix upon another which possesses none? To this we can give but a poor imperfect answer. We know not aright how all this can be: and we may well stand amazed to think that so it really is! What shall we say, but "even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The mind of God is beyond all measurement or comprehension of ours. The heart of God is a depth too deep for us to fathom. Its streams of love flow down freely to us, and we drink and are refreshed. But its hidden springs of affection and choice are altogether inaccessible to us. The how and the why we cannot reason out or comprehend. We shall know something of those secrets of love hereafter, but here we only see through a glass darkly. Yet the fact itself is plainly revealed. God has set His heart at once upon the most worthy and the most unworthy beings in the universe, embracing both extremities in his mysterious choice. Of this we are assured; and it is a thought as blessed as it is true. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

But how is God righteous in so doing? Is there not something here like inconsistency? Does it not seem as if He were indifferent to the character of the objects chosen, caring little whether they were holy or unholy, since He thus fixes upon the best and the worst at the same time? By no means. His choosing Christ shows that He is not indifferent to the objects chosen. In choosing him He shows how He prizes perfection, and how He delights in it. Having given this proof of his infinite love of goodness and holiness, no one can mistake his doings in reference to others. Whatever may be his reason, it cannot be indifference to sin or a want of regard to righteousness. He has put this matter beyond a doubt, by making THE RIGHTEOUS ONE the object of his supreme and everlasting choice. And having done

this, who shall charge him with inconsistency in choosing whom He will? Is He not at liberty to fix upon the most unholy without being charged with indifference to sin?

Having found an object infinitely worthy of his choice, and set his heart on him, may He not make his choice of others depend upon reasons best known to himself, without the imputation of unrighteousness? Were He indeed to choose them, and allow them to remain unholy, this charge would be well-founded. But though He finds them unholy, He does not leave them so. He chooses them that they may be holy. In their sanctification He displays his love of holiness. His object is that they may be delivered from their sinfulness, and conformed to the image of his Chosen One. And thus it is seen that it is still holiness that He is seeking, and on which He has set his heart. In all things He manifests that his is a holy choice, even though fixed upon the unholy. What a motive for us to seek holiness! It is to this that we are called. It is this that is enjoined upon us, "be ye holy, for I am holy."

This choice is said to be in Christ Jesus. Let us mark this expression, in Christ Jesus. The saints are chosen in him before the foundation of the world. Had He not been chosen, they would never have been so. It is because He is chosen that they are chosen in him from eternity. It is the Father's choice of the worthiest that enables him to choose the unworthiest. It is this that makes it a righteous thing for him to do so. In him they are chosen, as if forming part of himself, so that they are, if we may say so, lost in him,—so identified with him that they appear as one with him. They seem never to be known of the Father, nor to know themselves, save in connection with him. If they go back to eternity, they see themselves in connection with him. If they look at their history here, they see their connection with him,—dying, buried, rising, ascending, with him. If they gaze forward into

eternity, then also they see themselves still in connection with him. One with him in the Father's purpose; one with him in his death and resurrection; one with him in his kingdom hereafter, when He comes again in his glory to make all things new.

This is our security and joy. Jesus is the Father's Chosen One! Let us rejoice and be glad in this. The Father has found an object worthy of his choice. This is the foundation on which we build, a foundation broad enough for us to build upon here, and to rest upon for ever. Let us sing the new song, "saying, with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." This chosen of the Father is our chosen too! Chosen in him from eternity, we have been brought to choose him, by that Holy Spirit who quickeneth the dead and changes enmity into love. Whom have we in heaven but him? "His love is better than wine." "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is our beloved among the sons."² We have ravished his heart, and He hath ravished ours. "His countenance is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven, his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."⁴ And weary with his long absence from us, and unable any longer to brook delay, we take up the Church's longing supplication, "make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

It is because there is such a Chosen One that there is hope for the undeserving and ungodly. Sinners! there is hope for you. The Father hath found a Chosen One, in whom his soul delighteth, and because of this He is willing to take you in, and make you partakers of his love. Because this Chosen One has deserved everything, therefore it is a righteous thing in God to give eternal life to you who have deserved nothing. Because this Chosen One has glorified the Father, therefore his love can flow freely out to you, even though the chief of

sinners. Did you but see Christ as the Father's Chosen One, you would see what full provision this makes for your forgiveness and peace. Had there been no Chosen One in whom the Father's soul could rest, there would have been no hope of rest for you. Had there been no Chosen One there could have been no accepted sacrifice, no precious blood, no magnified law, no justifying righteousness—no hope at all for any sinner. But now there is hope, certain hope, for such as you, even though the guiltiest on this side of hell, because there is such a Chosen One as Jesus, the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. The more you realize of the infinite excellence of Jesus, the more you will understand the true foundation of a sinner's peace. The more you see in Jesus what the Father sees in Him, the more will you comprehend the glad tidings of great joy concerning Him, and learn to rejoice and sing "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Oh, come and share this joy. You are welcome. Tarry not a moment, lest the open door be closed for ever. Strange that the Chosen of the Father should not be your chosen too! Strange that the Chosen of God should be the rejected of men! Yet so it is! Oh, sinner, is it always so to be? Are you to stumble upon this stumbling-stone laid in Zion, till you stumble into hell?

"Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which believe He is precious, but unto them which be disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the Word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed."

"WHOSOEVER SHALL FALL ON THIS STONE SHALL BE BROKEN, BUT ON WHOMSOEVER IT SHALL FALL IT WILL GRIND HIM TO POWDER."

HYMN

SAVED from the awful guilt of sin

By Him who bare the cross;

We'll now a cheerful strain begin

Where God began with us.

We sing the vast unmeasured grace,

Of height and depth untold,

Which did the saints elect embrace,

As sheep within the fold.

We had not known the blood for sin,

Nor sweets of pardoning love,

Unless our worthless names had been

Enrolled for life above.

Well may we sing, since bought with blood

Of God's eternal Son:

Oh, how secure God's purpose stood

Ere time its race begun.

THE LAST TIME

"Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time."—1 JO. 2:18.

"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."—JAMES 5:8.

THE Apostle John, in the first of these passages, tells us, that the last time was begun in his days. It was going on when he wrote. The Apostle Peter tells us, that the last days were to end in the coming of the Lord, as we read throughout the whole of the third chapter of his Second Epistle. We thus discover the beginning and end of the period so often spoken of in Scripture as the last days. Its beginning was in the Lord's first coming and its end was in His second coming. The whole period between His first and second comings is called by this name.

Now, what was to be the character of these days? Was it to be good or evil? Evil, undoubtedly, to the very last. John tells us, that the special mark of these times was to be the prevalence of Antichrists. The last days were to be the times wherein Antichrist should have sway. They were not to be Christian but Antichristian in their character. There were to be "many Antichrists," but, as they drew near their close, there was to be One Great Power—one great adversary of God and His Christ exercising dominion. He is called Antichrist! The Antichristian tendencies began to show themselves even in the Apostles' days. They have gone on since then, showing themselves in many different forms. But as the days draw near their close, there is to be one great Antichrist, more hateful, more blasphemous, more

atheistical, and more powerful and extensive in his sway than any heretofore. He is to rise up in awful strength and cruelty, in daring defiance of God and hatred of His people, till he be utterly destroyed by the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

That the whole period between the First and Second Comings of Christ is evil and not good, may be shown from many passages, both of the Old and New Testament. We select a few. Our Lord, when answering the questions of his disciples about his coming, and the signs of it, makes no mention of any thing but wars and wickedness, tribulation and sorrows, onward without interval or cessation, until his coming. So far were these from ceasing, as the time of his coming drew on, they were to increase and grow worse as time went on. Iniquity was to abound, and the love of many wax cold. The time before his coming was to be like that before the deluge; like Noah's days, when wickedness overflowed, or like the days of Lot, when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed.

Paul, when speaking of the last days, tells us that they were to be wholly evil. "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come." And he adds, that so far from their growing better, they are to increase unto more ungodliness; "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." He tells us, moreover, in the second chapter of Second Thessalonians, that the "man of sin" had begun to work even in his own days, that it would go on increasing more and more, until the appearing of the Lord, and that then, but not till then, would it be overthrown;—"whom the Lord shall consume by the spirit of his mouth, and destroy by the brightness of his coming." It is plain, then, that the whole period called the last days, the period between the First and Second Comings of the Lord, was to be one of Antichristian wickedness and tyranny.

Daniel also gives us a description of this period. First, under the symbol of a great image, he sets before us the history of the empires which were to exist, until the stone cut out of the mountain without hands falls on the toes of the image,—that is, upon the Roman empire in its divided state, which stone must refer to the Second, and not to the First Coming of Christ, as that empire was not divided in that manner till long after the First Coming of Christ. Under the symbol of the four beasts, he gives us another picture of the times of Gentile oppression and wickedness. These times began in the prophet's days, and they are to continue till the Second Coming of Christ. This is plain from the prophet's description. First, the Babylonish empire rises up into power, and then passes away. Then the Persian empire succeeds, and passes away. Then the Macedonian empire succeeds, and passes away. Then the Roman empire follows, and is still in existence, and shall continue so, says the prophet, until the fifth or last kingdom comes,—the kingdom of Christ and his saints. "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days; and they brought him near before him: and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." Thus we learn that the whole period called the times of the Gentiles, is to be one of oppression and ungodliness, and wearing out the saints of the Most High, and that this period does not end till the Second Coming of the Lord.

During all this period of the last days, the Church of Christ is to be a "little flock,"—a small and despised remnant; like Noah in the days before the flood, like Lot in Sodom, like Abraham among the Canaanites, like Israel in Egypt, like the captives in Babylon, like the early Christians at Rome and Corinth. Her present state is to be one of oppression and persecution by the world. She is an injured and afflicted widow, having none to vindicate her cause on earth against

the cruelty of her adversaries. Her clothing is sackcloth, and her only crown the crown of thorns. Hence all the promises of Scripture, especially of the New Testament, take for granted this afflicted state. They suppose that she is to continue in that state until her Lord and Master come. In the Bridegroom's absence the Spouse mourns and weeps. Consolation is administered, and promise upon promise is given to sustain her during the absence of her Lord. But all these consolations point forward to a time when the Bridegroom shall come, and the Church shall no longer sit desolate and sad. Till He come, however, she has no promise of deliverance from her widowhood and sorrow. Till He come, her tribulation does not end nor her triumph begin. These "exceeding great and precious promises" are to uphold her in the day of her sorrow, and to be as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise. Hence it is to his coming that she is looking as her blessed hope. It is for his arrival that she is waiting with such longing expectation, wearying for the times of the restitution of all things, and saying,—*"Make haste, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices."*

Meanwhile, she has the Holy Spirit dwelling in her, as "the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." She walks by faith, and not by sight, and her faith is to her the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Saved by grace, and assured of her salvation in believing, she has peace with God, and learns to glory in tribulation. Resting on the free love of God to her, in Christ Jesus her Lord, she is "always confident," knowing that when He who is her life shall appear, she shall appear with Him in glory. Having received a kingdom that cannot be moved as her promised portion, she holds fast that grace of God which she believed at first, and serves God with reverence and

godly fear, looking for and hasting to the day of God, when that kingdom shall be her's in possession, as it is now her's in promise.

It is this hope that separates her from the world. It is a hope of which it knows nothing. It is so sure, so free, and so glorious, that it cannot even conceive of it aright. Hence there can be no community of feeling between the world and her. She is a stranger and a pilgrim here, and has nothing in common with the world at all. Many things mark her out as peculiar, but her hope especially does this,—this hope she holds fast, knowing that it shall not be put to shame. And as the last days draw nearer to their close, and her hope brightens and approaches, she seeks to walk more and more worthy of her calling. She comes out from the world more entirely, and fixes her eye and soul more intently upon the glory which is so soon to be revealed. The thickening darkness of the last days is to her the sign of coming dawn,—the forerunner of the long-expected kingdom. As the clouds grow denser and more threatening she lifts up her head, knowing that her redemption draweth nigh.

KELSO, April, 1845.

THE SIN-BEARER

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."—1
PETER, 2:24.

CHRIST bare our sins! The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. The words of Peter here are very expressive in the original language.

They imply that He carried up our sins with him to the cross, and bare them there in all their weight alone. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

Let us consider, first, the load He bore,—our sins. When speaking of this burden in the Book of Psalms, He speaks of it as a "burden too heavy to be borne." Both in regard to the number and the weight of these sins they were intolerable. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me." (Psalm 40:12.)

There had been sin. That sin must be borne either by the sinner or by one in his room. The penalty must be exhausted. The sinner could not bear it, so as to bear up under it. He must sink into perdition. Nor could he exhaust the penalty, for it is eternal. None but Christ could meet the demand and exhaust the penalty. None but He could bear up under the load, so as to endure the full amount of punishment due. And He has borne it. He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree.

Yet even He groaned beneath the intolerable weight. He who could uphold all things by the word of his power, was bowed down to the earth with the burden of sin,—sin not his own! He who could with infinite facility sustain the stupendous weight of worlds upon worlds innumerable; He upon whose shoulders rested the mighty burden of the universe;—was pressed even to agony and death, with the load of our transgressions! It was this that in the garden wrung from him the great drops of blood: it was this that made his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; it was this that nailed him in agony to the accursed tree; it was this that wrought the death of him who was the Prince of life, who had the keys of hell and death, and covered him

who was "the light of the world" beneath the darkness of an earthly tomb. Hear, how in the Psalms he continually breathes forth the groanings of his wounded spirit beneath the pressure of our iniquities; "thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore ... I am feeble and sore broken, I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart." (38:2, 8.) Again, in that Psalm, which we know was designed to express his feelings under the pressure of our sins, when bearing them upon his own body on the tree, hear how he groans under the awful burden, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," &c. Such was the awful burden which he bare on his own body on the cross. Such was the way in which it crushed and bowed him down to the earth! (Psalm 22:1.)

The feelings of the trembling sinner, when awakened under the terrors of the divine law, and made alive to the hell of sin within him, may help to give us some faint idea of the way in which the burden of our sins pressed upon Christ. It is true he had no sin;—not the shadow of sin upon him, for he was the Holy One; yet he speaks always of our sins as if they were his own, as if he had committed them. He felt under them just as if they were his own. He was perfectly holy, yet so closely were our sins bound upon him by God, that he felt the pressure just as if they were his own. Being our substitute, God dealt with him as such;—as if the sins he bore had really been his, not ours. Being thus in the eye of the law identified with those whose sins he bore, he was made to feel what they would have been doomed to feel, had God left them to reap themselves the fruit of their own transgressions. This awful burden he bore alone. He had none to aid him;—none to relieve him of any part of its overwhelming pressure. There was none that could assist him to sustain its load. None could have borne it even had they attempted; but none that really knew what the burden was, would have for a moment thought of attempting it. They would have shrunk from such

a perilous undertaking. They would rather have taken upon themselves the burden of upholding the universe, than attempted to bear even one fragment of that load of transgression which Christ bare on the tree. He therefore bore it alone. There was none to divide the burden with him; nor to uphold him under it. "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off." "They all forsook him and fled."

And, as he bare it alone, so he bare it fully and completely. Though he was alone, yet he bore it all; he left no part unborne. Though alone, he was sufficient to bear it all; his being alone did not make his sacrifice less perfect, or its effects less complete. By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. It was an infinite work, but he accomplished it all. It was an infinite burden, but he sustained it all. It was an infinite penalty, but he exhausted it all. Not a stroke was left behind. Not one drop of the cup of judgment put into his hands was left behind. Observe, then, that in bearing our sins he really exhausted the penalty. The penalty was not warded off and prevented reaching us merely; it was exhausted. He bore the punishment which we should have borne, and thereby not merely prevented the law from arresting us with its claims and penalties, but actually satisfied the law to the full. "Christ," says the Apostle, "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." (Gal. 3:13.)

The work, then, of bearing our sins is a finished work. It was in every jot and tittle accomplished by Christ, when he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. No part remains for us to do before we can obtain its benefits. No addition can be made to it in any way by us. "It is finished." It is not as if God had given Christ so much of the work to do, and left it for us to work out the rest in order to be saved. "There is no more offering for sin," now that He, by his one offering,

has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and purchased eternal redemption for us. "He has by himself purged our sins." He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: the chastisement of our peace was laid on him: he has finished transgression and made an end of sin: he has brought in everlasting righteousness, and made reconciliation for iniquity. Thus He is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth. There has been, once for all, offered a sacrifice such as the sinner needs, and such as God delights in,—absolutely perfect and infinitely precious,—the sacrifice of the Lamb without blemish and without spot; the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Here is a sacrifice which has abolished and superseded all other sacrifices, and by that very fact proved itself more perfect, more glorious than all. Here is a sacrifice, which, unlike the legal offerings of old, has never been, nor needs to be repeated, and by that very fact is proved to be more efficacious than all,—to have completely attained its end in providing a ransom for the sins of many. Here is set before us a finished sacrifice, and in that sacrifice a finished work; and in that work a finished atonement, a finished righteousness, the righteousness of God,—"He was made sin for us though He knew no sin."

Oh, what an infinite treasure-house is here displayed, of all that a guilty soul, a burdened sinner can require! Here is an infinite provision for pardon, in Him who was named Jesus, because He came to save his people from their sins. Here is an infinite sufficiency, the sufficiency of Him who was the Christ, the anointed of the Father, full of grace and truth. Here is infinite fulness, the fulness of Immanuel, God with us. The whole work is done,—all things are ready. The Lamb has been slain, atonement has been made, the rock has been smitten, the serpent has been lifted up, the ransom has been paid, the enemy has been vanquished and spoiled, captivity has been led captive, the year of jubilee, the acceptable year

of the Lord has come! The new covenant has been fully completed, sealed, and ratified; and this is the declaration of Jehovah founded upon it, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more!"

But, more fully to illustrate the perfect character of this sacrifice,—and the completeness of that propitiatory work which is built upon it,—let me endeavour to contrast this work with some of man's devices for putting away sin, and secure acceptance with God: let me show you how Christ has borne our sins in his own body on the tree, in opposition to those self-righteous ways in which blinded souls often times seek to bear their own sins; or at least to assist Christ in bearing them.

1st, then;—Christ has borne our sins in opposition to our own duties. To be saved by doing something ourselves, and to be saved by believing what another has done, are surely things so totally at variance with each other, that we are at a loss to discover how they could ever come to be confounded, or how any one professing to look for salvation from what Christ has done, could ever lean upon himself at all. Yet, as it was with the Pharisees of old, who, while most zealous for the sacrificial observances, yet trusted in their own works to make atonement for sin, so it is with many amongst ourselves. They name the name of Christ, yet make a Saviour of their duties, their good deeds, their honest or charitable doings, the excellence of their character, their zeal for public welfare, their integrity, their honourable name among men! These are made to occupy the place of Christ in the bearing of their sins. Or if they are not sufficiently self-righteous to lay the whole weight and stress of their sins upon these, yet they persist in laying at least a large proportion of the burden upon them, as if it were the design of the

Saviour's work, to lay part of the foundation, and leave them to finish it by their own exertions!

One would think that if we really knew what it is to bear the weight of sin,—even of one sin—we would shrink from the very idea of having any share in this. Yet we seem as if anxious to take some part in this awful work; as if covetous of a share in this awful honour. We seem solicitous to try our strength in bearing this tremendous burden, which none but God manifest in flesh could undertake, and whose pressure bowed even Him to the dust. We seem as if afraid lest Christ should not have done enough,—afraid lest we should be denied the privilege of bearing that which cost him the strong crying and tears, the agony of the garden, the shame of the Cross, the abasement of the tomb. But all this burden has been borne already by Him, and cannot in any way be borne over again by us. We can neither bear it in whole nor in part. It was not left for us to begin, neither was it left for us to finish: nor in any way to assist Christ (if we may so speak) in finishing it. Ours is to build upon a finished foundation, to keep the fabric separate from the foundation, and not to add any stones of our own to the sure, the perfect, the precious stone already laid. How common is it with many to conceive and speak of the work of Christ, as if the manner in which it was made available for us was by its imparting a meritorious, or at least an acceptable character to our own deeds! As if Christ saved us, not by doing anything for us, as our sacrifice or substitute, not by bearing our sins for us; but by giving such a value to all we do ourselves, as to procure our acceptance with God! What is this but to make Christ the minister both of self-righteousness and sin? It is not to believe in Christ as bearing our sins, but merely as enabling us to bear them ourselves. In opposition to such self-righteous attempts to share with Christ both the burden and the glory of redemption, it is said that Christ his own self bare our sins. The expression is made very strong and particular, just in

order to show that it was Jesus and none but Jesus; that it was Jesus and not our duties; that it was Jesus alone, and not partly Jesus and partly our duties, that bare our sins. Our duties then can bear no part of our sins at all. They cannot bear the weight of even one transgression of the law. However numerous and however goodly and excellent these duties may seem; and however few and small our sins may appear: yet still the best and holiest duty that ever a Saint performed, cannot bear the weight of even the smallest sin! It is Jesus, none but Jesus, nothing but Jesus,—who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. He saves entirely himself; he does not, as some imagine, assist us in saving ourselves; nor does he allow us, as others imagine, to assist him in saving us.

Secondly, Christ bare our sins in opposition to all outward ordinances, and privileges. How much stress do some lay on ordinances as if they were actually our Saviour's! These seem all the mediatorship to which many are trusting for removing God's anger, and securing his favour. They are strict and frequent in the observance of ordinances, and having been so, their idea is that it would be unfair and unjust in God to lay their sins to their charge. That is to say, they substitute ordinances for the sacrifice of Christ. They lay their sins upon these, as if they were sufficient to bear the weight of one single transgression of a soul! They do perhaps admit, that in the observance of these they are defective; nay, perhaps, that ordinances themselves are weak and unavailing; but then they consider that the object of Christ's death was to give ordinances a value and efficacy which they had not in themselves, by which they are rendered capable of bearing the weight of their sins. That is to say, they imagine by these ordinances to assist Christ in bearing the weight of their sins. And when they find that this does not bring any peace to their consciences, nor relieve them of the burden and sense of guilt, they are ready to say with Israel, "wherefore have we fasted,

and thou seest not; wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou regardest not." Thus they deny the great truth that the bearing of our sins is a thing already past and perfected 1800 years ago;—that Christ only, Christ wholly bare our sins in his own body on the tree. If trusting to duties for the remission of sin, may be called an attempt to bribe God to forgive us: trusting to ordinances may be called an attempt to flatter God to forgive us. True, ordinances are of God's appointment. True, they are to be diligently observed, and we can expect no blessing when we neglect them. But then they are available only for the purpose for which God has set them up, and for no other. And seeing God has appointed them not for procuring remission of sin, but for proclaiming remission through another, even through Christ, it is an insult to the God by whom they were established to use them for an end for which he did not ordain them,—it is an insult to that Saviour whose finished work they thus supersede; it is a miserable delusion of hell in the worshipper to take refuge in these as a sacrifice for sin. And this is true of all ordinances, even of that most sacred of all "The Lord's Supper." Even this ordinance, solemn as it is, glorious as it is, is not for the bearing of our sins. It has no more power than the most common rite of all to bear one single sin! It tells of sin already borne; borne by another; borne by Jesus in his own body on the tree. The bread and the wine are placed upon that table, not that they may bear our sins, or any part of our sins, but that they may testify of sins already borne. They are witnesses of sin already atoned for by another, and not to be again atoned for by us. They seal our pardon, but they do not purchase it. They seal our peace, but they do not procure it. They tell us of sin, whose weight has been already borne. They point away from themselves altogether. They point to Calvary; they point to the Cross; they point to Him who there bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and who by that one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Thirdly, Christ bare our sins in opposition to our own repentance and convictions of sin. How much and how often are sinners tempted to make these bear the weight of their sins. The formalist does this when he exalts repentance into the place of Christ, making it his atonement; when he imagines repentance to have of itself any power to procure remission. But I do not speak of the mere formalist; I speak of those in whose souls there is a deeper work going on; in whom there is much real anxiety and earnestness in the matter of religion. They are apt to lay upon conviction of sin, and mourning for sin a weight which they cannot bear. These are in themselves precious fruits of the Spirit's work in us; but be they ever so precious, they can never be substituted in room of Christ's work for us. They can no more bear the weight of sin than duties or ordinances can. Nay, their very end is to show you that sin is so awful a thing, its guilt so infinite, and its burden so intolerable, that you cannot bear any part of it yourself; and that if one fragment were to be laid on you it would sink you to the lowest hell. Convictions then are only precious when they lead you away from themselves to Christ; the law is still our schoolmaster, as it was Israel's to bring us to Christ. Yet how often is an anxious soul led to say—oh! if I but had convictions I should have peace. Alas! alas! brethren, you know not what you say. Convictions are precious things, but they bring no peace of themselves, but war and storm and trouble. Convictions are precious things, but they are not salvation; they are not the Saviour. It is well to be awakened from sleep when danger is hanging over us; but to awake from sleep is not to escape from danger. It is only to be sensible of danger, nothing more. In like manner to be convinced is merely to be made sensible that your soul is in danger. It is no more. It is not deliverance. Of itself it can bring no deliverance; it tells us of no Saviour. It merely tells us that we need one. Yet there are many who, when they have had deep convictions of sin,—strong terrors of the law, congratulate themselves as if all were well. They say, "Ah! I

have been convinced of sin: I have been under terrors, it is well with me, I am safe." Well with you?—Safe? Is it well with the seaman when he awakes and finds his vessel going to pieces upon the rocks amid the fury of the whelming surge? Is it well with the sleeper when he awakes at midnight amid the flames of his dwelling? Does he say "Ah, it is well with me,—I have seen the flames." In this way sinners are not unfrequently led to be content with some resting-place short of the appointed one. Anxiety to have deep convictions, and contentment with them after they have been experienced,—are too often the means which Satan uses for turning away the sinner's eye from the perfect work of Jesus, who himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.

In like manner, many are led away from the sure foundation by the stress they are disposed to lay upon their own feelings and frames of soul. Most of us have doubtless felt the tendency of the mind to count much upon these, as if our whole forgiveness and peace with God depended upon these,—as if we could have no forgiveness, or at least no sense of forgiveness, save when our feelings were of a certain cast, or of a certain degree of warmth and power. But it is most manifest that if Jesus has indeed borne our sins himself, then nothing in us at all can avail in aught to this end. Nothing can be more dishonouring to Christ than thus to divide the work of atonement with him. Nothing can be more perilous to the soul than thus to conclude favourably or unfavourably of our good estate, or our acceptance with God, because of the possession or the want of certain joyful emotions of soul. The work of Christ remains perfect, and the foundation of God standeth sure, notwithstanding all the fluctuations and uncertainties that may roll over us. We change: it changes not. Our feelings vary, He varies not. His love and favour toward us do not depend upon the warmth or the steadfastness of our love toward him, but remain ever the same. Our changeful

feelings may often times abate our joy, but our peace ought to abide unmoved, our conscious reconciliation ought never to be interrupted. Our peace with God, our forgiveness, our reconciliation flow wholly from the sin-atonement sacrifice of Jesus; and that has no variableness. A conscience once sprinkled with blood will whisper peace even in the darkest hour,—when new discoveries of corruption are rising up to alarm and amaze us, and our iniquities seem a burden too heavy to be borne. A soul that realizes and keeps in view the perfect efficacy of that sprinkled blood to purge from dead works, will still possess itself in peace and patience even when all sensible experience of delight has fled, and insensibility and deadness weigh it to the dust. It is not our feeling towards God that is our ground of peace, but his feeling towards us. It is not What we feel in ourselves, but what we know of Him, that produces and maintains the serenity of the soul. He is our rock. He is our peace. He is our all; and we are complete in Him!

Fourthly, Christ bore our sins, in opposition to our own faith, our own graces, and to the work of the spirit in us. It is not our faith or our holiness that bears the burden of our sins. To make a Saviour of our faith is as utterly subversive of the Gospel as to make a Saviour of our works. To trust in our works is self-righteousness,—to trust in our faith is the same. There is no merit, no virtue in believing, which we can build a claim upon. To feed upon the consciousness of faith, is not to feed upon the bread of life;—to rest upon our act of faith is to lose sight of Him who bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Our forgiveness and peace do not rest upon the work of the Holy Spirit in us,—nor upon the graces and fruits which he calls forth and ripens in the soul. It is Christ's work for us, and not the Spirit's work in us, that is the ground of our peace. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The work of grace within us cannot bear the burden of our sins; it cannot come in the room of the

finished sacrifice and the sprinkled blood, by which, being once purged, "we have no more conscience of sin." It is not upon our growth in grace and in holiness, that we are to rest our peace. It is not thus that a guilty conscience is made clear, or a burdened conscience relieved. No. Christ is our propitiation. Christ is our peace. Christ is our righteousness. We are complete in Him;—not in ourselves,—not in our holiness,—not in our love, but in Him. At all times, and in all conditions, complete in Him, so long as we hold fast our confidence in his name, and lest upon the glorious truth, which, in spite of all fluctuations in us, remains for ever the same; that He, his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Besides, our graces never will grow, the fruits of the Spirit never will ripen, so long as we hang our forgiveness upon them. It is only when forgiven that we begin to grow in grace. It is not till we are at peace with God that we can begin to be holy. And it is by constantly realizing that forgiveness, and taking it in the same way to the end, as we received it when first we believed,—that we can make any progress in grace at all. The more we grow in grace, the more shall we see of the infinite sufficiency of Jesus, and our perfect completeness in Him, however poor and empty in ourselves; the more shall we be led to throw ourselves wholly upon Christ, so that our iniquities may be all borne by Him, and none left for ourselves to bear. Let us beware of resting upon our grace instead of resting upon our Saviour. Grace is indeed a most precious treasure,—an inestimable gift; and in the conscious possession of such a treasure, you may with all safety take up the Apostle's rapturous song—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of His abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope." But still remember that it is not and cannot be our Saviour! It cannot bear the burden of our sins; it cannot purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It cannot be our advocate, it cannot be our Mediator, it cannot form the real ground of our hope and peace and confidence toward God. Christ has

borne our sins in his own body on the tree, and that is our hope, that is our peace, that is our confidence and joy.

While thus there is nothing that can give us peace but the sight of Jesus bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, there is nothing that can humble us but this. An un-forgiven soul is always self-righteous and proud. It is the free, the complete forgiveness of the Cross, that humbles the soul and melts the heart. A partial forgiveness, that would keep us in suspense, would only harden and irritate the soul. But a complete forgiveness prostrates at once the rebellious spirit,—disarms its suspicions,—dissolves it in penitence and love! "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn!" So long as we conceive of the forgiveness as partial, so long we are afraid to search into the depths of iniquity within, we are afraid to know the worst. Till the conscience is thoroughly purged by the blood of sprinkling, we shrink from the frill and unreserved scrutiny of our hearts. But when once the conscience is made clean, then we dread no longer even the fullest exposure in the clearest light, for we already know the worst of ourselves, that we are the chief of sinners, and we know the best, that we are completely forgiven! In these circumstances, we are delivered from all temptation to palliate the guilt or lessen the number of our sins; we feel now under no necessity to vindicate ourselves, or to take any other ground of defence but just that we are the chief of sinners. It is this that humbles us, and it is this that gives us simplicity and guilelessness of heart—that delivers us from every deceitful, sinister, selfish purpose and motive. And it is to this that David alludes in the 32d Psalm, when, after speaking of the blessedness of man when transgression is forgiven, &c., he thus finishes the character, and sums up the privileges of a forgiven soul,—"in whose spirit there is no guile." Being freely and completely forgiven,—all his former

temptations to deceit and guile have fled away,—his soul becomes as a weaned child.

Behold, then, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! See how He bare the mighty load of your transgressions, and how He bare it alone! His body was the point upon which all was concentrated,—upon which the mighty mass of sin was laid entire! In His death upon the Cross, behold the mighty sacrifice, the ransom for the sins of many! See there the sum of all His obedience and sufferings! Behold the finished work!—the work finished and completed in all its parts eighteen hundred years ago,—a work to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken,—a work of stupendous magnitude which He alone could have undertaken and accomplished! Behold our sacrifice, our finished sacrifice, our perfected redemption, the sole foundation of our peace and hope and joy. "He his own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." It is not said that our duties, or our prayers, or our fastings, or our convictions of sin, or our repentance, or our honest life, or our alms-deeds, or our faith, or our grace,—it is not said that these bare our sins,—it was Jesus who bare it; Jesus himself, Jesus alone, Jesus, and none but Jesus, "bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

KELSO, MAY, 1845.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,"—ROM. 1:16.

WE have had frequent occasion to state the Gospel itself. We have showed that it is glad tidings of great joy concerning Jesus Christ, "the only begotten Son of God, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we by His poverty might be rich." We have showed that he who believeth is justified from all from which law could never justify him,—that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." We have showed that this forgiveness is a sure thing,—sure to him that believeth, so that there is no need for doubt or uncertainty,—sure to him that believeth, not because better than others, but simply because he believeth. Our object at present is to bring before our readers some instances of the power of the Gospel,—to show its blessed results, so that men may see that it is a real thing, and that its blessings are present realities.

We have had frequent occasion to observe cases in which the effects of a believed Gospel were slowly and gradually brought out,—perhaps one after the other successively in the course of years,—so that we could only gather its results from the summary of a whole lifetime, and this, perhaps, after all only imperfectly in fragments, so that the true nature and effects of the Gospel were not fully seen. In such cases, it might be supposed naturally enough that it was not simply the believed Gospel that wrought the happy consequences, but the gradual inward process going on in the soul, which, in the course of years, produced joy and peace. By this means, the real nature of the Gospel is often misunderstood, and a series of self-righteous doings and feelings substituted in its place. Thus, people are kept in darkness and bondage from supposing it necessary that it should be so, and that a long period must elapse ere the Gospel can

take effect, and till they can hope to experience its joys or taste the blessedness of knowing assuredly that they are forgiven.

It might be enough to point to all the believers mentioned in the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles contain the records of thousands of cases in which the Gospel took immediate effect, and not one in which its blessings were indefinitely postponed, and they who believed it left in darkness and disquietude. What better instances can we have than those, of the immediate and most blessed results of a believed Gospel. No man can gainsay these. They are so plain and so explicit. And then they are instances recorded by an unerring pen. From all these we learn beyond a doubt that the Gospel, as soon as received, brings along with it into the soul joy and peace,—light and gladness,—the very sunshine of Heaven. Now, if the Gospel wrought such blessed effects in those days, then why not now? What should hinder the same joy and peace from taking immediate possession of the soul that believeth? It is the same Gospel still. It contains the same free message of peace. It presents the same glad welcome to the sinner. There is the same Saviour still; the same precious blood—the same justifying death—the same peace-speaking cross—the same perfect righteousness. There is the same Holy Spirit working as of old, with an arm that has not been shortened, and with a power as able to quicken and save as of old. Surely, then, there must be something widely wrong if they who profess to receive the glad tidings are still left in sorrow,—nay, think it right to remain in that state, or even count it presumption to rejoice.

We know not a better way of settling this point than by adducing some modern instances, from which it is plain that to some at least among us the Gospel has lost none of its former power and gladness; and that some in our own day have found it as glad and glorious a Gospel as did those who heard it warm from the lips of the Apostles.

This will show that the blessed effects immediately following upon its belief are still manifested among us, and that to them who receive the Word of God concerning his Son simply and as little children, it is still, as of old, a record of gladness,—dispelling all darkness, and filling the soul with light. Take, first of ally the following instance. It is from a small work, called St Helena Memoirs. It is an instance very much to our present purpose, and a most interesting case indeed. The narrator was conversing with an officer who was a Deist. In the room, and hard by, there was a young man, listening to all that was said. The conversation passed on from a discussion on Deism to a simple statement of Gospel truths. But the narrator himself must tell us what these were:—"I began, as I usually did, at the universal depravity of man, his need of regeneration and a Saviour, the nature of conversion, instancing the jailor, Lydia, the thief, &c., and proving that when convinced of sin nothing prevented our instantaneous pardon and acceptance to eternal life in Christ Jesus but our own wilful unbelief. I showed the madness of looking to any works, either of repentance or any thing else, as a condition to perform before we can venture to believe or hope to be pardoned; and then dwelt upon the Scripture way of justifying the ungodly through faith alone, and instantaneously on believing. Then I dwelt on the richness, freeness, and sovereignty of grace." Such were the truths stated, and in conversation merely—conversation not directly pointed at the individual affected. They were just the common Gospel truths—nothing more:—man's lost estate,—the free salvation through the cross.

Now, mark the results, and see what a simply-spoken Gospel can do. In a short time he began to observe that though the Deist was unmoved, the young man was in tears. He sat weeping, as if utterly absorbed in what he was hearing, and unconscious that others saw him. He seemed most affected by what was said about the salvation

being immediate, and that nothing prevented him being pardoned that moment but his own unbelief. Soon after the conversation ended. The narrator and the young man were left alone for the night. As soon as they were left there alone, he took the young man by the hand, and again spoke to him in the fulness of his heart. He was utterly overpowered. He seemed overwhelmed with the deep conviction, and drowned in tears, till it seemed as if he were becoming ill. The free grace of God was then dwelt upon, and the Gospel again set before him. Suddenly his tears ceased to flow. All sorrow fled, and joy unspeakable took possession of his soul. But we must here give the very words of the narrator:—"We had committed ourselves in prayer to God, and lain down to rest; and now I remember a scene occurred which I shall never forget. It was this. His agony of sorrow had ceased, and now an agony of joy so possessed his soul that several times I thought he would have expired. I tried to allay it, but in vain. He would go on crying out in the most soul-piercing expressions, addressed to Jesus Christ. He wished to die,—then,—that moment,—and be with Christ, crying out, 'O blessed Jesus, thou hast saved me—me, a great sinner, a child of wrath;—thou hast saved me this night,—thou hast given me eternal life and glory;—I shall never perish;—oh, never, never;—thou hast made me thy child for ever and ever;—Jesus is my Saviour, God is my God.—O blessed, blessed boundless love;—boundless grace and mercy. O love, love, what boundless love to me;—an heir of Heaven, —justified,—glorified! Oh, it is too much to bear. O blessed Jesus, help me, help me to bear this agony, or I shall die. Oh, support me, or take my spirit to thyself, that I may bear it. Oh, take me now,—take me this night, that I may be delivered from this great agony of joy, and be with thee for ever and ever!' In this strain he continued for nearly an hour. I saw I could do nothing. Finding him much exhausted, I got up and tried to stop him from speaking any more, but he burst out again, and then I thought that his soul had fled, and

that that Saviour to whom he cried in his transport had taken his spirit to himself. After this, he became more composed, and sank to sleep. I watched over him. He seemed an angel slumbering in bliss. In the morning he was quite composed, and in a heavenly frame of soul; and really his countenance and manner seemed as if his spirit had been absent from the body and present with the Lord in paradise, where he had heard unutterable things, and had just returned again to this lower world of sin and sorrow. The great tide of rapture had now subsided, and peace, joy, and love seemed to breathe forth from him on all around."

Such are the immediate effects of a believed Gospel! And what it did for one it would do for all. It is as full of joy to each of us. But we put the full cup of gladness from our lips, and think it humility to taste it drop by drop! It is unbelief that mars our joy, and so misrepresents the glad tidings as to strip them of all their joy. They would gladden were they but believed. But who hath believed our report?

But take another instance of the power of the believed Gospel. It is from the same volume. The individual referred to had been visited with sickness, and, until that, had not only not known the Gospel, but nothing of the Bible at all. God blessed the words of a dear friend to him on his sick-bed, and the change was most wonderful. His weakness prevented his being taught by man. But he was taught from above, and grew rapidly in grace, manifesting the most childlike simplicity and faith in God. It is said of him, "His faith appeared to have no mixture of imperfection in it, for he simply and sincerely took for granted all that God had said in his Word, and was astonished to hear any of us express our want of assurance of faith or conscious sense of our interest in Christ. This to him was a mystery which we could never explain, and which, happily for himself, he died in entire ignorance of."

Take another case,—that of Colonel Gardiner. He had been arrested in his ungodliness by the voice of God, and thrown into deep anguish. His deliverance came thus;—

"Within about two months after his first memorable change he began to perceive some secret dawnings of more cheerful hope—that, vile as he then saw himself to be, he might nevertheless obtain mercy through a Redeemer; and at length, about the end of October, 1719, he found all the burden of his mind taken off at once by the powerful impression of that memorable scripture upon his mind; (Rom. 3:25, 26.) 'Whom God hath set forth for a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.'

"He had used to imagine, that the justice of God required the damnation of so enormous a sinner as he saw himself to be; but now he was made deeply sensible, that the divine justice might be not only vindicated but glorified, in saving him by the blood of Jesus, even that blood which cleanseth from all sin. He was led to see the riches of redeeming love and grace, in such a manner as not only engaged him, with the utmost pleasure and confidence, to venture his soul upon them; but even swallowed up (as it were) his whole heart in the returns of love, which, from that blessed time, became the genuine and delightful principle of obedience, and animated him, with an enlarged heart, to run the ways of God's commandments. Thus God was pleased (as he himself used to speak) in an hour to turn his captivity. All the terrors of his former state were turned into unutterable joy. And though the first ecstasies of it afterwards subsided into a more calm and composed delight, yet were the impressions so deep and so permanent, that he declared, on the word of a Christian and a friend, wonderful as it might seem, that, for about seven years after this, he enjoyed nearly a heaven upon

earth. His soul was almost continually filled with a sense of the love of God in Christ; so that from the time of his waking in the morning, his heart was rising to God, and triumphing in him."

Or take another less known. A naval officer was disputing with a pious lady about the necessity of the Spirit's teaching. He denied such a thing. She simply replied, "It is so." "And while," says he, "the feeling was still contemptuously curling my lip, in an instant it gave way to a joy of heart, which I cannot describe in any other way than by what would have been the state of my mind, if she could have persuaded me that I had received the Holy Spirit, and also that her assertions alluded to, were really true. It was a clear and sensible perception of the love of God in the work of Jesus Christ, without, however, being able at the time of giving any definite reason for the conviction. But that was not called for at the time, as eye saw not the effect, neither did ear hear it.

"We went in the afternoon to a chapel, where it pleased the Lord that the clergyman should read and expound the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Every sentence that he uttered was as a river of living water poured into my soul. It was then, for the first time in my life, that I saw with the spiritual eye that blessed being who 'was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.' It was in that hour that I saw a reconciled God in the Lord Jesus Christ. O, it was a joy unspeakable and full of glory! From that day a treasure in the book of the living God has been unfolded to me, and on that day the seal was broken."

Or take again a remarkable instance recorded in the life of Lady Huntingdon,—that of Dr Conyers, minister at Helmsley, in the last century. He was almost a Socinian when he began his ministry. His conversion was very remarkable—

While reading the lesson for the day in the public service at the church, the expression of St Paul (Eph. 3:8)—'The unsearchable riches of Christ,' made a deep impression upon his mind. On this scripture he was involuntarily led to reflect—'The unsearchable riches of Christ!'—'I never found, I never knew that there were unsearchable riches in Him!' Accustomed to consider the Gospel as extremely simple and intelligible, he was surprised that the Apostle should assert that the riches of Christ were unsearchable. Immediately he concluded that his sentiments and experience must be entirely dissimilar to that of the Apostle. Deep convictions accompanied these reflections, and his trouble was not a little increased by considering that if he himself was wrong in the fundamental articles of religion, he must also, by his mode of preaching, have misguided his flock, to the great prejudice of their souls.

At length the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner is attended with success, and on the 25th of December, 1758, while walking in his room, in a pensive frame, he was led to contemplate those two passages of Scripture, Heb. 9:22—'Without shedding of blood there is no remission,' and John 1:7—'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' The mists of ignorance were instantaneously dissipated, and finding that he could centre his hopes in the atoning blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, he became the immediate partaker of real and ineffable joy.

"I went up stairs and down again (said he,) backwards and forwards in my room, clapping my hands for joy, and crying out, I have found him—I have found him—I have found him, whom my soul loveth, and for a little time, as the Apostle said, whether in the body or out of it, I could hardly tell."

Or take another striking narrative from the same work,—the account of Lady Huntingdon's own conversion. She was conversing one day with a relative, Lady Margaret Hastings, who had been lately brought to Christ. This lady told Lady H. that "since she had known and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ she had been as happy as an angel." This went like an arrow to her soul. Deep conviction of sin followed. A dangerous illness deepened the conviction, and her misery was great. At length she was brought to rest on Christ, and found peace in believing—

Now the day began to dawn. Jesus the Sun of Righteousness arose, and burst in meridian splendour on her benighted soul. The scales fell from her eyes, and opened a passage for the light of life which sprang in, and death and darkness fled before it. Viewing herself as a brand plucked from the burning, she could not but stand astonished at the mighty power of that grace which saved her from eternal destruction, just when she stood upon its very brink, and raised her from the gates of hell to the confines of heaven; and the depths from which she was raised, made the heights which she had reached only the more amazing; she felt the rock beneath her, and from that secure position looked with astonishment, downward, to that horrible pit from which she was so mercifully delivered—and upwards, in ecstasy, to that glory to which she should be raised. The 'sorrow of the world, which worketh death,' was now exchanged for that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto life; and 'joy unspeakable, and full of glory,' succeeded that bitterness that comes of the conviction of sin; she enjoyed, already, a delightful foretaste of heaven.

Or take the following brief account of the conversion of Mr Mills, one of the great promoters of Missions to America—

The spiritual career of this devoted servant of Christ and the church commenced in the following manner: When about fifteen years of age, his attention was specially directed to the great concerns of the soul. For two full years he continued in a state of anxiety, quarrelling with the sovereignty of God, and often wishing that he had never been born. One morning, as he was about to leave home, to return to school in a neighbouring town, his pious mother took an opportunity of inquiring into the state of his mind, and begged him to make an ingenuous disclosure of his feelings.

For a moment he was silent, and wept; but his heart was too full long to suppress the emotions produced by so affecting a request. He raised his head, and, with eyes streaming with tears, exclaimed, 'O that I had never been born! O that I had never been born! For two years I have been sorry God ever made me.' What reply could such a mother make to such a disclosure? It was given her in that same hour what she should speak: 'My son,' said she, 'you are born, and you can never throw off your existence, nor your everlasting accountability for all your conduct.' This heavy thought was like a dagger to his soul. His mother expressed her fears that he had never thoroughly seen the evil of his own heart, and that he had much to learn before he was acquainted with himself: to which he ventured to say, 'I have seen—to the very bottom of hell!' With this frame of mind, he took a melancholy leave of his parents for the winter.

The farewell to his mother drove her to her knees. There is such a thing as special faith in prayer. It was such to this dear saint, when she went to plead for her poor son. She did not leave her closet, till she found the full relief she sought, and till her mind was confidently assured that God would remember mercy for her child! On that very morning, it pleased the Holy Ghost, as she afterwards ascertained, to knock off the chains from this unhappy prisoner, and introduce him

into the liberty of the sons of God! He had not gone far, before he had such a view of the perfections of God, that he wondered he had never seen their beauty and glory before. There was nothing in God now which distressed him. He had lost all his opposition to the Divine sovereignty; and such were his views of this adorable perfection, that he could not refrain from exclaiming, 'O glorious sovereignty! O glorious sovereignty!' He retired a small distance into the woods, that he might be the more at liberty to contemplate the character of God, and adore and extol his holy and amiable sovereignty: but he here saw so much of God, that his mind was almost lost in the overwhelming manifestation. The scene was altogether new. There was a wonderful change either in God or in him. Everything was gilded with light and glory; and now and then, as he gazed at the splendour and majesty of the Divine character, he would still exclaim, 'O glorious sovereignty!' It does not appear that in all this he was bribed into acquiescence. His mind was so constantly occupied in viewing the perfections of God, and in meditating on His word and works, and so continued for several weeks, that he did not think of himself with any degree of concern.

Or, lastly, take the following sketch of the conversion of the famous Mr Fuller—

"One morning," says he, "I think in November, 1769, I walked out by myself with an unusual load of guilt upon my conscience. The remembrance of my sin, not only on the past evening, but for a long time back, the breach of my vows, and the shocking termination of my former hopes and affections, all uniting together, formed a burden which I knew not how to bear. The reproaches of a guilty conscience seemed like the gnawing worm of hell. I do not write in the language of exaggeration. I now know that the sense which I then had of the evil of sin and the wrath of God, was very far short of the

truth; but yet it seemed more than I was able to sustain. In reflecting upon my broken vows, I saw that there was no truth in me. I saw that God would be perfectly just in sending me to hell, and that to hell I must go unless I were saved of mere grace, and as it were in spite of myself. I felt that if God were to forgive me all my past sins, I should again destroy my soul, and that in less than a day's time. I never before knew what it was to feel myself an odious, lost sinner, standing in need of both pardon and purification. I knew not what to do! In this state of mind, as I was moving slowly on, I thought of the resolution of Job, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' I paused, and repeated the words over and over. Each repetition seemed to kindle a ray of hope, mixed with a determination, if I might, to cast my perishing soul upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, to be both pardoned and purified; for I felt that I needed the one as much as the other. In this way I continued above an hour, weeping and supplicating mercy for the Saviour's sake: (my soul hath it still in remembrance, and is humbled in me!) and as the eye of the mind was more and more fixed upon him, my guilt and fears were gradually and insensibly removed. I now found rest for my troubled soul.

"When I thought of my past life, I abhorred myself, and repented as in dust and ashes; and when I thought of the gospel way of salvation. I drank it in as cold water is imbibed by a thirsty soul. My heart felt one with Christ, and dead to every other object around me.

"From this time, my former wicked courses were forsaken. I had no manner of desire after them. They lost their influence upon me. To those evils, a glance at which before would have set my passions in a flame, I now felt no inclination. 'My soul' (said I, with joy and triumph) 'is as a weaned child!' I now knew, experimentally, what it

was to be dead to the world by the cross of Christ, and to feel an habitual determination to devote my future life to God my Saviour."

Such are a few instances of the power of the Gospel. They tend very strikingly to show both its real nature and its effects upon the soul when believed. From them let us gather a few things.

1. The Gospel is just good news about God and his Son Jesus Christ. It is not good news about myself,—but simply and solely about God and Christ. It tells me of the exceeding riches of the grace of God. It tells me that there is salvation for me,—salvation to the uttermost through the cross and blood of God's beloved Son.

2. We see that the believing of these good news brings peace to the soul. It is not the believing, coupled with something else in us;—it is simply this believing that gladdens. That which brings joy to the sinner is what the Holy Spirit shews him in Christ. There he sees fulness,—infinite fulness,—fulness most suitable for a sinner,—fulness free to all,—fulness pressed upon him. And it is this that gladdens him.

3. We see that it is IN believing that there is joy and peace. There is not merely joy as the fruit of believing, but joy in believing. It is not joy as the result of examining my faith and summing up my evidences; but it is joy in believing. For in these instances there was no time for evidences to manifest themselves, there was no time for self-examination at all.

4. We see that there is no long period nor laborious process required to be undergone before peace is obtained. In some of these cases, indeed, there was a protracted time of conviction; but it is evident that the length of time had nothing to do with the subsequent peace. It is clear from these that the Gospel is fitted and designed to bring

us immediate peace, and if it does not do this the reason is because it is not believed!

5. It is of the utmost moment to press an immediate salvation upon the sinner. He is bent upon delay, and he tries to make himself believe that forgiveness is something far off,—something which he can only attain after a long struggle of fears and doubts. Hence the necessity for insisting upon the present peace which the Gospel is intended to bring, and to press upon the sinner's conscience the urgent and imperative command of God, to believe without one moment's delay. It is this urgency which the Holy Spirit owns and blesses for the conversion of sinners, and the comfort of the doubting. In nothing that God commands does he admit of one moment's delay or hesitation in obeying it, and woe be to us if we lead any sinner to suppose that he is at liberty to wait one single moment before believing the Gospel.

It has been always Satan's object to cloud the Gospel, so as to make it appear not to be the blessed gladdening thing which it was in the days of the Apostles. And hence there is a necessity for jealousy in regard to this. And it is very useful to point back to some such instances of its peace-giving power and say to all gainsayers "such is the Gospel." See its nature;—see its freeness;—see its fruits;—see the peace it brings.

"Now the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

KELSO, OCTOBER 1845.

TRIBULATION

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: Be zealous, therefore, and repent."—REV. 3:19.

THE washing of a vessel supposes that there is some soil or stain upon it which requires to be removed. There would be no need for washing were it not for this. It would be labour lost to him who washes, and, perchance, also serious injury to the vessel.

The casting of gold or silver into the furnace implies that there is dross upon them to be thus purged out by fire. There would be no need for fire, or furnace, or refiner's labour, were there no dross. It is the dross that makes the necessity for these. They are but means for getting quit of it.

So with chastisement. It supposes SIN. Were it not for sin, chastisement would be unknown. In heaven there is no chastisement, for there is no sin. Angels know nothing of it, for they know no sin. And in the coming Kingdom, when all things are made new, there shall be no chastisement, for there shall be no sin. It is only where there is sin that there is chastisement. There being such a thing as chastisement on earth, is just God saying, "I have found iniquity there." And God's sending chastisement to an individual, is just his saying, "I have seen sin in thee."

But more than this. Chastisement implies a determination to get quit of sin. It is not merely God's saying there is sin on thee, but also his adding, "I must purge it away; I cannot allow it to remain on thee." It is God's expression of his deep interest in us and his paternal anxiety for our welfare. To make us clean is what he seeks; and this he is resolved to accomplish at any cost. It must be done, for he is holy. It

must be done, for he loveth us. Sin must be got quit of whatever pain or sorrow it may require to effect it. What is pain if it expels sin? What is sorrow if it purges away the evil of our nature, or a lifetime's gathered dross?

But chastisement is something more peculiar still. In one sense, it may be said that all the woes and wretchedness of earth are intended to drive men from their sins.

God is thus speaking to all. He is thus warning all. He is pleading with men to turn from iniquity and seek his face. He embitters all sin,—he embitters all pleasure,—he fastens sorrow upon everything beneath the sun, that he may lead men to repentance and salvation. In this general way he is addressing all. To every sinner upon the broad earth he is speaking and saying "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die." Every pang that shoots through the frame, and makes the flesh to quiver, is a message from God. Every sorrow that shades the brow and saddens the eye is a message from God to a sinning, suffering world. They speak to sinners not only of the holiness of God, but of the exceeding riches of his grace and of his deep and affectionate interest in their welfare.

But, strictly speaking, this is not chastisement. Chastisement is something more special and peculiar in its nature and design than this. It is the strictly paternal dealing of God with the members of his own redeemed family. It takes for granted the family relationship. It is a family word,—a household name. For thus the Apostle teaches us:—"Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; but if ye be

without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." (Heb. 12:5–8.)

There is then a necessity for chastisement. It is part of the children's portion here. It is the family discipline, and no member of the redeemed family from the beginning has ever been without it in some measure or form. It is one of the family badges, and as such has been worn from generation to generation by all the children. Not that they are a sad and wretched company. No: They "greatly rejoice, even though now if need be, they are in heaviness through manifold temptation." There is no joy like theirs, no peace like theirs. Yet they have sorrow too. There is the tear in the eye, even when the calm smile is playing round the lip, and peace is shedding the serenity of its sunshine over the countenance. Their life is, as to most outward things, a sorrowful one; but as to what is inward, it is full of peace. They are forgiven; and that is peace. They are accepted in the beloved; and that is peace. They are delivered from a present evil world; and that is peace. They have a rich inheritance in reversion; and, that is peace. Yet have they fightings without and fears within: they are "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Yes, chastisement is their lot on earth. It is through much tribulation that they must enter the kingdom of heaven. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

Now, why is this? We are sure it is not in vain. God sends no needless sorrow to any of his children; he afflicteth not willingly. It pains him to do it, if we may thus speak after the manner of men. Why, then, does he afflict? Let us inquire into this. It much concerns us to understand this aright. For affliction misunderstood by the sufferer

becomes doubly bitter and piercing. It then becomes not only unalleviated, but unprofitable sorrow.

Chastisement springs from love,—the deep love of God. Let us never forget this. It is love that fills and presents to us the cup of sorrow. Whether it is of mingled or un-mingled bitterness, still it is love that pours it out:—the bitter as much as the sweet. The love that lets the child alone to do as he pleases is foolish love, if, indeed, it can be called love at all. But the love that restrains and chastises is deep, wise, tender love. It is from the very bottom of the loving heart that chastisement comes. Chastening love is, in truth, the deepest and most self-denying of all. Hence it shows us how much God is in earnest with us. It shows us what pains he is taking to bless us. It is in affliction that we see the strength and the earnestness of the love of God. This of itself may be enough to lead us to acquiesce in his dealings as all right and wise,—to say "it is well;" "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good;" shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? But still it is well to inquire more particularly into God's reasons for afflicting,—the ends he has in view in bringing us under the rod. For thus we shall not only be more fully satisfied that "all is well," but also learn particularly the lessons which God is seeking to teach us.

I. Tribulation proves us. We really do not know ourselves till trial comes. Of many a sin and many a weakness we are utterly ignorant till affliction brings them out and exposes them to view. It was for this end that God led Israel into the wilderness to try them and to know what was in their hearts. Their desert-trials proved them, that is, put them to the proof. And when thus proved, what iniquity was found in them that had lain hidden and unknown before! The trial did not create the evil; it did not make their hearts worse than before. It merely brought out what was there already, but had been

lying unseen and unfelt, like a sleeping serpent. When Israel was thus tried, what worldliness came out; what unbelief; what rebellious murmuring against God; what atheism and idolatry; what self-will, self-confidence, and self-pleasing! They could not have believed that such wickedness could be found in them, or that if their hearts did contain such evil, it could, have lain concealed so long. Yet it never came out till then.

So with the saints still. God chastises them that he may prove them and bring out the evil that is within. And when the trial comes what a difference it makes! The flesh, the old man, is cut to the quick, and forthwith arouses itself. When it was asleep, we did not know its strength and vitality; but now that it has been wakened up, how fearful its still-remaining might! The wind rises, the storm drives o'er us, the billows heave, and soon we know that we are but a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. When all was calm, there seemed nought but purity, and ripple folded over ripple in the brightness of their transparent green. But the tempest stirs the depths, and all is changed. So with the soul even of the saints in its hours of tribulation and storm. The hidden evils come forth. Sins scarcely known before display themselves. The heart pours out its wickedness. Hard thoughts of God arise. Atheistical murmurings break out. Questionings both of his wisdom and his love are muttered. Distrust and unbelief assume the mastery. And what a scene the wretched soul presents! All this was in us before, but we knew it not. It was needful that we should know it, and hence God sent the trial to bring it out. And thus are we led, on the one hand, into deeper views of our own exceeding sinfulness, and into fuller discoveries of the abounding grace of God. We learn to prize more than ever the open fountain; and to shelter ourselves with more confident security under the righteousness of the righteous One.

Thus the Lord proved Job. He let loose the tempter: He sent tribulation. And straightway the hidden evils of his heart come forth,—impatience, unbelief, self-righteousness. Then when the Lord has showed him these things, and led him to deeper views of sin, when he has searched him through and through, and made him to abhor himself; then he leads him to the blood of sprinkling, and sheds down anew the brightness of his gracious countenance, filling him with the joys of his salvation, and lifting up his head for ever.

II. Tribulation purges us. To be proved is one thing, to be purged is another. It is good to have the evil brought out, but it is better to have it taken away. The heat of the furnace burns out the dross, and leaves the gold behind. Now this is God's wish and aim. As he says to Israel so he speaks to us, "I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin." Is. 1:25. And, again, "when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning." Is. 4:4.

Now there is not only much in us that requires to be taken away, but much that will yield to nothing, save chastisement. Other processes of discipline may remove a great deal, yet still there remains behind very much which nothing but trial and suffering will purge away. Some parts of the stone to be polished are so hard and rough, that heavy strokes are needed to smoothe them down. They resist every milder kind of treatment.

In some, worldliness is so strong that chastisement is needed. In others it is simply love of the creature. In others it is pride that needs to be abased. In others it is selfishness that needs to be eradicated. In others it is stubbornness and stoutness of heart. In others it is the

desire of the honour that cometh from men,—man's love, man's approbation, man's smile. In others some idol needs to be broken in pieces. In others some creature comfort needs to be taken away lest we should settle down and be at ease. In others strong passions need to be broken down, or a froward will needs to be bent and subdued. These are some of the evils that need to be purged out of us. For the accomplishment of this, sometimes the trial is short, but sharp and pointed, going into the very vitals like a sword. Sometimes it is long, protracted, heavy, bruising and crushing us with its weary ever-pressing weight. Different processes are required, some longer and some shorter; some a sudden stroke of the rod, others a continual thorn in the flesh:—some a quick cutting off of the diseased member, others a long-running issue to carry off the deep-seated malady. Yet all is wise and all is gracious. Love is the prompter in all, and perfect skill is the director of each operation or each blow. To deliver us from sin, and to make us partakers of his holiness, is God's one object throughout. Oh! deep deep must be the love which takes such pains with us. It is love of which we are altogether unworthy. Who are we that God should so deal with us? Surely if we are not worthy of comfort and prosperity, much less are we worthy of affliction.

III. Tribulation rebukes us. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." It is God's way of pointing out what he sees amiss in us, calling our attention to it and condemning it. It is his way of saying, "I have somewhat against thee," or "I have not found thy works perfect before God." The rebuke of God is a solemn thing. It cannot be called anger, or a frown, or punishment; all these have passed away; from all these we are delivered for ever. Yet still there is something in the rebuke of God that should make us stand in awe. He rebukes the world, and it trembles and flees away in terror. But when he rebukes his saints, it is that they may draw near, though with reverence and

godly fear. A parent's rebuke is much to a loving child, how much more is the rebuke of our God!

He administers many rebukes, some lighter, some severer. To the former especially we often give but little heed. The touch of transient pain; a few days' illness; a slight indisposition; a passing weakness; some common domestic care or vexation; the severance of friendship; some short parting from one we love; some unkindness where least we looked for it; some disappointment on which we were not calculating;—these are his fatherly rebukes. I do not here speak of the sharper and sorer ones, for we are not so apt to overlook them. They force themselves upon our notice. We cannot mistake them. But these briefer, commoner, slighter ones need to be pointed out; for they are so little recognized, so much undervalued or unheeded, as if the hand of God was not in each one of them; as if, because they were so slight, so mild, so gentle, they were not to be owned as the laying on of a father's hand, but casual things, coming and going, we know not how or why.

I feel that this is a much-needed admonition to the saints of God, for the point adverted to is a much neglected one. Our continual tendency is to overlook any slight ailment or trouble as not worth noticing, and as not coming from God. We are thrown into a raging fever, till our life is despaired of; and in this we do not hesitate to own the finger of God. We take a slight cold or sustain some slight injury; and here the finger of God is oftentimes not perceived at all. The gentleness of the rebuke makes us forget that it comes from God! Strange! Should not its gentleness call forth immediate thanksgiving. Should not its gentleness be accepted as a new token of paternal love and care?

Ah it is thus that we provoke God to inflict heavier blows. We compel him to send the heavier chastisement by our inattention to the lighter. We make bitter trial absolutely necessary. We bring it upon ourselves. How gently God rebukes for a while! If we may speak after the manner of men, he just hints or whispers his reproof. He is most unwilling to chastise with severity. He tarries long. He tries other means. He sends milder trials, that we may be led to self-searching and repentance, and thus he will be spared the necessity of inflicting a heavier blow. But we trifle with his gentle rebukes, till he is constrained to lift up his voice and speak in a tone which can neither be mistaken nor overlooked. Oh how sad that we should thus, by our heedlessness and perversity, draw down upon us sorrows which God would fain have spared us! Let us learn the meaning and the use of small trials;—of slight rebukes. Let us count none too small or slight for our most serious thought. It will save us much. It will teach us many a blessed lesson in an easy, pleasant, gentle way.

IV. Tribulation arouses us. We often fall asleep. We dwell on the world's enchanted ground, and often, ere we are aware, we are soothed to sleep, forgetful of the quick passing time. And while we sleep, all goes wrong. Our faith waxes feeble; our love is chilled; our zeal cools down. We lose our earnestness, our boldness, our energy, our freshness, our simplicity. All our movements are those of a man but half-awake. Our schemes are carelessly formed and drowsily carried into effect. With how many In our day is it thus?

But God will not have it so. He cannot allow such indolence and listlessness in his work. Such sloth makes but poor work either in a man's own soul or in his efforts for the souls of others. We must be awakened at whatever cost. He does it gently first. He causes us to hear some distant noise;—it may be the tumults of the nations, or it may be the tidings of some terrible disaster afar off. He means by

this to awaken us out of our sleep. Perhaps this fails. Then he comes nearer and makes his voice to be heard in our own neighbourhood or within the circle of our kindred. This surely will arouse us! Perhaps not. Then he comes nearer still, for he cannot allow us to slumber away our precious hours. He speaks into our very ears. He smites us upon some tender part, till every fibre of our frame quivers, and every pulse beats quicker. Then we start up and wonder how we slept so long. But oh! how difficult is it sometimes to awake us! It takes many a stroke before we are thoroughly aroused.

Ah! let us beware of the world's enchanted ground. Many a saint has fallen asleep on it, and only been awakened by severest chastisement. Let us beware of sloth and ease, lest, being led on from step to step, we be overtaken by sleep which may yet cost us a bleeding,—it may be, almost a broken heart.

V. Tribulation solemnizes us. It is a gay world in which we live, and we are prone to fall into its levity. Around us are the sights and sounds of mirth by which a vain world is seeking to cheat away its ever-fretting uneasiness, or drown its deeper sorrows. Oftentimes the saints seem to catch the tone of levity and frivolity, making mirth with the most mirthful, jesting with the most foolish, singing the world's songs of vanity, and joining in its idle words, as if its friendships and its pleasures were not forbidden things. Apart, however, from the contagion of the world's influence, our tone is apt to fall low, and our deportment to lose that solidity and seriousness which becometh saints. We get light and airy; we give way to the current of vain thoughts; we do not set a guard upon our lips; foolish talking and jesting is too much indulged in, even among the children of God. Our words are not "with grace seasoned with salt." We forget the admonition "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may

minister grace to the hearers." And this levity, this frivolous habit, grows upon us. Seriousness becomes a thing reserved entirely for the closet or the sanctuary. We grieve the Holy Spirit, who cannot dwell amid levity and mirth any more than amid profanity and crime. He retires from us, driven from his abode by the laughter and jesting with which we were making it resound. He can no longer dwell in a temple which, from being the house of God, we have turned into a hall of revelry, a haunt of mirth and song.

I do not mean that the saint is ever, even for a moment, to be gloomy. Gloom and melancholy are not the inmates of a soul that has tasted the joy of pardon, and is walking with a reconciled God in blessed light and love. No. He rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." But still, as has been well said, "true joy is a serious thing." True joy is deep. It is the waking up of the heart's deep springs. Mirth and levity are not joy. They are too shallow and empty to deserve the name. All is hollow. In coming to him who is the fountain of all gladness, the saint of God bids farewell to gloom. Tribulation he may have, but not gloom. That has left him for ever, since first he knew the Saviour and opened his ears to the joyful sound. Peace is now his heritage. It is not so much as if joy were abiding in him as if he were abiding in joy. It is not so much as if joy were poured into him as if his heart were ever pouring itself out into a vessel of joy; so deep, so calm, and so abiding is the gladness of the redeemed of the Lord.

But still it is not levity that is their portion; it is joy. And this joy is not only far superior to this vain mirth, but it is utterly inconsistent with it. This levity is as much an enemy to real joy as it is to holiness and spirituality. Hence it must be rooted out of them. God cannot suffer it in his children. His desire is that they should be holy. This element of earthliness must be purged out. They must be made solemn and thoughtful. For this end he sends affliction. In a

moment, perhaps, he smites him to the earth; or by some more slow but withering crushing calamity, he purges out the foolishness that had wrought itself into their inmost being. His purpose is to make them thoughtful, serious and solemn. And what he sends to them is fitted to make them think, and that in a way in which they have never done before. The blow he inflicts lays them down in the dust. It in a moment puts to flight all levity. It withdraws them from an airy shadowy world, and sends them into the very inmost recesses of their spiritual being, or forward to the infinite eternity whose vastness and reality they had been little heeding. It brings them into contact with solid certainties, and that makes them thoughtful. It brings them acquainted with sorrow, and sorrow drives off all levity. Sorrow and levity keep no companionship. Affliction awakens them to a sense of their selfishness. They look around them and see, as for the first time, the world they live in, with all its sins and sufferings. They had seen these before, but now they seem quite new and clothed with a reality which had hitherto been unfelt. It is through sorrow that we see truth best. It is when seen through this sad medium that all objects assume their right proportions. Shadows then evaporate; realities compass it about. And realities make us solemn. It is shadows that make us light and vain.

Thus God solemnizes his saints, and brings them, in this respect, into closer sympathy with the mind of Christ. All was solemnity with him. And the nearer we are brought to resemble him, the more will this calm, this blessed, this happy solemnity possess us. We shall live solemn lives and do solemn deeds. Our looks and tones will be all solemn. We shall be earnest men; men who have no relish for levity, because it is so incompatible with the deep peace which is their portion, and who have no time for it, because eternity is so near.

VI. Tribulation quickens prayer. It sends us to our knees. In the day of prosperity a man has many refuges; in the day of trial but one, and that is God. To this refuge he betakes himself. Prayer, perhaps, was something to him before, now it is all. Man's arm has failed, and there is none to lean upon but God. Prayer becomes now a far more real thing than ever. Its value and its importance are seen in a new light. It is prized now as it never was prized before.

We cannot do without it. Of necessity we must now pray, and send up our cries from the depths. It is real asking, a real pleading now. As a mere form it has passed away. What new life, new energy, new earnestness are poured into each petition! It is the heart now that is speaking, and the lips cannot find words wherewith to give utterance to its desires. The groanings that cannot be uttered are all that burst forth and ascend up into the ear of God.

There is new nearness to God now. It is close dealing with him now. New arguments suggest themselves wherewith to plead; new desires spring up; new wants disclose themselves. God's fulness and our own emptiness are brought before us so vividly that our soul's longings are kindled, and our heart crieth out for God, for the living God, as the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so we are made to pant after God. It was David's sorrows that quickened prayer in him. It was in the belly of the whale that Jonah was taught to cry aloud. And it was among the thorns and in the fetters of Babylon that Manasseh learned to pray.

Such are a few of the blessings that flow from chastisement. Only a few have been mentioned, yet there are many. And this the saint knows. Each sorrow brings with it its own train of blessings; and thus, though not joyous but grievous, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

But in all this we must see a father's love. We shall lose much of the benefit of trial, perhaps all of it, if this is overlooked. It is out of the deep love of Him who gave for us his only begotten Son that sorrow flows down to us. Let us ever rest on this. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? And surely the blessings of chastisement are among these "all things." All things work together for our good. Love can do us no wrong. That is a blessed impossibility. In all that it sends of suffering it is only opening new channels in which to pour itself into us, as well as deepening and enlarging the vessel that it may contain the more. Every sorrow not only is the proof of love, but draws after it larger streams of love. It is love making way for itself because the place is too narrow. The inflicting of the wound is love; much more the healing of it. Surely all is love. There is no unkindness, no harshness, no inattention to our feelings, no needless causing of grief.

Beloved, "it is well." We could not do without affliction. We should neither know ourselves nor God. The depths of his varied love would be as a sealed spring. He wants to teach us all his love. He is seeking for occasions to show it; and if he cannot find them, he must make them, rather than that we should not taste the riches of his immeasurable love. And shall we call him unkind for this? Shall we have hard and rebellious thoughts of him for this? Shall we count it a wrong done to us to have new streams of love flowing in upon us which sorrow has opened? Shall we shrink from that which opens up to us more of the Father's heart?

Who can tell or measure the deep love which chastisement implies? We may, perhaps, be able to measure the love which sends us days of gladness,—but the love which draws the cloud of sorrow over our skies is too deep to be measured or weighed. God's interest in our

welfare is to be seen in everything that he bestows; but most of all in his chastisements. How deep must his interest be, how affectionate, how tender, when, in order to secure our welfare, to make us holier, and to add to the weight of our crown hereafter, he can consent to send suffering upon those whom he loves so well. This is love,—paternal love, in its truest kindest form.

Beloved, "it is well." Let us learn, then, to "glory in tribulation." The world, perhaps, submits to it, but it is ours to glory in it. The world tries to bear up under it; but it is ours to give thanks for it. The world may try to get over it as an evil that cannot be helped; let us know how good it is to be afflicted. He who is infinitely wise and loving calls it good, and shall not we?

Beloved, "it is well." We are not worthy of affliction. We are not worthy that God should take such pains with us to prepare us for his kingdom. Yet he does so. And he will continue to do so to his chosen ones; for it is through much tribulation that they must pass to the Kingdom. And in this let us "greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of our faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

KELSO, January 1846.

GRACE AND GLORY

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."—TITUS 2:11.

THE Apostle first speaks of grace in connection with present holiness, and then he speaks of it in connection with future glory. He first speaks of it in reference to the first coming of the Lord, and then in reference to the second.

The condition into which grace brings us is that of a pardoned, reconciled sinner; the character into which grace fashions us is that of holiness; the attitude in which grace places us is that of expectation for Christ's second coming. The last of these three results is just as natural and necessary a fruit of grace as either of the former two. The same grace that teaches us to look back to the first coming of the Saviour, teaches us also to look forward to his second; as the Apostle elsewhere declares, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for his Son from Heaven," 1 Thess. 1:9, 10; and in the passage which we have placed at the commencement of this tract, he states most strongly the connection between "salvation by grace" and "looking for the blessed hope." The moment a sinner has found this pardoning grace that flows out to him from the cross of Christ, he longs to fling himself into the arms of that Saviour who has opened for him this precious stream.

The great truth which the Apostle announces to us in the above passage is, that grace received necessarily leads us to expect and desire Christ's second coming. Such is the effect of grace,—the certain result of a believed gospel,—a gospel which brings to us the certainty of forgiveness and the conscious possession of eternal life.

The Apostle does not say that this grace may lead us to long for the coming of Christ, but must lead us, as its designed and inevitable consequence. We do not merely say it leads us to believe in Christ's coming, but to expect it, to desire it, to look for it, to love it. Nor do we say that grace leads us to long for death. Scripture does not teach us that; it is that "blessed hope," even the "glorious appearing" of the Lord, that it sets before our eye. Nor do we say that grace leads us to desire the spiritual presence of Christ. No; his spiritual presence is not a matter of hope or expectation, but of present and certain possession, as he himself has said—"Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." This spiritual presence is the believer's present inheritance and joy, but his visible and glorious presence is as yet but the object of hope. That hope, no doubt, is a certain one, which "maketh not ashamed," but still it refers to things unseen as yet.

Our inference, then, from the passage at the head of this tract is, as we have already stated, that grace truly received necessarily leads us to look for and desire Christ's second and "glorious appearing" as a "blessed hope." And that this is really the Apostle's meaning is manifest from many similar passages of Scripture. There is 1 Th. 1:10, already quoted; there is, also, 1 Cor. 1:7, "So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" Phil. 3:20, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ;" Heb. 9:28, "To them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation," &c. &c. Such passages sufficiently confirm our inference. But now we ask, perhaps, "Why is it so?" Why does grace thus lead us forward necessarily to the second coming of the Lord? To this we answer:—

I. Because this grace unites us to Christ, and this union, once begun, necessarily leads us to press forward to its full consummation. This

consummation can only be when we see him as he is—eye to eye, and face to face. When the soul is set in motion toward Christ, it cannot rest till it has fully beheld him—till, like aged Simeon, it has grasped within its arms the object of its fond desire. Faith can do much, but still it is not sight. Nay, the stronger that faith becomes, the more intensely does it quicken within us the desire for sight. To feel that we are His, and that He is ours, and yet not to feel the weariness and bitterness of absence, would be strange indeed. To say "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," and yet not to desire to behold him, nor to long for his personal vision and embrace, would be an inconsistency which, in human friendships, would be reckoned a confession of insincerity and estrangement. Love draws us to the beloved object; with nothing short of that will it be content. If it can be content with less, it is not love at all.

But it may be said, have we not Christ's spiritual presence, and is not that all we need? We answer,—Christ's spiritual presence is much indeed, but still it is not all that God has promised to his Church, and therefore we cannot be content with it alone. It was never designed to supersede his visible presence, nor to interfere with the blessed hope of his visible return. Nay, the more his spiritual presence is realized, the greater will be the longings for his actual appearance. It is the experience of his spiritual presence that whets the appetite for his personal return. For thus the soul reasons,—"this spiritual fellowship with Christ is declared to be but the earnest of the future reality; and if the mere earnest be so glorious, what must be the personal communion and full-eyed vision?" The closer, then, the present union, the more ardent will be the desire for the perfection of that union at the coming of the Lord.

II. Because even this grace itself is only begun, and is not to be fully opened up till the day of the Lord. This I gather from such passages

as these, 1 Peter 1:13., "Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.," and Ephes. 2:7., "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." This is emphatically the dispensation of grace, and yet it is only the commencement of that grace, now manifesting itself. Here we have grace in large and overflowing measure,—yet the full reserve of grace is yet to come. It awaits us at the Coming of the Lord, for not only is there in store for us against that great day, the exceeding eternal weight of glory,—but the full manifestation of grace itself is reserved till then. Is this grace then that bringeth salvation, so precious, so desirable now? How very precious, how very desirable then ought to be its full developement and brightness unobscured? How much to be desired and longed for, the day of its grand revelation! It is grace itself then that teaches us to look for the blessed hope of the Saviour's glorious appearing.

But some will say, "What does this future manifestation of grace concern us, if we can only secure that which is present;—if I get grace to save me, what need I care for aught beyond this?" Now mark the meaning of such a sentiment. (1.) It is saying, that provided you are saved you take no interest in the glory of your God. You care for his grace only because it saves you, not because it glorifies him. You care only to know as much of God and his purposes as will save you. That accomplished, everything else is to you a matter of minor interest. Such a sentiment from one who is "not his own, but bought with a price!" (2.) It is saying that, provided your salvation is secured, your sanctification is a less material thing. If the other is only secured, that can stand over! You know not how much,—how very much your sanctification depends on the assured hope of these future realities. You are as much bound to believe all that will sanctify as all that will

save! Besides, is a man really in a state of salvation who is not eagerly seizing hold of everything that will advance his holiness? The probabilities are that he is not. (3.) It is saying that you are never to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to go on unto perfection, that you are to be always laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c., which the Apostle so strongly condemns, Heb. 6:1, &c.

III. Because the knowledge of Christ which this grace gives us makes us long to see him face to face. "Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, &c., says the Apostle Peter. This love to a Saviour unseen makes us long for the nearer, closer fellowship of a Saviour seen. His being unseen does not prevent us loving him, but our loving him unseen does not lessen our desire to see him "as he is." It is the believing perception of an absent invisible Saviour that quickens our desire to see him "face to face." He is said to be "fairer than the children of men," "altogether lovely." This is the report we have heard regarding him, and this report of his surpassing comeliness only makes us long the more to see him. "They shall see his face," is the crowning blessedness of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22:4.) Do you really believe the report, and do you not desire to see the king in his beauty? As good old Samuel Rutherford said, "I often challenge time which holdeth us asunder; I half call his absence cruel, and the veil upon his face a cruel covering that hideth a fair fair face from a sick soul.... I dare not challenge himself, but his absence is like a mountain of iron upon my heavy heart." Does this saint's experience accord with yours? Do his expressions of desire to meet his returning Lord call forth the sympathies of your longing hearts?

Some may say, "What does it matter to me when I see Christ, if I know that I am his, and receive assurances of his love." Ah! but

would you say so of an absent friend or brother. Would that friend believe you really loved him if he heard you speaking in this manner? Is not this way of speaking an ill-concealed disguise, an awkward apology for the coldness of a heart whose love beats with low and languid pulse? What would you think of a wife saying of her absent husband, "What does it matter when I see my husband, if I know that I am his, and receive daily letters from him signed with his own hand?" Would you think her love to be "strong as death?" Would you not think she took the matter with a cool complacency which argued either wonderful composure or wonderful indifference? In the case of a faithful loving wife, would not every communication of her husband's love only make her long more anxiously to meet him, to weary more impatiently for his return? Or take the case of the disciples when Christ was parting from them. According to some, this parting would be a matter of perfect indifference. They had already his spiritual presence and the promise of its continuance, and what cause had they to mourn his personal absence? Yet they were loath to part with their beloved Master. Not to hear the sound of his familiar voice; not to be cheered by the smile of his gracious countenance, was matter of no common sorrow:—and "their hearts were troubled." This parting was a trying event; his absence was a sore privation, and accordingly his concluding hours were spent in administering to their comfort. Was that comfort useless? According to some it must have been so, if his absence was no trial. But if it was necessary to them, is it not as necessary to us? And yet many of us seem to require no such comfort at all; for his absence never seems to cost us one sorrowful thought, nor his return one longing desire. Our feelings ought surely to be the same with his weeping disciples. We cannot be wrong in mourning his absence, and wearying for his return, when not only we read that his disciples thus mourned and longed, but, when we remember that the inspired prayer of that disciple who knew him best, and loved him most, who had leaned on

his bosom and had most of his spiritual presence, was still the prayer of one who wanted something more, who could not be satisfied with anything but his return. Even so Lord Jesus come quickly!

IV. Our fourth reason for saying that this grace necessarily leads us to desire the coming of the Lord is, because it opens up to us all the corruptions of our inner man, and makes us groan by reason of this body of sin and death. Many of our corruptions and temptations are from the external world, and a spiritual coming will not remove these, however much it fortify us against them:—And it is their existence that makes us groan, not merely their prevalence. Others of our corruptions are from Satan, the prince of this world, and a spiritual coming to us will not bind him. Others are from a body of mortality, and a spiritual coming will not redeem the body, for, says the apostle, (Rom. 8:23,) "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemption of the body." This "vile body" will still continue vile, till it be changed at the coming of the Lord, and fashioned like unto his own glorious body (Phil. 3:20, 21.) Then, and not till then, will it cease to tempt us. Then, and not till then, will it cease to be to us the source of manifold corruptions, the prison-house of earthly bondage. Till then we "groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed (i.e. not that we long for the disembodied state, the separation of soul from body,) but clothed upon, (with the house not made with hands, the glorious body,) that mortality may be swallowed up of life," (2 Cor. 5:4.) And this groaning creation will continue still to groan,—still to tempt, still to weary us,—till He who hath subjected the same in hope, shall come to lift off the curse, and deliver it from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21.) And Satan, too, will continue to be the God of this world, the prince of the power of the air, until cast out and bound by Him who is to put all his enemies under both his feet and ours. If, then, we do

not long for the coming of the Lord, which alone can deliver us from these enemies without and within, we surely do not feel the power of corruption, the burden of this "vile body,"—we surely are not alive to the seducing influence of a sin-accursed earth.—we surely have no realizing experience of the tyranny and craft of the Evil One!

V. Grace leads us to look for "this blessed hope,"—because by grace we are brought into a state of suffering and tribulation, from which Christ's coming is to redeem us. Grace brings along with it many trials to which we were strangers before. It brings the hatred of the world. It brings the alienation of friends. It brings ridicule, contempt, and persecution. "I am not come to send peace on earth, but a sword." To receive this grace is to take up the cross; and he who has not taken up his cross has not received grace. It is to enter upon the path of tribulation,—for "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of heaven." Such trials are manifold,—they are innumerable, and they are hard to bear. It is a thorny path, even though a Saviour's foot-prints are discerned at every step before us, and a Saviour's arm is held out for us to lean upon!

How earnestly, then, should we desire that day which is to end our tribulation, and introduce us to endless rest! How truly should that event be to us "a blessed hope," which is the signal of commencing triumph to the poor afflicted saints,—which is to unbind the crown of thorns from the bleeding forehead of the widowed church, and place upon her brow the glorious "diadem."

Say not—"Death will end this tribulation to me personally, therefore I need not look beyond that;" for how, let me ask, do you know that Christ may not be come before that? How do you know that your death is to be before his coming? Besides, such a feeling as this is selfish in the extreme. You are a member of the body of Christ, and

you ought to feel for the whole body, and to regard the tribulation as yours whether you be in the midst of it or not. You ought to long for the day of final deliverance for the Church's sake as much as for your own. You sympathize with the past sorrows of the Church—with the sufferings of the suffering band of martyrs: you feel as if you were one of them—as if their sufferings were yours. You wish that "those days" had been shortened, and would gladly have shortened them if you could. Ought not, then, the very same feelings to actuate you with reference to that portion of Christ's Church which has yet to encounter days of tribulation? Ought you not to desire that, "for the elect's sake, these days may be shortened"? Ought not the consciousness of trouble and suffering in your own ease to lead you to desire the coming of the Lord, that the days of the Church's tribulation may be ended for ever?

If you do not desire the coming, there is reason to suspect that you are not bearing the cross. The cross not being felt, the crown loses half its value, and the coming is little realised, little longed for. It is the burden of the cross that makes the day of deliverance so desirable in our eyes—that makes us enter into the meaning of such promises as these: "If we suffer we shall also reign with him"—"If we suffer with him we shall be also glorified together." 2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17; 1 Peter, 4:13.

VI. Grace leads us to desire the glorious appearing of our Lord, because it opens our eyes to see this world's universal wretchedness, and makes our hearts tender to mourn for it. Men speak of this world as a happy world. They praise it as if it were all but Paradise. And once we, too, might be disposed to join in their praises, and echo back their joyous sentiments. Once it seemed to us a peaceful, pleasant scene, a world of smiles and sunshine, with here and there only the passing shadow of a cloud to intercept the tranquil radiance,

or tinge with momentary sadness the hour of mirth. Even disappointment could not dissipate the gay delusion, nor disenchant the bewildering spell. Cares and vexations thickened around us; coldness, desolation, and disease frowned upon us; broken friendships, severed relationships, blighted prospects, darkened our path, and overshadowed our skies;—but even all this could scarcely make us believe what a wild waste wilderness we lived in, what a world of wretchedness and crime.

But grace opened our eyes. We saw first that we ourselves were sinners, and then looking round us we saw with what a world of sinners we were surrounded. We felt that we were in wretchedness, and we began to see what a wilderness of misery encompassed us on every side. The dazzling veil was lifted up, and beneath it we saw scenes that made our hearts bleed at every vein, and heard sounds of lamentation, mourning, and woe ascending from myriads of dying sinners who were living without peace, and perishing without hope, and passing into eternity without a pardon and without a Saviour. It was as if there stood before us some goodly fabric, built with costly magnificence, and decorated with most inviting architecture. We went round and round it, admiring it on every side. It seemed so fair and goodly,—so peaceful a sunshine rested on it, we thought we should like to dwell within sight of it for ever. And though now and then a shriek was heard within, or a funeral passed out, yet we heeded not these interruptions. But at last we were taken in, and the whole dismal interior lay before us and around us,—a vast hospital of the dying and the dead,—a mighty "lazar-house of many woes." Then when we saw how the whole creation groaned and travailed, then we felt how infinitely desirable was the day of its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, how "blessed" was the "hope" of the coming of the Lord.

Such, then, are the proofs of the statement with which we set out, that grace, rightly received, makes us long for the glorious appearing of our Lord. We think they are sufficient to show that that event ought to be to us a blessed hope, and that the attitude in which we are called upon to stand in reference to it, is that of men who are looking and longing for that which is the uppermost desire of their hearts.

Such, believer, let the coming of thy Lord be to thee. Is he not thy friend? Does his absence not make a dreary blank? And art thou not, then, longing for His appearing, for the day when He and thou shall meet to be parted no more for ever!

But if these things be true, then what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? This hope is not only a blessed one, but a holy one. It not only gladdens, but it sanctifies. He who has this hope in him is called upon to purify himself, even as Christ is pure. It brings us more vividly into contact with the Lord, and this elevates and purifies. It makes us overleap the dreary interval which lies between us and his coming, making us feel as if he were already with us, and this tends to conform us to his image.

This grace believed, and glory hoped for, is no barren over-curious speculation of man. It is the very truth of God. Were it nothing but man's device, it might be dismissed as unprofitable. But it is not so. The grace brings salvation, and the hope leads us ever onward and upward. It is like some well-known star in the firmament, not merely to be gazed at and admired, but serving the storm-vexed seaman as a guide over the trackless waste of ocean. And may not the low condition of the Church of Christ in these last days be, in no small measure, traced to her having so sadly lost sight of that blessed hope, which was esteemed so precious, by the primitive church, in

apostolic days? May the Lord not charge us with the indifference of the unfaithful servant, who said, "My Lord delayeth his coming," and who began forthwith to live in pleasure, as if his master would never return? May he not address us in these last days, as he did Ephesus, "Remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."

How awful, sinner, must that day appear to thee! Thou hast no hope in it. It is all darkness and sorrow to thee, the beginning of thy endless woe! For he comes to execute the Father's righteous purpose of wrath upon the ungodly, to take vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not his gospel.

And wilt thou live on unmindful of that coming day of tribulation and anguish? It is a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains! Wilt thou live on in thy sins, as if there were no sin-avenging Judge, no sin-avenging day appointed by him, when thou shalt give in thy account for the deeds done in the body. What will the end be of all those pleasures in which thou art now swallowing up every care about the day of wrath? The beginning may be pleasant, but what will their end be? The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and thou art yet in thy sins! Still reckless of the Judge and of his sentence! The end of all things is at hand, and thou art living as if there were to be no end at all, as if thou wert to live for ever! The world's Mighty King will soon be here, and thou art still a rebel, whose doom shall be the crushing stroke of the iron rod! And dost thou feel no terror? Is there no sadness on thy brow as that awful day approaches, and the signs of its nearness are becoming visible around thee? Do you still say, let us eat and drink and be merry? Not one sigh for a participation in the coming glory? Not one shudder at the thought of plunging into

endless woe? Not one cry for mercy, not one tear for all your ungodliness and worldly lusts? Darkness is coming, wrath is coming, judgment is coming, the second death is coming, the eternal night is coming, and wilt thou slumber on, as if thou wert on thy way to heaven, or as if hell were all a fable, and the threatened sorrows of eternity a lie?

Here is the message of God to thee, "How long, ye simple ones will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you."—Prov. 1:22–27.

Yet there is GRACE for thee! The free love of God is still in the Saviour's hands, and he is dispensing it freely to all who come! Why, then, reject that free love which would save even thee? Why madly thrust away the love, and choose the wrath? Why prefer the curse to the blessing of the God that made thee? Yet, behold, this free love is still held out to thee! The cup of free grace is once more pressed to thy lips! Oh, drink and live for ever. "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."—Jer. 13:16.

Rev. 22:20.—"Even so come Lord Jesus."

THE Church has waited long

Her absent Lord to see;
And still in loneliness she waits,
A friendless stranger she,
Age after age has gone,
Sun after sun has set,
And still in weeds of widowhood,
She weeps a mourner yet.
Come then, Lord Jesus, come!
Saint after saint on earth
Has lived and loved and died,
And as they left us one by one,
We laid them side by side;
We laid them down to sleep,
But not in hope forlorn,—
We laid them but to ripen there
Till the last glorious morn.
Come then Lord Jesus, come!
The serpent's brood increase.

The power's of hell grow bold,
The conflict thickens, faith is low
And love is waxing cold.
How long, O Lord our God,
Holy and true, and good,
Wilt Thou not judge Thy suffering Church,
Her sighs and tears, and blood!
Come, then, Lord Jesus, come!
We long to hear Thy voice,
To see Thee face to face,
To share Thy crown and glory then,
As now we share thy grace.
Should not the loving Bride
The absent Bridegroom mourn,
Should she not wear the weeds of grief
Until her Lord return?
Come then, Lord Jesus, come!
The whole creation groans,

And waits to hear that voice
That shall restore her comeliness,
And make her wastes rejoice.
Come, Lord, and wipe away
The curse, the sin, the stain,
And make this blighted world of ours
Thine own fair world again.
Come then, Lord Jesus, come!
KELSO, MAY, 1846.

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