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UNSEARCHABLE RICHES;

OR,

SOME OF THE RELATIONSHIPS

OF

CHRIST TO HIS PEOPLE.

BY

EDWARD DENNETT.

“Christ is All.”—COL. iii. 11.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following chapters, of which this volume is composed, are neither lectures (although the writer may have occasionally spoken upon the same subjects), nor notes of lectures. They are rather written studies or meditations; and inasmuch as they have been helpful to the writer himself, he ventures to hope that they may also be for the edification of his readers.

They are very simple, and suited, therefore, to the apprehension of the feeblest of the saints of God. Hence nothing has been taken for granted; for the conviction has been forced upon the mind of the writer, after some little experience, that it is a mistake to assume that either readers or hearers are beyond the necessity of the re-statement of fundamental truths. It may be added, that each chapter is complete in itself; and, on this account, repetitions have not been avoided, if thereby the subject in hand could be rendered more intelligible or more complete.

The subject is one : it is Christ Himself ; and no one will feel more deeply than the writer how feeble has been his attempt to pourtray some of the relationships which He sustains towards His people. But it is profitable to be occupied with Christ in any measure ; and it is the writer's prayer that the Lord may condescend to use these pages to lead His own into an increasing acquaintance with Himself, and that He may thus glorify Himself by ministering blessing to His saints, according to His own heart. And to His own name shall be all the praise !

BLACKHEATH, 1878.

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# UNSEARCHABLE RICHES:

OR,

*SOME OF THE RELATIONSHIPS OF CHRIST  
TO HIS PEOPLE.*



## CHAPTER I.

### CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR.

**T**HIS is the first character under which Christ is apprehended. Son of God, Son of Man, the Christ of God, &c.,—all these are titles and glories of which we have but little, if any, conception until after we have been enabled, by the grace of God, to apprehend Him as meeting our need as sinners, and by faith to lay hold upon Him as our Saviour. Then, at peace with God, our hearts are at leisure; and, led by the Holy Spirit, we delight to trace out, study, and feast upon, every aspect in which He is presented for our contemplation in the Scriptures. This order is maintained in Matthew's Gospel. Thus when the angel

A

visited Joseph, to direct him in his perplexity concerning Mary, he said, "She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: *for He shall save His people from their sins*" (Matt. i. 21). It is true, that we have His royal lineage and His miraculous conception previously set forth; but still the first announcement concerning Him is in His character as Saviour. So in the Epistle to the Romans. After the salutation and introduction, we have first of all the state and need of man—whether Gentile or Jew—set forth; and immediately thereon the blood of Christ as meeting man's guilt is introduced—*i.e.*, Christ as Saviour. "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth a propitiation (mercy-seat) through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 22-26).<sup>1</sup>

In considering Christ, then, as Saviour, two things are mainly included, viz., His Person and His Work. Besides this, there is the action of God in raising

<sup>1</sup> It is not forgotten that the Lord Jesus can only present Himself as Saviour on the ground of accomplished redemption. Hence, in this respect, He is first Redeemer and then Saviour. But we speak here of the order of apprehension.

Him from the dead and setting Him at His own right hand. But this is rather declarative, being the response of God to what Christ had done,—God's estimate of His work, of what was due to the One who had glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He had given Him to do (John xvii. 4). Thereby God both exhibits and declares Him to be Saviour in virtue of His finished work—in virtue of the Cross.

The Person of Christ as the Saviour may first engage our attention. In the Scriptures already cited His person claims the precedence. Thus in Romans it is "the gospel of God concerning His Son (I quote the true order), who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. i. 1-4). In Matthew also He is said to be the Son of David, the son of Abraham (Matt. i. 1); and then to have been begotten of the Holy Ghost—before He is announced as the Saviour. It is the Person that attracts the gaze before we can consider His work. It is otherwise with the sinner. As a rule he first learns the value of the work of Christ before he considers the truth of His person. The blessed Lord Himself, in His conversation with Nicodemus, first declares the mysterious dignity of His Person; and then proclaims His rejection and death. "No

man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven. And 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" (John iii. 13-15).

There are, then, two sides to the person of Christ. He was God manifest in flesh. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). The Word was the Eternal Son, and the Eternal Son became man. He was thus God and man—a union of extremes which was not possible in any other, and rendering His person so unfathomable, so incomprehensible, that He Himself said, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27). But it is essential that we hold fast both His true Divinity and His as equally true humanity. For had He not been true man, He could not have been a sacrifice for sin, and had He not been God, His sacrifice could not have been available for all. Satan knows this, and hence, in every age, he has sought to undermine the one or the other of these truths, insinuating doubts sometimes concerning His humanity and sometimes concerning His Divinity. But it is the glory of the person of Christ that He is both Divine and human, that He is, in His one person, both God and man. This truth lies at the

foundation of, and, indeed, gives its character to, redemption.

How vast a field is thus opened for our contemplation! Following Christ in His pathway down here, from the manger at Bethlehem to the cross at Calvary, we see the unfoldings both of the human and Divine. As we behold Him, His lowly guise, "His visage so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men" (Isa. lii. 14); as we mark Him in companionship with His disciples, and see Him weary and resting, eating and drinking, weeping with those who wept (John xi.), and sleeping, too, on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship (Mark iv. 38), we cannot doubt that He was man. It was, indeed, the proofs of His humanity which, meeting their eyes, confounded His adversaries, and blinded them to His higher claims.

On the other hand, the evidences of His Divinity are no less clear to the anointed eye. Who but God could cleanse the leper, open the eyes of the blind, raise the dead to life, and control the winds and the waves? Hence He said to Philip, in answer to his demand to show him the Father, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: *or else believe Me for the very works'*

*sake*” (John xiv. 10, 11). And what He *was*, what He is declared to be in the Scriptures is, if possible, still more conclusive. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John i. 1, 18). He is said to be “the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of His person” (Heb. i. 3). In another epistle He is described as “the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (Col. i. 15–17). Consider moreover His own words: “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John xiv. 9); “I and My Father are One” (John x. 30); “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John viii. 58); and who can doubt that He claimed to be Divine? <sup>1</sup>

We cannot too often bless God for the four Gospels,

<sup>1</sup> When speaking of the proofs of our Lord’s Divinity, it has always seemed to me that if you grant all that He claims, you must concede that He is God. For example, if we believe in, come unto, love, and serve Him as He requires, we make Him Divine: for if He were but a man it would be derogatory to the claims of God for Him to require, or for us to give, what He continually demands.

in which are blended these two aspects of the person of Christ. Hence they are the profoundest of all the Scriptures—because they contain the unfoldings of a Divine-human life. No doubt the narratives are simple on their surface; but as we are led on by the Spirit of God we begin to discover that there are depths of which we had never dreamt, and into which we must gaze, and continue to gaze, if we would behold the treasures that are therein contained. And the more we are familiarised with their contents, the more shall we be impressed with the majesty of the person of Christ as the God-Man, God manifest in flesh. And it should never be forgotten that there can be no stability where there is any uncertainty as to the person of our Saviour. What strength it gives to the soul to be able to say (to quote the language of another)—“The pillars of the earth rest upon that Man who was despised, spit upon, and crucified!” It is the knowledge of what He is, no less (if not more) than what He has done, that draws out our hearts in confidence, adoration, and praise. For indeed He is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. ix. 5).

We may now pass to the work of Christ. By it we generally understand what He accomplished on the cross—His death. In a larger view of it, there would be included His life as well as His death; but there is a broad and essential distinction between these two things. *It was in His death alone that He bore the sins*

*of His people* (1 Peter ii. 24).<sup>1</sup> His life revealed what He was, showing, if we may so speak, His qualification to be an offering for sin, and proved Him to be the Lamb without spot or blemish—the Lamb of God; but it was on the cross alone that He stood in the sinner's place, met all God's righteous claims, and endured the wrath that was due to sin. It is the blood that maketh atonement (Lev. xvii. 11; see also Lev. i, ii, and xvi.). It was, therefore, on the cross alone that God dealt with Christ concerning the question of sin and sins. All through His life, though He was the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He reposed in the consciousness of the Father's love and smile: not a cloud ever passed between His soul and God. But when He was on the cross, there was a total change; for there it was that He was made sin; and in the unfathomable anguish of His spirit, when all God's waves and billows rolled over Him, He cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). He was thus forsaken of God—forsaken because of the place He had voluntarily taken as the sacrifice for sin. At that awful moment, there-

<sup>1</sup> We are quite aware of the controversy which has been raised upon this passage. For the sake of maintaining particular views, it has been contended by some that ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον taken with the verb should be translated "up to the tree." But not only is this contention shown to be baseless by the usage of the words themselves, but the whole teaching of Scripture on the doctrine of the Atonement is exactly opposed to it.

fore, God was dealing with Him, instead of us, about the question of sin; though He was never more precious to God than then: for it was on the cross that He proved His obedience to the uttermost. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again" (John x. 17).

It was, then, on the cross—by the shedding of His blood, by all, indeed, that He suffered there, by His death, that atonement was accomplished. Hence, ere "He bowed His head and gave up the ghost," He cried, anticipatively,<sup>1</sup> "It is finished" (John xix. 30). Then the work was completed which so glorified God, that on that foundation He saves, and is righteous, nay, He is glorified, in saving every one who believes. All the blessings of all the redeemed, the millennial blessing of the earth, the reconciliation of all things, the eternal happiness of saints of all dispensations, the perfection of the new heavens and the new earth—all these manifold blessings and varied glories will flow from the finished work of Christ.

This work, to speak generally, has two aspects—towards God, and towards man. The first, and, we may add, the essential aspect is God-ward. Thus on the great day of atonement, the blood of the sin-offering was carried within the veil and sprinkled "upon the

<sup>1</sup> We use the word "anticipatively," inasmuch as His death was not then actually accomplished. But all things were now fulfilled. (See verses 28–30.)

mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times" (Lev. xvi. 14). This was done both with the blood of the bullock which was the offering for Aaron and his house (specially typical of the Church as the priestly family of God), and also with the blood of the goat of the sin-offering which was for Israel. Without entering here upon the characteristic differences and details of these sacrifices, the point I press is *that the blood in both cases was for God*. I do not say (for that would be to forget other scriptures) that the blood is never for us, but here it is wholly for God; for indeed it was sprinkled before as well as upon the mercy-seat, and sprinkled there seven times, so that when the worshipper drew near he might find its perfect testimony in the presence of God. Still it was for God, atonement being made therewith according to the requirements of His holiness, and the righteousness of His throne. It made propitiation for the sins of the people. So with Christ. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John ii. 2). The efficacy, therefore, of the blood of Christ is according to its value in the eyes of God; and that is infinite. Thus if the blood sprinkled upon the mercy-seat availed, on the one hand, to make propitiation for the sins of His people; on the other, because of its unspeakable preciousness before God, inasmuch as He had been so glorified by it, and at

such a cost, it became the foundation on which God is able to deal in grace with the whole world, and to send out His servants with the entreating message, Be ye reconciled to God. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16).

The other aspect to which we have alluded is that of substitution—shadowed forth by the live goat. After the blood had been sprinkled, according to Divine direction, it is said, "he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Lev. xvi. 20-22). This exactly answers to what we have in Romans. At the end of the third chapter Christ is shown as the mercy-seat through faith in His blood (ver. 25); and then at the end of the fourth, we read, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (ver. 25). Thus not only has propitiation been made to God through the blood of Christ, but, if we are believers, we can say that He was delivered for our offences, that He

has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, and carried them away into a land not inhabited—and left them there—where they can no more be found; for if He was delivered for our offences, He has been raised again for our justification.

One other thing may be added. Our sin, as well as our sins, has been dealt with in the cross. “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. viii. 3). Thus not only has God been glorified, but the whole case—both the need and the state of the sinner—is met by the work of Christ. The truth of all the sacrifices is embodied in it—the burnt-offering, as well as the sin-offering, the paschal lamb, as well as the sacrifices on the day of atonement. All these were but adumbrations—shadows of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world—of that one sacrifice which, in the consummation of the ages, was accomplished on Calvary. But it is only after we know Him as our Saviour that we learn these things. Then, at peace with God, we delight—as we shall do throughout eternity—to contemplate the death of Christ, and to trace out, even though we may see but in part, the wondrous outlines of the work it effected, and its manifold relations both to God and ourselves.

The resurrection of Christ has a particular and special

significance. "Him," says Peter, "being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts ii. 23, 24). And, again and again, he emphasises the fact that God had raised up, and exalted at His right hand, the One whom they had rejected and crucified (see Acts iii. 14, 15; iv. 10; v. 30, 31). The Apostle Paul likewise enforces the same truth (see Acts xiii. 27-31; xvii. 31, &c.; also Rom. iv. 24, 25; 1 Cor. xv.; Eph. ii., &c., for his doctrinal teaching on the whole subject of the resurrection of Christ). The point I would here dwell upon is, that the resurrection of Christ was God's declaration of satisfaction with His work, that setting Him in the glory at His right hand was the expression of His estimate of its value—the response of His heart to the preciousness of the One who had done it, as well as to the claim which Christ had established upon Him by it. Our blessed Lord Himself presents this truth. Thus He said, after the traitor had gone out to accomplish his evil work, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. *If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself*, and shall straightway glorify Him" (John xiii. 31, 32). Accordingly, when, in the seventeenth chapter, He takes His place in spirit beyond

the cross, He pleads His work as constituting a claim upon the Father, to glorify Him with the glory which He had with the Father, before the world was (vers. 4 and 5). God's righteousness, indeed, was thus displayed in glorifying the One at His right hand, who to glorify Him "had become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8-10).

But this fact has another voice to the believer. If Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, went down into death under the wrath and judgment which were our due, the fact of His resurrection by God shows, proves indisputably, that our sins are gone. For where is our substitute? In the glory of God. If, then, He is in the glory of God, we know, not only that our sins are left behind, but also, that God rests in perfect complacency in the One who expiated them by His death, inasmuch as He has given Him the supreme place in heaven. To borrow the language of another—"I cannot see the glory of Christ now without knowing that I am saved. How comes He there? He is a man who has been down here mixing with publicans and sinners, the friend of such, choosing such as His companions. He is a man who has borne the wrath of God on account of sin; He is a man who has borne my sins in His own body on the tree (I speak the language of faith); He is there, as having been down here amidst the circumstances, and under the imputation, of sin; and yet it is in His face I see

the glory of God. I see Him there consequent upon the putting away of my sin, because He has accomplished my redemption. I could not see Christ in the glory if there were one spot or stain of sin not put away. The more I see the glory, the more I see the perfectness of the work that Christ has wrought, and of the righteousness wherein I am accepted. Every ray of that glory is seen in the face of One who has confessed my sins as His own, and died for them on the cross, of One who has glorified God on the earth, and finished the work that the Father had given Him to do. The glory that I see is the glory of redemption. Having glorified God about the sin—'I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do'—God has glorified Him with Himself there. When I see Him in that glory, instead of seeing my sins, I see that they are gone. I have seen my sins laid on the Mediator. I have seen my sins confessed on the head of the scapegoat, and they have been borne away. So much has God been glorified about my sin (that is, in respect of what Christ has done on account of my sins), that this is the title of Christ to be there, at the right hand of God. I am not afraid to look at Christ there. Where are my sins now? where are they to be found in heaven or on earth? I see Christ in the glory. Once they were found upon the head of that blessed One; but they are gone, never more to be found. Were it a

dead Christ, so to speak, that I saw, I might fear that my sins would be found again; but with Christ alive in the glory the search is in vain. He who bore them all has been received up to the throne of God, and no sin can be there."

How, then, we may ask in conclusion, are we connected with Christ? It is by faith. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36). Again, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John vi. 47). "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts xvi. 31). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). God, in the Gospel, presents the Christ, of whom we have spoken, as the Saviour. It is therefore the Gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. iv. 4), as well as of God's grace. Receiving His testimony, bowing before Him in self-judgment, exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, we are saved, linked with Christ, and are brought to God in all the acceptance of Christ Himself. Every believer is thus associated with Christ before God, and is brought into the enjoyment of all that Christ is for us, as well as of all the blessings which He has secured for us through His meritorious death and resurrection. How unspeakably blessed, then, is it to be enabled by the Spirit of God to say, *Christ our Saviour*. Beloved reader, are you able to claim Him as such? If not,

how unspeakably sorrowful is your position. But God, even now, in the tender yearnings of His grace, meets you, as He directs your gaze to Christ at His own right hand, and proclaims by His Word, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." If you are able to call Him your Saviour, then we have no words to express your blessedness ; but we may remind you of the obligation under which you are thereby placed, to show, by word and life, that you are saved, and to testify to that grace which has called you out of darkness into God's marvellous light.

" Oh, draw me, Saviour, after Thee,  
 So shall I run and never tire :  
 With gracious words still comfort me :  
 Be Thou my hope, my sole desire.  
 On Thee I'd roll each weight and fear :  
 Calm in the thought that Thou art near.

" What in Thy love possess I not ?  
 My star by night, my sun by day,  
 My spring of life when parch'd with drought ;  
 My wine to cheer, my bread to stay,  
 My strength, my shield, my safe abode,  
 My robe before the throne of God !",

B

## CHAPTER II.

### CHRIST OUR REDEEMER.

**I**T is only by the consideration of every aspect in which Christ is presented to us in the Scriptures, that we are enabled in any measure to apprehend what He is to, and for, us ; as well as the fulness of the truth of our salvation. We have contemplated Christ as our Saviour, and it might seem to some as if this title included also what He is as our Redeemer ; but we shall find, as we trace out the subject, that we are led into new aspects both of His work and of our condition.

As a matter of fact, indeed, He accomplished redemption before He could be presented as Saviour ; for He is able to save only on the ground of His finished work. On God's side, therefore, redemption precedes salvation : but we speak here rather of the order in which Christ is apprehended in the soul.

Remarkably enough, He is never once in the New Testament—in so many words—given this title. He is said to have redeemed us ; and we are said to have redemption in Him, through His blood, &c. ; but He is

never termed our Redeemer. In the Old Testament, on the other hand, the title is of frequent occurrence (see Job xix. 25; Ps. xix. 14, lxxviii. 35; Isaiah xli. 14, xliii. 14, xliv. 6, xlvii. 4, xlix. 26, &c.). But the fact of Christ having redeemed us, and therefore being our Redeemer, is found in almost every book of the New Testament Scriptures; and the elders in heaven, as they behold the Lamb taking the book of God's counsels, sing a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, *and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood* out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," &c. (Rev. v. 9). In every dispensation, therefore, God has been a Redeemer; and hence there is no subject more worthy of our meditation.

In the Hebrew Scriptures there are two words in frequent use to express the truth of redemption. The one signifies "to buy back;" "to redeem by the payment of a ransom" (לָקַח); and the other, "to loose" (פָּדָה); and hence also, used very much in the same sense as the other, though the primary meaning is, "to loose." In the New Testament there is but one word (λυτρόω); but it comprises the meanings of both Hebrew words—viz., to release on receipt of ransom. There are thus two thoughts in the word "redemption," the payment of the ransom, and the consequent deliverance; our being freed, and the state into which we are brought as the result of having been redeemed.

Before, then, we are in a position to look at Christ as our Redeemer, we must first consider the state in which we were, which necessitated His advent in this character. It is not only that we were sinners. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. v. 12). Through sin, therefore, death reigned over the whole world. But there was more than this, awful as such a statement may seem. Through the Fall—man's sin—Satan had acquired rights over him, and held the power of death, wielding it, indeed, as the just judgment of God (Heb. ii. 14). He thus became, in that all had sinned, the prince of the world (John xii. 31, xvi. 11); the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4); holding all men captive under his power and thrall (Acts xxvi. 18; Col. i. 13). We therefore were in a state of hopeless captivity, sold by our sin under the power of Satan, who reigned over us, and afflicted our souls with the hard rigour of his bondage. And we were as helpless as we were hopeless; for having fallen through our own sin under the penalty of death, and thereby under the power of Satan, and having no means to provide a ransom, we were shut up for ever, unless some one from without, competent and able, should intervene to deliver us from the prison-house of our captivity. Hence St. Paul says, "Ye were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course

of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," &c. (Eph. ii. 1, 2).

Such was our condition. We had failed to answer God's claims upon us, and had consequently fallen under the penalties of sin; and, at the same time, we came under the dominion of Satan, who reigned over us through the power of death which he wielded as the judgment of God upon us on account of our sins. Then it was, when we not only had no claim upon God, but had incurred the just penalty of our sins, that He, according to the counsels of His grace, being rich in mercy, in His love and in His pity redeemed us—redeemed us not with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter i. 18).

We will now consider more particularly the method by which our redemption was effected. It consisted properly of two parts, the price paid, and the deliverance effected; the claims of God met, and our deliverance from the hand and power of Satan; and we shall find these two things historically illustrated in the redemption of Israel.

(1.) The price paid, or the ransom money. Speaking to the disciples, our blessed Lord said, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx.

28). In another scripture we read that Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim. ii. 6). That is, He gave Himself in death—corresponding so far with the other scripture quoted, "gave His life." The significance of these statements will be explained by a passage from the Old Testament. "The life of the flesh is in THE BLOOD: and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is THE BLOOD THAT MAKETH AN ATONEMENT FOR THE SOUL" (Lev. xvii. 11). Hence, "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). It was therefore the blood of Christ (for the life is in the blood) that constituted our ransom money: this was the price paid for our redemption. Hence St. Paul says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood" (Eph. i. 7); and St. Peter, in the scripture we have before cited, that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. It is no wonder that he terms it "precious," since it availed to meet all the claims of a holy God upon us, so that on that foundation he could proclaim salvation to all. For, in truth, it not only satisfied God's claims, but so infinite was its value that the Lord Jesus, by the shedding of His own blood, glorified God in all that He was,—in every attribute of His character,—and thus He can righteously justify every one that believeth in Jesus. Yea, more, He glorifies Himself, in bringing every believer to Himself, in making him His child, and if

a child, then an heir, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ (Rom. viii. 17).

The blood of Christ is, therefore, the redemption money; and hence every one who is under its shelter is safe for ever from judgment. This was prefigured in the case of Israel in Egypt. When God was about to smite the land of Egypt, to pass through it as a Judge, and had thus raised the question of sin, His own people—Israel—were as obnoxious to the stroke of the destroyer as the Egyptians. How, then, could Israel be as righteously spared, as Egypt was as righteously judged? In one of His messages to Pharaoh, He says, "I will put a REDEMPTION (see marginal reading) between My people and thy people" (Exod. viii. 23); and this was done in a remarkable way, when by Jehovah's direction, "Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you" (Exod. xii.

21-23). The Lord thus redeemed His people by blood,—figure of the blood of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John i. 29). But mark an important distinction. The command was given to all to sprinkle the blood—the provision was therefore for all; but unless in the obedience of faith the people carried out the directions they received, they would not be protected. So now the blood of Christ is sufficient for the shelter of all the world; but unless there be faith it will be of no avail. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* (none other) in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16). “Whom God hath set forth a propitiation *through faith* in His blood” (Rom. iii. 25).

(2.) The first part, then, of redemption was the payment of the ransom; and that, as we have seen, was done by the blood of Christ. But Israel was not redeemed—though perfectly safe under the shelter of the blood—as long as they were in Egypt. Hence the second part, or the completion of their redemption, was effected when God, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, brought them out of the land of Egypt through the Red Sea, and destroyed Pharaoh and all his host in its mighty waters. On the basis of the shed blood, God—having been satisfied as Judge—can now act for His people as their Deliverer; and hence He brings them out of Egypt in power.

Then they could sing—they could not while in Egypt—  
“The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become  
my salvation. . . . Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth  
Thy people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast  
guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation”  
(Exodus xv. 1-13). They are now, and henceforward,  
a redeemed people.

So with believers now, they cannot be said to be  
redeemed until they know deliverance; not only that  
they are sheltered by the blood, but brought clean out  
of the enemy's territory—through death and judgment  
—by the death and resurrection of Christ. In the  
case of Israel, since it was historical, the sprinkling of  
the blood and the crossing of the Red Sea were neces-  
sarily two successive stages. But now the work has  
been done, in the death and resurrection of Christ,  
which answers to both; and though, as a matter of  
fact, the two parts—the shelter of the blood, and deli-  
verance—are often successive in our apprehension,  
there is yet no reason why the fulness of redemption  
should not be received and enjoyed at the same time.  
And it would be far more frequently, were a full gospel  
more commonly proclaimed; whereas it seldom goes  
beyond the forgiveness of sins, and hence souls are  
kept in ignorance of the completeness of the salvation  
which God has wrought out for them in Christ.

But it may be well to explain somewhat more fully  
how our deliverance is effected in Christ. It is, then,

of the first importance to know that not only has God dealt with the question of our sins—our guilt—but that He also has dealt with sin—our evil nature—in the death of Christ. “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Already, therefore, He has judged sin, root and branch; and hence Christ met and broke the whole power of Satan (even as God broke the whole power of Egypt in the Red Sea—figure of Satan’s power) in His death. The consequence is that, believing in Christ, I am brought through His death out of the old condition in which I was (out of Egypt), and by His resurrection I am brought into a new place—a place (in Christ Jesus) not only where there is no condemnation, but where also the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans viii. 1, 2). Consequently, God can now say to believers, “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Rom. viii. 9). Our redemption, therefore, is complete; God has acted for us—on His claims having been met and satisfied by the blood of Christ—and brought us out of our old condition unto Himself. “He has guided us by His strength unto His holy habitation.” Already have we passed from death unto life, with death and judgment for ever behind. We are no longer in the flesh, looked upon as children of Adam; but since we have died

with Christ, every tie that bound us to that state is snapped; and we are now in Christ, and in Christ where He is, and consequently a redeemed people. Now we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose; and assured that, according to that purpose, we are to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; that whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified; we can take up the apostle's triumphant language, If God be for us, who [can be] against us? Yea, we can rest in the full persuasion that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. viii. 28-39).

(3.) One thing, however, has to be noted. While we are redeemed—as to our souls completely, we have to wait for the consummation of our redemption as to the body. Brought out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea, fully delivered, and receiving the Holy Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance, we wait for the adoption—the redemption of our body. For in truth, we are still in the wilderness, and through our bodies linked with a groaning creation; and hence

we ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the time when even our bodies will be redeemed (Rom. viii. 23).

“ Our earthen vessels break ;  
 The world itself grows old ;  
 But Christ our precious dust will take  
 And freshly mould.  
 He'll give these bodies vile  
 A fashion like His own,  
 He'll bid the whole creation smile,  
 And hush its groan.”

“ For this we wait until He returns to receive us unto Himself ” (Phil. iii. 20, 21); and we thus see how gloriously complete is the redemption which He has effected for His people, so complete that nothing shall be left in the hands of the enemy; but spirit, soul, and body alike are rescued and made His own.

As we then survey this work in all its extent, we can surely acknowledge with joyful hearts that Christ is our Redeemer. And never should we forget at what a cost He has redeemed us to God. It is familiar to us to say—with His blood. But how little we apprehend the meaning of the words; how little do we enter into the wondrous fact that He gave Himself to die, went down under all the wrath that was due to us, was made sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Surely as we meditate upon it, it will evoke from our hearts the more constant

cry of adoration, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen"<sup>1</sup> (Rev. i. 5, 6).

What, then, are our responsibilities as a redeemed people. First and foremost, the acknowledgment that we belong to Him who has redeemed us. This truth is continually brought out even in the Old Testament Scriptures: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; thou art Mine" (Isa. xliii. 1). Hence it is that the apostle, as we may notice more fully in the next chapter, so often terms himself the slave (*δοῦλος*) of Jesus Christ. For since the Lord Jesus has paid, in His wondrous grace and love, our ransom money, He has acquired the full right and title to all that we are and have. We are henceforward His property. But this involves a twofold aspect—privilege and responsibility. We have the privilege of belonging to Christ, of being His own, of being bound to Him by special ties (for He loved the Church and gave Himself for it), and therefore of being the special objects of His care, tenderness,

<sup>1</sup> We do not enter in this paper upon the wider aspect of redemption. Christ also tasted death for everything (Heb. ii. 9); and hence everything will be brought under His power (Ephes. i. 10; Heb. ii. 8). We are distinctly told that He bought the whole field (Matt. xiii. 44); and all men (2 Pet. ii. 1).

and love. We now say, My Beloved is mine, and I am His; yea more, I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me (Song of Solomon ii. 16; vii. 10). And how sweet and blessed a thought it is that He has acquired, by a title which none can ever dispute, possession of us! What rest it gives to our souls to remember that we are His! In sorrow, trouble, or bereavement—in the silent watches of the night—in isolation from all about us—what unspeakable solace to raise our eyes to Him, and to be able to say, Thou hast redeemed us, and we are Thine—Thine for ever!

But the privilege involves the responsibility of showing practically in our walk and conversation that we are His—of living not to ourselves, but unto Him who has died for us, and risen again (2 Cor. v. 15). For by our redemption we are separated from all the peoples of the earth, and are, therefore, to be distinguished by testifying in our ways that we belong to our Redeemer. It is for us, each one, as before the Lord, to ask ourselves, How far we are doing this? Whether we, as a redeemed people, are as separate from those about us, as Israel was, for example, from the tribes that surrounded them when passing through the desert? True that, so far, this was an external separation; but surely this was meant to be a type and figure of a separation more real than theirs—more real because of the profounder character of our redemption. The question, however, is, Are we daily

confessing with heart, life, and lip, that we belong to Christ?

And this question brings us to a special responsibility in connection with our redemption, as stated by the apostle Paul. He says to the Corinthians, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? . . . Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body"<sup>1</sup> (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). The Lord, therefore, claims our bodies because He has bought us with a price; and therefore He would have our bodies as organs for the exhibition of Himself in this scene. Hence, after the full statement of redemption in the Epistle to the Romans, the apostle says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, your reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1). What an honour thus put upon us—that He should take up these bodies of ours, which were once the instruments of Satan, and make them the means of the display of Himself—that God might be glorified! Ah! Satan little knew what he was doing when he urged the Jews to put Christ to death. He succeeded in getting Him cast out of this scene; but what has been the

<sup>1</sup> I do not add the words, "And in your spirit, which are God's," as they are without sufficient authority—the argument itself indeed showing that they are an unwarranted addition.

consequence? That there are thousands of Christ's followers whose only business is to reflect His likeness, to bear about in their bodies the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in their bodies (2 Cor. iv. 10). How far are we individually meeting in this respect our responsibility? We all shall own it; and if we own it, and at the same time have to confess our failure in responding to it, we may, and surely shall, cast ourselves upon Him for grace and strength to yield ourselves wholly to God as alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. vi. 13).

St. Paul also teaches that being redeemed, we should disown, and reject every authority that conflicts with that of Christ. "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (1 Cor. vii. 23). It need hardly be said that he does not mean that we are not to have masters in this world. On the other hand, he has, by the Spirit, given special directions to those who are thus placed. But what he here asserts is the supremacy of the authority of Christ; and that we, since He has bought us with a price, belong to Him whatever our situation. "He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (1 Cor. vii. 22, 23). In like manner, enforcing the same truth, he reminds servants, in another epistle, that

they "serve the Lord Christ" (Col. iii. 24). Whatever our position, therefore, in this world, however subject it may be, we are never to forget that we belong to Christ, that He has purchased us with His own blood; and hence our eye must ever be upon Him, for He is our Lord, and it is Him whom we serve.

Another scripture will indicate a further responsibility. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus ii. 14). We have already seen that the Lord has acquired us by redemption, and this thought is also expressed in the words, "purify unto Himself a peculiar people;" but two things are here added, which He desires should characterise the people whom He has redeemed. His object was to redeem us from all iniquity, both from its power (see Rom. vi. 14), and its practice; and that we should be zealous of good works. As being redeemed, therefore, we should be known by separation *from* evil, and separation *unto* Christ, marked out as a peculiar people—a people peculiar and proper to Himself, and known by zeal for good works.

It is well to judge ourselves often by such a scripture, that we may detect our failures and discover how far we are answering the mind of Christ about us—His object in our redemption. And especially may we apply the phrase "zealous of good works." For while there is no greater snare at the present time

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than excessive activity, in which the soul often loses all communion, and hence all power, there should never be a carelessness concerning works which are according to the mind of God. Indeed, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. ii. 10). We are responsible, therefore, to be *zealous* of such good works.

If we now turn to 1st Peter, we shall find another character of responsibility in connection with our redemption. "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter i. 17, 18). St. Peter thus sets us down in the presence of God the Father, and sets us down there as pilgrims, that we should pass the time of our sojourning in fear, that holy fear which is begotten by His holiness according to which our works are even now judged. He would have us as pilgrims who have been brought out of Egypt, in our passage through the wilderness, to maintain holiness, to be holy, because God is holy (ver. 16). For it is to God that we are redeemed; and hence He requires us in our walk and ways to be suitable to Himself—to His

own character. How watchful, then, should we be to keep apart from evil, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, having the fear of God before our eyes, knowing that He marks all our ways, and that without holiness shall no man see the Lord (Heb. xii. 14).

Finally, we are ever bidden to look onward to the day of redemption. Thus we are told that the indwelling Spirit "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. i. 14); and again, that we are not to grieve "the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. iv. 30). Then it is that the full fruits of redemption will be entered upon and enjoyed, when the Lord will take possession, in power, of all that has been purchased by His precious blood. We have already dwelt upon this as to the body. But there is more than this. We have the Spirit as the earnest "of our future full participation in the heritage that belongs to Christ—an inheritance to which He has a right through redemption, whereby He has purchased all things to Himself, but which He will only appropriate by His power when He shall have gathered together all the co-heirs to enjoy it with Him." It is for this we wait—not only for the coming of Christ, the resurrection of our bodies, and our being glorified together with Him, but also for the time when, as joint-heirs with Himself, we shall enter with Him

upon the possession of all that scene of dominion, blessedness, and glory, which He has acquired through His death—His works of redemption—all being the purchase of His own precious blood. What wonder that we are told that this consummation is to the praise of God's glory! Our present acceptance in the Beloved is to the praise of the glory of His grace; our share with Christ in His inheritance will be to the praise of His glory. On that scene of blessedness and exaltation, by the grace of our God, we shall soon enter. For since we are children, we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; and He is waiting for the moment when He can accomplish the desire of His own heart in having us with Himself, according to His own prayer, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). May He enable us to walk now as those who are waiting for the consummation of such blessedness!

## CHAPTER III.

## CHRIST OUR LORD.

AS soon as we know Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer, we are also taught that He is our Lord. His Lordship, indeed, is universal, and hence has reference to men as such, though at the same time He sustains this relationship in a special way towards believers. The Apostle Peter declared this truth on the day of Pentecost. "Therefore," he said, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both LORD and Christ" (Acts ii. 36). So also St. Paul: for after describing the long descent of Christ from "being in the form of God," down to His "being found in fashion as a man," and humbling Himself, and becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," he says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii.

6-11). The Lord Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, says, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). Once more, St. Peter, dealing with another aspect of the same truth, tells us of false teachers "who shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord<sup>1</sup> that bought them" (2 Peter ii. 1).

We have then, so far, two things: first, that God has made Christ Lord on the ground of redemption, giving Him this place of universal supremacy to mark His appreciation (if we may thus reverently speak) of the work which He had wrought out by His death; and secondly, that, as we saw in the last chapter, Christ has acquired Lordship over all by purchase. This thought we find in one of the parables: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matt. xiii. 44). The consequence is that He is Lord of all, having "power (*ἐξουσίαν*—authority) over all flesh" by the appointment of God (John xvii. 2; see also Acts x. 36; Rom. xiv. 9). When, however, we, as believers, speak of Christ as "our" Lord, we express another thought, because then we bring in the idea of relationship—the relationship of servants. It is the same Lordship, but we, by the grace of God, have been brought to own it, to bow

<sup>1</sup> The word Lord here is *δεσπότης*, not *κύριος*.

before Him in this character; to accept His authority and rule, and to take the place of subjection. This, indeed, was one of the objects of His death, as St. Paul tells us—"He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 15). And again, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, *that He might be Lord both of the dead and living*" (Rom. xiv. 7-9). We, therefore, recognise, through the grace of our God, not only that Christ is Lord of all—as He truly is—but also that He is in a more intimate way *our* Lord. He is our Lord, not only in virtue of His appointment as such, as the rejected Christ and now glorified Man, but also because He has acquired this place over us through redemption. It is, therefore, our joy to confess Him as Lord; and how solemn to remember that all, even those who reject Him in this day of grace, will one day be constrained by power—power, too, significant of destruction—to own Him also as Lord (Phil. ii. 10, 11). It is the more incumbent upon us who are believers to recognise, declare, and be subject to His authority, that we may, in some measure, be witnesses for Him in this day of His rejection.

Seeing that Christ holds this place, what are our privileges and responsibilities with reference to Him in this character ?

(1.) The first thing to be named is worship ; for it is before Him as Lord we fall down in adoration. This is taught, in principle, in one of the psalms. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him" (Psalm xlv. 11). So also in the passage already cited from the Philippians—every knee is to bow, and every tongue confess that He is "Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 10, 11). Theologians take pains to argue that Christ is to be worshipped equally with the Father, inasmuch as He is God as well as man. And this is true ; but, at the same time, it misses the Scriptural teaching concerning His present position and the worship due to Him in it. He is God ; but the wonder and the characteristic of His present place is that He occupies it as man. It was the same Jesus whom the Jews crucified who is now made both Lord and Christ ; and He has taken up even the glory which He had with the Father before the world was as man. It is a great mistake to suppose that He was man down here, and God in heaven, as if the two natures could thus be divided. The truth is—if we may draw the distinction—when down here, while He was truly man, He was the presentation of God to us ; whereas now, while He never loses His essential Divinity, He sits at the right hand of God as man. Hence,

though it is perfectly true that we worship Him as God, and, indeed, all the adoration which ascends up to God of necessity is offered to Him—inasmuch as the term God includes all the persons of the Godhead—it is rather as the man who is in the glory of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, that we bow before Him in praise and worship.

And surely it is a sweet thought to our souls that He who down here was scorned, rejected, cast out, and crucified—He whom even His own disciples forsook, abandoning Him in the hour of His greatest sorrow—is now exalted, and set forth as the object of our homage. Oh, how infinitely precious He must be to God, and what unspeakable value must His work have in His eyes, that He should thus set Him in the highest place, and constitute Him the object of adoration both of angels and saints! Thus St. John writes, “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 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. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped"<sup>1</sup> (Rev. v. 9-14). What ineffable grace, then, that even now we should have been taught that He is worthy of our praise !

“ Father, Thy holy name we bless,  
 Gracious and just Thy wise decree,  
 That every tongue shall soon confess,  
 Jesus the Lord of all to be.  
 But, oh ! Thy grace has taught us now  
 Before that Lord the knee to bow.

“ Him as our Lord we gladly own :  
 To Him alone we now would live ;  
 Who bow'd our hearts before Thy throne,  
 And gave us all that love could give.  
 Our willing voices cry aloud,  
 Worthy art Thou, O Lamb of God ! ”

(2.) Just as we worship Him, so also we pray to

<sup>1</sup> The reader will notice several variations from the English Text. On the 9th and 10th verses the authorities are very much divided, but what is given above is believed by those competent to form an opinion to be the more exact reading. There can be no doubt whatsoever about the omission, in the 14th verse, of the words, “ Him that liveth for ever and ever.”—See “*Textual Criticism*,” by C. E. Stuart.

Him, as Lord. There are two striking exemplifications of this principle recorded in the Scriptures. When Stephen was martyred by the infuriated Jews, it is said, "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts vii. 59). St. Paul, too, speaking of the thorn in the flesh, says, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9). Now, that it was Christ he thus addressed as Lord is evident; for he adds, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power (*δύναμις*, the same word as is translated 'strength') of CHRIST may rest upon me." These instances afford most important instruction as to the character in which Christ is to be addressed in prayer. It is as Lord—not as "Jesus" or "Christ," as is sometimes unhappily heard. A moment's consideration will show us the fitness of this. To use the appellation—His name—of Jesus, or the term Christ, when bowing before Him, is surely to forget our place as suppliants, as well as His place as Lord. It savours of familiarity, even if not of irreverence; though it is freely admitted that it may be done without the slightest feeling of the kind. Be this as it may, we should never forget His exaltation and dignity, when approaching Him in supplication. The spiritual instincts of the child of God will suffice to teach him

that, at such a time, the title of Lord should never be omitted. It becomes Him to receive, and us to render it; marking, in some humble measure at least, our sense of His claims, and also, indeed, of our place in His presence. The angel used it, when calming the fears of the women at the sepulchre on the resurrection morn, and in a most significant manner. He said, "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the LORD lay" (Matt. xxviii. 5, 6). He thus reminded them that Jesus, whom they sought, was the Lord. The malefactor, also, on the cross, taught undoubtedly of the Spirit of God, addresses Him aright. "Lord," he says, "remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom" (Luke xxiii. 42). Let us, then, be ever careful to remember what is due to the One before whom we bow, and from whom we seek grace and blessing.

If this were the place, we might point out (what a careful examination of the Scriptures would assuredly justify) that there are special subjects which we more fittingly bring before the Lord. For example, there is, as we may see further on, a special relationship between the servant and the Lord. He Himself thus taught His disciples, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." The apostle, likewise, as already seen in the matter of the thorn in the flesh which he felt was

hindering his service, addresses himself to Christ as Lord. It will suffice to have given this indication, because it needs acquaintance with, and divine intelligence to be rightly guided as to this. It is a subject, however, which ought to be carefully considered; for nothing is more painful than to hear the interchange of "God," "Father," or "Lord," in prayer, without intelligence, in meetings for prayer or worship.

But passing from this, it is surely no mean consolation to remember when we are addressing Him in prayer that He is *our* Lord. It constitutes both a claim, and an assurance; a claim, because of the relationship into which we have thus been brought, and an assurance, because it reminds us of what He is to us and for us in this character. Ah! indeed, He is no stranger to us, and if it is very sweet to us to utter the words, what joy to Him to hear us address Him as our Lord. Led by the Spirit of God, may we be increasingly bold in the use of the term—with the holy boldness which confidence in His love alone can inspire!

(3.) The correlative of "Lord" is "servant." We are therefore specially reminded by the term "our Lord," that we are His servants. We are His servants because He has bought us with His own blood; and we are therefore absolutely His property. Hence it is that St. Paul delights to call himself a servant—a slave (δοῦλος)—of Jesus Christ (Rom. i. 1; Phil. i. 1.,

&c). We speak, of course, here of all believers as servants, and not of the special class whom the Lord has been pleased to endow with gifts, and send forth to labour amongst the saints, or in connection with the gospel. We lose much if we confine the term "servant" to this class; for whatever the position we occupy, all are as truly the Lord's servants as if engaged in any public way—as, for example, in the ministry of the Word.

This being the case, it will at once be observed that the Lord's will is our only law. It is indeed the characteristic of the Christian that he has no will; for the moment his will is active, the flesh appears. Thus he has—*i.e.*, he should have—absolutely no will. He can say with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; *yet not I*, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). The Lord has shown us also this path. "I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38). Hence it is actually said that "He took upon Him the form of a servant" (a slave—*δοῦλος*, Phil. ii. 7). Just, therefore, as He had no will, but in all He thought, spoke, and did, was governed by the will of the Father, so we in all things should have respect to His will—it being no longer we, but Christ in us, and these bodies of ours but organs for the expression of Himself—His will.

Our responsibility, then, as servants is obedience.

As the Lord said to certain professors, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke vi. 46). Or, as He said to His disciples, "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John xiii. 13, 14). As soon, therefore, as Christ is revealed to us as our Saviour, and we acknowledge Him as our Lord, we should take the attitude of Saul when he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6; xxii. 10.) From that moment we must accept the place of obedience to His will; and not only accept it, but find our joy in it, even as He Himself said that it was His meat to do His Father's will, and to finish His work (John iv. 34). Nor can any believer plead ignorance of what His will is. It is true that many *are* ignorant; but since He has been pleased to give us in the Scriptures the revelation of His mind for us, to mark out the path in which He would have us walk, to assure us of guidance in every difficulty and perplexity, and since He has sent the Comforter to guide us into all truth (John xvi. 13), we have no excuse if we remain in ignorance.

How simple, then, is our path! We have now to please but One. It needs therefore only that the eye be always fixed on Him. As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes

of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so should our eyes be ever upon the Lord, to catch the first intimation of His will, so that our willing feet may be ever quick to execute His commands. And what an honour is thus conferred upon us! Christ our Lord is the centre of the glory. The eyes of all heaven are directed to Him—the Object of their unbounded reverence, homage, and delight. What, then, are we that He should deign to make us His servants? Nothing—nothing but that we have been made through the sovereign grace of our God, in virtue of His finished work. Surely, therefore, we should have a deeper sense of the wondrous honour conferred upon us, so that our hearts swelling with grateful love may increasingly delight to prove their love by keeping His commandments (John xiv. 15).

(4.) We have a further responsibility connected with the Lordship of Christ. As pointed out, He is Lord of all (Acts x. 36). Not only have we, therefore, as believers, to take the position of obedience, but we have also to acknowledge His authority over all connected with us—over our families and our households. It is a question of increasing importance, whether the doctrine of the universal Lordship of Christ has not been too much overlooked. The state of the families of many believers demands that it should be imperatively considered. It is a fatal mistake, into which many fall, to suppose that the

unconverted members of our families have no relationship to Christ. He is Lord of all; and they are under the responsibility of owning, as believers are under the obligation of enforcing, that Lordship. The rule of Christ has to be maintained throughout the whole circle of the responsibility of the saints—thus within that circle, at least, anticipating the millennium.<sup>1</sup> It is in this, that the families of saints should present an entire contrast with those of the world; and thus be a living testimony to the authority of a rejected and an absent Christ—Christ our Lord.

(5.) Again, if we remembered that He who is our Lord, is also universal Lord, it would give us far greater power to deal with souls. When charging upon them the sin of rejecting Christ, how often do they evade, or turn aside the stroke, by the thought, We had nothing to do with the act of the Jews and Romans eighteen hundred years ago. Not that it is difficult to meet this objection, if once fairly spoken; but if the fact of the present Lordship of Christ were pressed, we can apply a test which cannot be escaped. Do they acknowledge the place which has been given to Him by God? Do they confess and submit to His authority? Then—as we know they do not—they stand convicted—palpably convicted—of refusing and rejecting now the One who has been made both Lord

<sup>1</sup> See, for a larger discussion of this subject, "*The Christian Household*," published by W. H. Broom.

and Christ. This weapon, if skilfully used, might, in the power of the Spirit, reach many a conscience, and bring souls to repentance before God. Especially might this be the case, if the truth already touched upon were connected with it, that if they persist in refusing to own Christ now, in the day of grace, they must do so before the great white throne, and own Him then, alas! to their everlasting destruction. It is a question worthy of consideration whether we do not give man, as such, too large a place in preaching the gospel; whether we do not concede to him too much the position of choosing or refusing. Of course, his responsibility must never be overlooked; for it is on this side that his conscience is the soonest reached. Nor must we forget to present the grace, the mercy, and the love of God; and surely every presentation of the gospel should be the expression of His own heart. Conceding all this, and, indeed, insisting on it, it may yet be asked whether, as a rule, the claims of Christ as Lord are sufficiently pressed. What subject could supply a more fruitful field for argument and appeal? Man everywhere owned, and Christ disowned. Alas! it is still true that there is no room for Christ in the inn (the world). It is man's wisdom, man's precepts, and man's authority; and all these combine in saying, We will not have Christ to reign over us. And yet He is Lord of all. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. It

knows Him not still, and thus goes onward to destruction. For God will have His Christ universally acknowledged, for the decree has gone forth and cannot be altered; and yet the world passes on, banishing Him who is Lord out of all their thoughts, vainly dreaming that all is, and that all will be, well. But even while we write, the hour may be about to strike when He shall leave His place at God's right hand to receive His people to Himself, and then they will ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 17). Thereon will commence that series of awful judgments predicted in the Scriptures, which will be preparatory to, and will usher in, His return with His saints, when out of His mouth, will go "a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and the wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. xix. 15, 16). Then He will take to Himself His great power and reign; "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Then "all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him" (Ps. lxxii. 8-11). Be wise, therefore, dear reader, and now, while it is the accepted time and the day of salvation, bow before God and own Christ as Lord; for "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God

hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. x. 9). But if you should be, alas! of the number who remain indifferent to, and reject His claims, not only must you finally bow the knee before Him, when He shall be seated as the Judge on the great white throne, but you must also hear at the same time the irrevocable sentence of your everlasting doom—the doom of the second death (Rev. xx.). Oh! then, kiss the Son—now while it is the day of grace, and God’s longsuffering lingers—lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, and perish for ever, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Reconciled to Him, it will be the joy of your hearts to confess, and to worship Him as Lord.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CHRIST OUR SHEPHERD.

IT may be questioned whether this relationship of our blessed Lord to His people occupies its due place in our souls. It is quite true that it is found most frequently in the Old Testament Scriptures; but it would be to suffer great loss to suppose that it was only a Jewish relationship. Indeed, John (chap. x.) expressly forbids this conclusion, for the Lord distinctly states, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock (not *fold*—the word is *ποιμνη*), and one Shepherd" (ver. 16). Peter, also, writing to believers of this dispensation, says, "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter ii. 25); and again, "Feed (shepherd) the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over [God's] heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when

the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter v. 2-4). St. Paul uses the same figure, when addressing the elders of the Church at Ephesus. "Take heed," he says, "therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed (*shepherd*) the Church of God," &c. (Acts xx. 28).

Christ, therefore, is the Shepherd of His people now; and they are His sheep—collectively, His flock. There is, however, this difference. To the Jews—had they received Him, He would have been a Shepherd on earth; and even in the millennium He will be the Shepherd of His earthly people. "And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd" (Ezek. xxxiv. 23; see also Jer. xxiii. 1-4). But He is our Shepherd as the One who has died, risen again, and is seated at the right hand of God. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews thus says, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," &c. (Heb. xiii. 20). It is, therefore, from His place on high that He now shepherds His people; and hence He is termed the Chief Shepherd, because in His tender care for the sheep, being absent from them, He provides those who shall "feed the flock" under His guidance and direc-

tions. When He therefore ascended up on high, He gave some, pastors, &c. (Ephes. iv. 11); for it is through these, and such as have the place of rule, that He now exercises the functions of the Shepherd for His people.

The relationship, then, in both dispensations is expressed by the same term; but the blessings secured by it are determined by the respective positions and needs of the sheep. Hence that beautiful Twenty-third Psalm—the solace of God's people in all ages—could be adopted by saints of all dispensations. Nay, it is so worded that the Lord Himself, when on the earth as a man, could use its language, as well as the pious remnant among the Jews, and believers at the present time.

(1.) Let us, then, in the first place, consider a little the Shepherd Himself. To the Jews He said, "He that entereth in by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep" (John x. 2). And there He stood before them as the One who alone came in to Israel by the way appointed of God, who answered to all the conditions predicted of Him in the Scriptures—the One, therefore, to whom the door was divinely opened to give Him access to His sheep. But the people as such received Him not; and hence He became also the Door of the sheep (ver. 7). "All that ever came before Me," He says, "are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by Me

if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. *I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep*" (John x. 8-11).

Here, then, is the great characteristic of the Good Shepherd—He giveth His life for the sheep. He is the Christ who has died; and if He died for all, then were all dead (2 Cor. v. 14). This brings in the whole secret of redemption. The sheep had gone astray—were lost, and would have perished everlastingly, but the Good Shepherd went after that which was lost—even down into death—the death of the cross—and sought until He found. This explains to us the epithet—"Good" Shepherd. All we like sheep had gone astray, and turned every one to his own way; but the Good Shepherd offered Himself for our sins, gave His life for the sheep, and the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. liii. 6). As the Apostle Paul reasons, seeking to extol the unprecedented character of God's love, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ

died for us" (Rom. v. 6-8). The whole heart of Christ, as well as of God, was revealed by His death; for there was nothing in us to draw out His affection, to move Him to take our place, and to redeem us with His precious blood. "In the same night in which He was betrayed, He took bread and gave thanks"—and founded the memorial of His accomplished sacrifice. Thus side by side we behold His perfect goodness, and man's perfect evil; but the full exhibition of what man was could not hinder the manifestation of what He was. Nay, just as the light of the sun when shining on a dark thundercloud seems all the more bright and intense, so the love, grace, and goodness of Christ are magnified by the unmitigated evil which on man's part brought Him to the cross. *The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.*

By giving His life for the sheep He acquired the title to their possession. Thereon follows another action, *He giveth life to the sheep.* "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10); and again, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" (ver. 28). With this we may connect another word, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," &c. (ver. 9). We add this scripture, to show the way in which Christ bestows life, that it is never apart from faith in Himself.

“He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life” (John iii. 36). So here He is presented as the Door, and whosoever enters in by Him is saved—has eternal life. It were a fatal mistake to suppose that while He absolutely bestows life as a gift,—and indeed as a sovereign gift,—that it could ever be possessed without personal faith. For this is the appointed means of its possession—that, indeed, which characterises them as His sheep, and thus separates them from the world.

Again, it is said, “He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” (ver. 3); also that “He knows His sheep” (vers. 14–27). He had just exemplified this in the case of the blind man. He had met him in his blindness, opened his eyes, led him out of Judaism, and made him a worshipper of Himself as the Son of God. There are also several beautiful illustrations of these characteristics of the Good Shepherd recorded in the gospel. Take one from the first chapter of this gospel. “Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee” (John i. 47, 48). From all eternity He has known His sheep; and in His own time He addresses them by name, calls them by a word of power, and

His voice penetrates into their souls, and leads them out, constraining them to recognise it as that of the Good Shepherd. Just as on the morning of His resurrection when He said, "Mary," and she instantly responded, Rabboni; so now, He speaks, and the sheep hear His voice, and straightway follow Him. It is thus He has called every one of His flock, and thus that He will still gather His sheep, until the last one that is straying upon the mountains or in the deserts is brought under His shepherd care. "*I know my sheep,*" is surely a word of rich consolation to the hearts of His own. In the wilderness still—though following His lead—and often faithless and weary, how often does the temptation come to doubt His care and love! "I know My sheep," should calm every anxiety, and dispel every fear, revealing, as it does, that His eye is ever upon us, comprehending all our case, all our needs, yea, knowing us altogether!

We have already alluded to the composite character of His flock—being now made up of Jews and Gentiles,—as He teaches in the sixteenth verse. Indeed, the whole history of the formation of the flock is there set forth—"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: these also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd." This is the special feature of the flock during this dispensation. In the past, Israel alone was His flock; hence the Twenty-third Psalm commences, *Jehovah* is

my Shepherd. But inasmuch as when He came unto His own, His own received Him not, He by His death broke down the wall of enclosure that separated the Jews from the Gentiles, and laid the foundation in His blood for the gathering out of both alike through faith in His name. Ever since Pentecost, therefore, He has been calling His sheep from every land, and from every clime, and they hear His voice, and they are brought, and together, whether Jews or Gentiles, they form the one flock under the one Shepherd.

Another characteristic of the Shepherd is, that He keeps His sheep in safety. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any<sup>1</sup> pluck them out of My hand. My Father, who gave them Me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of My Father's hand" (vers. 28, 29). He thus guarantees absolute security to His own. The wolf may catch (same word as pluck—*απράζω*) the sheep away from him who is an hireling, and not the shepherd, but none can catch, pluck, them out of His hands. What rest of heart it should give us, as we read these blessed words!

(2.) It may be profitable, if we ponder a little more in detail upon some of the characteristics of the sheep.

*They hear His voice* (vers. 4, 16, 27). This goes

<sup>1</sup> I do not insert the word "man" with our translation, for the term any will include Satan as well as man—as it was intended to do.

back, as already explained, to the very commencement, when He calleth His own sheep by name, and is that which distinguishes them as His sheep. The Lord Himself draws the contrast. "Ye" (He said to the Jews), "ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice," &c. (vers. 26, 27). We may combine with this another trait, "They know not the voice of strangers" (ver. 5). Herein lies the safety of the flock. They at once recognise the voice of the Shepherd; but though a stranger should simulate the tones of the Shepherd ever so closely, they know not his voice; *i.e.*, they detect it as that of a stranger. This is that which is taught by the Apostle John. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . These things I have written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John ii. 20-27). There is no need, therefore, that we should seek to be familiar with all the errors that abound on every hand in order to escape their seductions: it is enough for us that we know the voice of the Shepherd; and our safety will be in ever listening to it, becoming increasingly acquainted with it, maintaining evermore the attitude of her who sat at the feet of Jesus, and

heard His word (Luke x. 39). This will be at once our preservative from danger, and the means of our safety and blessing.

Consequent upon hearing His voice, *the sheep follow the Shepherd*. "He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice" (vers. 4, 27). The sheep has no will but that of the Shepherd; and ceasing to follow Him it becomes a wandering sheep. "All we like sheep," says the prophet, "have gone astray, and turned every one to his own way" (Isa. liii. 6). In Eastern lands, and indeed in some parts of Europe, the shepherd ever goes before his sheep; and when he moves onward, they follow, and when he stops, they stop likewise. Our blessed Lord alludes to this in the scripture before us, and uses the custom to convey most striking instruction. For to follow the Shepherd necessitates that the eye of the sheep should be ever upon Him, that, indeed, they should ever be on the watch to ascertain when He would have them to move, and where He would have them follow. Everything is thus left in the Shepherd's hands: it is His to discern a coming danger, to provide for their sustenance, and to indicate their path. Their responsibility is to follow—to follow the Shepherd wherever He may lead—to follow Him until He shall come to receive them to Himself.

It is also said that *the sheep know the Shepherd*. They not only know His voice; but they also know

Himself. "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I the Father" (John x. 14, 15). This is the highest blessing of which the sheep are capable; for it implies entering into His own thoughts, ways, and desires, yea, the knowledge of Himself. It is thus that we are brought into communion with Him. We may know His voice, and be following Him, and yet be without much acquaintance with His character. To know Him, is what St. John gives as descriptive of the fathers in God's family. "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning" (1 John ii. 13). This, therefore, is the highest and most blessed attainment which the believer can make. And the Lord desires that it should be made—and in an infinite measure—"as the Father knoweth Me, and I the Father." He knows us, and He desires that we should know Him. May He Himself lead us into an ever-increasing acquaintance with Himself, so keep Himself before our souls that we may grow daily in the knowledge of Him—of what He is, as well as what He is to us, and for us—through the power of the Holy Ghost!

(3.) It may help us still further to understand the relationship, as well as the privileges of the sheep, if we add to the foregoing considerations, the teaching of Psalm xxiii.

The Lord (Jehovah) is my Shepherd. Everything

depends upon the relationship, whether we can truly adopt this language. Every one can say the Lord is *a* Shepherd; and hence all the significance of this statement is connected with the little word "my." To say "my" Shepherd is the language of faith: the word "my" is, therefore, the doorway into the psalm. How blessed if we can, then, adopt these words as our own, and say He is our Shepherd. And what follows? "I shall not want." We shall not want, not because we are sheep, but because He is our Shepherd. This conclusion flows, not from what we are to Him, but from what He is to us. It is very strengthening to the soul to see this clearly, for many of us are apt to begin with ourselves; and consequently, as we discover what poor, feeble, wayward creatures we are, we fall into doubts and anxieties. But when we begin with the Lord, consider what He is—what He is in Himself, as well as what He is in relationship to us, we obtain the well-grounded assurance that we "shall not want." For surely it belongs to the Shepherd to provide for the sheep. How foolish it were even in children to question their parents as to how their wants were to be met on the morrow! Much more foolish would it be on our parts—when we have such a Shepherd. Enough for our hearts surely to know that He is ours, and in that sweet confidence we can leave everything in His hands, "who shall feed (tend) His flock like a Shepherd" (Isa. xl. 11). He is ours,

and we have everything in Him ; and hence the heart can rest in perfect peace—in the full assurance of His unfailing love, omnipotent power, and unwearied care.

“ He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; He leadeth me beside the still waters ”—or, as we have it in the margin, pastures of tender grass, and waters of quietness. He thus provides suited blessings—needed sustenance, and rest and refreshment. But even this fails to convey the richness and bounty of the provision which He makes for His flock. The pastures are—pastures of tender grass, on which the sheep feed with appetite and delight, until they are satisfied ; and when they are satisfied—as with marrow and fatness—they lie down by the cool and refreshing waters of quietness. As it is said in John x.—“ I am the door : by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture ” (ver. 9). What unfolding of the heart of the Shepherd—ministering thus to the need of His own, watching over them to minister to all their necessities. Happy are the sheep who are placed under such constant, loving, and faithful care !

“ He restoreth my soul : He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake ” (Ps. xxiii. 3).  
As a hymn says—

“ If e’er I go astray,  
He doth my soul restore.”

E

This belongs here also to His office of Shepherd. We need not say that the foundation on which He does this is His own finished work—the propitiation which He has made for our sins (1 John ii. 1, 2). But in the psalm this restoration is looked at as effected by the Shepherd. The sheep wanders, goes astray, and the Shepherd goes after that which is lost, and finding, brings it safely back. Every sheep is thus under His eye, and cannot stray without His knowledge; and when any of us have strayed, we surely should have perished, if He had not followed after, and drawn us back again by the ministrations of His love.

And just as we are indebted to Him for restoration, so also for being kept and guided into right paths—paths of righteousness—paths which are according to His own will. Mark, moreover, that He so leads us “for His name’s sake.” It is again—it cannot be repeated too often—what He is—on account of His own name; and therefore His own glory is concerned in guiding us into these paths of righteousness. We can thus ever plead with Him on this ground; and whenever we do so, our plea is irresistible. It was so with Joshua. When the Israelites were smitten, after the sin of Achan, before the men of Ai, Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord, and pleaded with God; and the whole burden of his cry was at last expressed in the one ques-

tion, "And what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (Joshua vii. 6-9). Rising to this height, the answer immediately came. Let it always, then, be remembered that the Lord is concerned for His own name's sake, to lead us in the path which is according to His will.

The Psalmist now waxes more bold. He has told us what Jehovah is, and what He does. This gives him confidence, and he is consequently able to say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. xxiii. 4). The valley of the shadow of death is not so much passing through death, as the character of our pathway through this scene. We are passing through a judged world. Death hangs over it like a pall; and hence to the believer, who enters into God's thoughts about it, it is the valley of the shadow of death. But what is his antidote against fear? It is that "Thou art with me." This indeed is the source of all our security and blessing—the Lord is with us. And being with us, we have His rod and His staff to comfort us—His rod to direct, and His staff to support. Do we sufficiently enter into this? Is it as constantly present to our souls as it should be—that the Lord is with us? and that His rod and His staff comfort us? The scene may be never so dark and desolate, and we may be never so weak and weary, but we have boundless

resources in the One who is our Shepherd—His own presence to cheer our souls, and His rod and His staff to guide in perplexity, and to support in weakness. Blessed be His name!

We have now another feature, as well as another character, of blessing. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over” (ver. 5). It is not only that the path may lie through the valley of the shadow of death, but enemies are around. But He that is with us is all-sufficient for this difficulty. They may rage, and seek to destroy, but, says David, “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” He will be the sustenance of His people, and cause their enemies to see that they are upheld, sustained, and provided for, by the Lord. As the apostle writes, “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me” (Heb. xiii. 5, 6). But we have more; “Thou anointest my head with oil”—the unction of God—the Spirit of power; and hence he adds, “My cup runneth over.” Nothing is wanting; nay, he is filled to overflowing with goodness and mercy, and in such a scene as this. This is all the result of having the Lord as our Shepherd; for all flows from Him—from what He is to us in this relationship. And let it not be forgotten that this is our present portion.

These are not blessings which we shall have, but blessings which we now have. How we narrow the heart of God by our unbelief! And hence our need of learning ever more of Himself, that we may understand more fully the immensity of His grace, and the riches of His provision for us, while passing through the wilderness. Surely we may say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want!"

The conclusion is as simple as beautiful. "Surely goodness and mercy shall (not have followed, but shall) follow me all the days of my life." How do we know this? Because of what the Lord is as our Shepherd. It is confidence in Him, and the knowledge of what is suited to Him, that enables us thus to speak. And yet more—"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." All leads up to this. Blessed as we are now, and enjoying so much because of what Christ is to us as our Shepherd, we shall enter upon larger blessings and more perfect joys, when He shall return to receive us to Himself, and we shall be for ever with Him. But we must not miss the present application of the words. The effect of grace upon the heart is to draw us ever closer to Him from whom it flows, and to produce in us the desire to dwell in His house for ever—yea, to dwell before Him, and in His presence, everlastingly. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty

of the Lord, and to inquire (meditate) in His temple” (Ps. xxvii. 4). The heart is thus attracted to, and absorbed in the contemplation of, the One whose beauty had been unfolded in His ways of grace and love; and hence can find no rest or satisfaction except in the presence of its Object. All—every blessing—is centred in Him, and, therefore, the soul that knows it desires to be always with Him. Happy are they who have learnt the lesson, that they want nothing outside of Christ; that He is enough their hearts and minds to fill!

May the Lord Himself unfold more and more to us of His beauty, as well as the unspeakable character of the blessings which are ours, because by grace we have been brought into relationship with Him as our Shepherd.

“ I love the Shepherd’s voice :  
 His watchful eyes shall keep  
 My pilgrim soul among  
 The thousands of God’s sheep.  
 He feeds His flock, He calls their names,  
 And gently leads the tender lambs.”

## CHAPTER V.

## CHRIST OUR LIFE.

WHEN the Lord Jesus came into the world, “darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness the people;” yea, the night of death prevailed throughout the whole globe. It was, to borrow the language of Job, in speaking of death, a land of darkness, and the shadow of death; “a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness” (Job x. 21, 22). For “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. v. 12). There was, therefore, not a ray of light to relieve the total darkness of man’s state and condition. Not only so, but Satan also reigned; for through man’s sin he had acquired rights over him, and thus held him in complete subjection to his will. He became, therefore, the prince of the world (John xii. 31). “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. iv. 4). “In the beginning was the Word, and

the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. *In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.* And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John i. 1-4).

Christ, therefore, came into this scene of darkness; and at once there were two distinct moral spheres. Round about Him was darkness—the darkness of death; in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light and the darkness were thus in contact; for the light shone in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. But there was Christ, having life in Himself, and hence He was "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9). It is true that few received it, but there was the light shining for every one, so that if any remained in darkness, it was because they did not turn their faces towards the light. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 10-13). These only—as many as received Him—were illuminated, and being

illuminated, they received life, for they were born of God.

During His earthly sojourn, Christ had life in Himself as the Son of God; and hence, "as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (John v. 21). For, indeed, as St. John tells us, "The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John i. 2); and as He Himself said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10). Every one, therefore, who believed on Him then was quickened, even as the saints of the old dispensation were quickened—born again; but "life more abundantly" could only be received after His death and resurrection; and hence the bestowal of everlasting life upon those who believe in the present dispensation is the fruit and consequence of His finished work. He Himself thus says, "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John xvii. 1, 2).

But why was it necessary that Christ should die to become the "Prince" of life (Acts iii. 15)? We have seen that death was the fruit—the wages of sin (Rom. vi. 23); and hence as long as the question of sin was

undealt with, God's righteous claims upon man on account of it, unmet, unsatisfied, death must continue to reign. Man had incurred the penalty and consequences of his deeds, and must lie under both the one and the other until he should be redeemed, until there should be found One qualified, able, and willing, to take up his case and settle it with God. Christ was that One—the Lamb of God's providing—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). He came, and by His death met all God's claims upon the sinner, for He went down under all the wrath that was the sinner's righteous due; and in the very place, and concerning the question of man's sin, made a full and perfect atonement, and so glorified God that God, in token of His satisfaction with His work, has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heaven. Now, therefore, He is the Living One, death has no more dominion over Him, and He can bestow eternal life upon all that come unto Him. "Therefore as by the offence of one (one offence) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (one righteousness) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. v. 18). It was God's holiness that made it necessary for Christ—being in the place which He occupied through grace—to die on the cross for sin; so that on the foundation of the expiation which He there accomplished, God can now righteously justify,

and bring from death to life, every believer. There is no life, therefore, excepting in and through Christ. Hence, John can say, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).

This scripture supplies us also with the means by which life is received. *It is by faith alone.* Hence our Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him (πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με—believeth Him that sent Me) that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (κρίσιν—judgment); but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24). Herein is displayed the grace of God. We had reaped the wages of our sin—death; we were dead in sins, and must for ever have continued under the penalty and the consequences of such a condition. But God was rich in mercy—and acting according to His own nature, from His own heart, commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. And now while the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. It is His free—His gratuitous and blessed—gift to every one that receives His testimony, concerning the sinner, and concerning His Son. He has provided life—life out of death—and this life is free to every one who believes. "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this

life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life ” (1 John v. 11, 12).

We thus see that every believer has eternal life. But it should be carefully observed that he is never said to have it in himself. There are two negative statements which have led some to make the inference ; but an inference, even when rightly drawn, is not the Word of God. Thus our Lord speaking to the Jews said, “ Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you ” (John vi. 53); and St. John says, “ Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him ” (1 John iii. 15). These passages, however, must not be taken as signifying anything beyond the denial of the possession of eternal life on the part of those spoken of, for the representation of scripture, as in the passage already cited, is that “ this life is in His Son.” Having eternal life, we have it, therefore, only in Christ. Christ is in us—but this again is another aspect of truth—and having Christ we have eternal life ; for it is Christ who is our life. But when speaking of eternal life, it is never said to be in ourselves, but always in “ His Son.” It is this fact which guarantees to us its absolute security, assures us that it can never be lost, for whoever would rob us of it, must first pluck us out of His hands ; nay more, must pluck Him from His seat at the right hand of God.

Christ is our life. We may trace this truth a little further—or indicate some of its consequences.

(1.) Our life is not here. This, indeed, is the statement of the apostle. “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. iii. 3). He has just been pointing out our responsibilities as connected with our being dead and risen with Christ. As dead with Him, we are not to act as alive (*ζῶντες*) in the world (Col. ii. 20). We follow the order of Christ. He has died out of this scene, has no present place in it; He is, as far as this world is concerned, a dead man. We, therefore, commence our Christian life by taking the place of death. We are buried with Christ in baptism (Col. ii. 12), and God’s estimate of us is that we are dead. Hence our responsibility to walk accordingly, to mortify our members which are upon the earth, &c. (Col. iii. 5). Scripture teaches us that God has so completely associated us with Christ, that He counts us with Him as dead to sin (Rom. vi); dead to law (Rom. vii.); and dead to the world (Gal. vi.); and hence faith accepts His estimate as true. We have been brought through the death and resurrection of Christ out of this scene into a new place—so completely, that it can be said of us, “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Rom. viii. 9). Our life, therefore, is not here; it cannot be, for we are dead; but it is hid with Christ in God.

How blessed for us if we did but accept the full

consequences of this truth! What an immense gain if we only started on the Christian life by accepting death upon all that we are by nature, and upon all around us! How it would lift us up out of our circumstances, if we looked steadfastly away from all that we see, up to where Christ is, and remembered that our life is there; that He is our life! What power it would give us over the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life! What a testimony would thus be borne by us to the claims of a Christ once rejected, but now glorified! We need to judge ourselves in these things, for we shall find that the secret of much of our weakness and failure lies in seeking our life in things of this world. But as the apostle teaches, if we are risen with Christ, we are to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. We are to have our minds (*τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε*) on things above, and not on things on the earth (Col. iii. 1, 2). That is, we should dwell, be occupied with, delight in the place to which we belong. Hence the exceeding importance of knowing our place, that we are dead and risen with Christ; for otherwise, we cannot say, this is not our rest; that we have no part in the scene through which we are passing; that our life is above. When an Englishman is living for a season in a foreign land, he has no interest in the place of his exile: his thoughts, his interests, and his associations—in other words, his life—are all connected with his home. So

should it be with the believer. Having died and risen with Christ, all his "life-associations" should be connected with the place into which he has been brought; even as St. Paul says, "Our conversation (*πολίτευμα*) is in heaven; whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii. 20). Only then—when this truth is accepted—shall we know the joy of continual occupation with Christ. And, it may be added, the object of all God's dealings with us now is to bring us under the power of this truth. If we will find our life in things down here, He must bring in death upon them, and thus lead us through many a grief and bitter sorrow, that He may teach us for His own glory, and our blessing, that Christ—and Christ alone—is the life of His people. As one of old has said, "He often dims the brightness of this scene that we may behold the glory beyond;" and the place of the glory beyond is where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

(2.) Since Christ is our life, it is that life—Christ—that we have to reveal as we pass through this scene. Indeed, we have no other. Hence St. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; *yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*" (Gal. ii. 20). There are three stages plainly marked in Scripture: first, "Ye are dead"—this is God's estimate; secondly, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead" (Rom. vi. 11), &c.; by faith we are to count ourselves dead, according to God's

estimate; and thirdly, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2 Cor. iv. 10). These bodies of ours—once the instruments and servants of sin—God in His grace has now taken up that they may become the medium for the display of Christ.

This, then, is the whole of our responsibility—to express Christ in all that we are and do—since He is our life. This involves the bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, the constant application of the cross,—symbol of the power of death—to all that we are as natural men, that nothing of self in any way, nothing of mere nature, but only that which is of Christ, may be exhibited. Every one—at least every one who knows the evil and incurable character of the corruption of the flesh—understands that the flesh must not be permitted to have its way. If we are irritated—lose our temper—for example, we can all see that we have failed, and are ready to judge ourselves for it in the presence of God. But it is not every one who perceives that mere nature has to be kept under the application of the cross, as well as these evil forms of the flesh. And yet, if it is only the life of Jesus that is to be manifested, it is patent that nothing of what I am must be seen, or the presentation of Christ would be confused and obscured. Surely we need greater watchfulness in this respect; for how often, in our leisure

moments, in our intercourse even with saints, we display far more of our natural characteristics than of Christ. We meet and converse, and sometimes it will be that, while the intercourse is nothing but pleasure, when we examine it, in the light of such a responsibility as this, we have to confess that it was ourselves that were prominent, and not Christ. The geniality, humour, and wit did not savour of Him, but of ourselves; and thus we failed—failed in the one object for which we have been redeemed and brought to God.

It is true that to meet such a responsibility will need incessant watchfulness, and unwavering fidelity. This is what the apostle says, ALWAYS bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus. Our seasons of relaxations are our special times of danger. We so often forget that our loins—if the figure may for a moment be changed—must always be girded, that having taken to ourselves the whole armour of God, and having done all, we have still to stand. And at the same time we must learn to be unsparing in self-judgment. Too often we are like Saul who reserved the best of the flocks and herds, under the pretext that they were for the Lord's service. No; nothing must be spared; but everything connected with me, as a natural man—all of self, flesh, and nature (we use the three terms that nothing may escape), must be kept under the cross—in the place of death. Then, and then only, will Christ shine forth. It is to accom-

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plish this end that God has to deal so severely oftentimes with us; for the earthen vessels must be broken, if the light within is to shine forth.

Where, does any one inquire, is the power to meet this responsibility? It is only to be found in being occupied with Christ in glory. "We all, with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Being thus transformed, likeness to Christ will beam forth; we shall reflect the glory by which we are changed.

It is, therefore, not to be regarded as a mere figure of speech when we are told that we have been crucified with Christ; that we have put off the old man, and put on the new, &c. These things are solemn realities before God; and should be no less real to us—the foundation, indeed, of our place and blessing in Christ. We ourselves, then—all that we were by nature, as men in the flesh—are gone in the cross of Christ. Christ only remains; and He is our life; and He only is to be revealed through us in our walk and conversation. How inestimable the honour thus conferred upon us! And if we have any fellowship with God's delight in Christ, how we shall praise Him in that He has made such as we the vehicles for the presentation of His Christ in this dark world!

(3.) Christ is our life; and this will by and by be displayed. This is the point of the scripture referred

to: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ [who is] our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 3, 4). The life is hidden now, but when Christ shall appear, it will be publicly displayed—and that with Christ in glory. There are, however, two steps in this process, to each of which a few words may be given.

First, this involves the resurrection—or change of our bodies. For so great is the power of life in Christ risen that the bodies of His saints, whether living or in the grave, will be changed so as to lose every trace of their mortality. Hence the apostle, speaking of the resurrection of believers, says: "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. xv. 53, 54). Victorious life—flowing from Christ—will reign supreme; and thus will our redemption be consummated. Our Lord Himself was the first to announce this blessed truth. Speaking to Martha, He said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26). He thus distinguished the two classes of saints—those who shall have died before, and those who should be living at, His return. The former

shall be raised and the latter shall not die—according to that word of the apostle's, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Cor. xv. 51; see also 1 Thess. iv. 13-18). It was this prospect that lifted the apostle above all the circumstances by which he was surrounded. "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day;" and after pointing out the relation of the present light affliction to the future weight of glory, while looking at the things which are eternal, he says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. v. 1-4). As one has beautifully said, "He saw in Christ glorified a power of life capable of swallowing up and annihilating every trace of mortality, for the fact that Christ was on high in the glory was the results of this power, and at the same time the manifestation of the heavenly portion that belonged to them that were His. Therefore the apostle desired not to be unclothed but clothed upon, and that that which was mortal in him should be absorbed by life, that the

mortality that characterised his earthly human nature should disappear before the power of life which he saw in Jesus, and which was his life, that power was such that there was no need to die."

The time of this consummation is when the Lord returns to receive us unto Himself. This is definitively stated in 1 Thess. iv., "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: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (vers. 16, 17). It is then that He will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 21).

The results, therefore, of Christ being our life will not be reached until the resurrection morning. Now we can rejoice in the knowledge that we have eternal life, and that, having it in Christ, it is ours for ever; but then we shall lose all trace both of mortality and corruption, for life and incorruptibility (*ἀφθαρσία*) have both been brought to light in the Gospel (2 Tim. i. 10). Into the full character of this we can now but feebly enter; and yet it is permitted us to raise our eyes to where Christ is, to see Him glorified, to know that having died, He dieth no more, death hath no more

dominion over Him; and, as we behold Him, we are warranted by the Word of God to say, We shall be like Him; we shall share in all the fulness of life which is in Him; for God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Surely as it is all of grace, to God alone belongs all the praise!

Secondly, there will be, as already said, the display of this life together with Christ in glory. This is the perfect contrast to our present condition, and is several times brought out, in other aspects, in the Scriptures. "Beloved," writes St. John, "now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear (or, it is not yet manifested) what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear (or, when He is manifested), we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). This will be the utter reversal of our present seen condition. We are now God's children; but then it will be displayed that we are, in that we are like Christ. So also it is death now as far as this world is concerned: God says that we are dead, and we reckon ourselves to be so. But then—when we appear with Christ in glory, it will be displayed that He is our life, and that we are one with Him in that eternal life. Then we shall reign in life by One—Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 17).

Nor will the relationship be ever changed. As Christ is our life now, so will He be throughout eternity.

Evermore we shall be able to say, With Thee is the fountain of life ; in Thy light we shall see light. Then all tears will have been wiped away, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things will have passed away (Rev. xxi. 4). For death, the last enemy, will ere this have been destroyed ; and hence there will be for every saint of God the constant, perpetual, unhindered enjoyment of the power of that life "more abundantly," which he receives through Him who has died, risen again, and is now alive for evermore. What a contrast to our present circumstances ! Death is upon the whole scene ; and we have to bear always about the dying of Jesus. It is death, therefore, upon ourselves as well as upon all around. Then it will be life, and nothing but life, and life for evermore !

" Fair the scene that lies before me ;  
Life eternal Jesus gives ;  
While He waves His banner o'er me,  
Peace and joy my soul receives :  
Sure His promise !  
I shall live because He lives. "

## CHAPTER VI.

## CHRIST OUR FOOD.

**A**NOTHER character in which Christ is brought before us is that of our food. This was foreshadowed in the Levitical economy; for the priests received the most minute and precise instructions concerning feeding upon the sacrifices, or parts of the sacrifices (see Lev. vii.). But there were differences. In some cases the whole priestly family were admitted to the privilege (vi. 18; vii. 6, &c.); and it is in these that we specially see the privilege of believers now of feeding upon Christ. Our Lord Himself refers to the subject during His life. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man shall eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews, therefore, strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the

last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: *so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me,*" &c. (John vi. 51-57).

We have in this scripture, "eating the flesh of the Son of Man, and drinking His blood," and "eating" Christ Himself; and combining this with other scriptures, we are said—speaking generally—to feed upon Christ in three characters: as the Passover Lamb, as the Manna, and as the Old Corn of the land; for it need scarcely be said that all these things are types of Christ. In the scripture cited from St. John's Gospel, we have Christ especially as the Manna (ver. 32, 33, 48-50, &c.); and a reference to Him also as the Passover Lamb (compare 4th ver. with ver. 53, &c.); but we shall have to turn to the Epistles to find Him in the character which answers to the Old Corn of the land (Josh. v. 11).

(1.) We will consider Christ, first, as the Passover Lamb, as the food for His people. If we go back to the history of Israel, we shall find that they kept the Passover in Egypt (Exod. xii.), in the wilderness (Num. ix.), and in the land (Josh. v.). The question then arises, When do we feed upon Christ as the Passover Lamb? It is sometimes said that we only do this at the outset, when, convicted of sin, we fear the

approach of God as a Judge; and that as soon as we have deliverance, we thereafter cease to feed upon Him in this character. If this be so, why does Israel keep the Passover both in the wilderness and in the land? I think, therefore, that it will be seen that we never cease to keep the Passover; and, moreover, that the place in which we thus feed upon Christ *depends upon our state of soul.*

Every believer knows what it is (has known what it is) to feed upon the roast lamb in Egypt. Awakened by the Spirit of God, alarmed by the impending judgment, brought under the shelter of the precious blood, how eagerly we fed upon the Lamb that had passed through the fires of God's holiness when bearing our sins on the tree! True, it was with bitter herbs that we ate it, for we then had a sight of our sins—in measure according to God; and with girded loins, and shoes on our feet, and our staff in our hand, for already Egypt had become morally a desert, and we were only waiting for the word of the Lord to commence our pilgrim journey. It was a time much to be remembered, for it was the beginning of months—the first month of the year of our spiritual life.

But while every believer has passed through this experience, it is to be feared that many feed upon the roast lamb in Egypt all their lives. Not knowing deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ, or even peace with God as the result of the

sheltering blood, they feed upon Christ only as the One who by His death bars the way to God as a Judge; and consequently they do not know God as their God and Father in Christ Jesus. Such a state of soul is both to be deprecated and deplored; for it is the result either of bad teaching, or of the unbelief of the heart in the fulness of the grace of God.

Passing now from Egypt, the next place in which Israel kept the Passover was the wilderness; and they were told to keep it there "according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof" (Num. ix. 3). The wilderness is the place of every believer when viewed as a pilgrim. The world has become a desert to him, and he is passing through (as not of) it, because he is waiting for the return of his Lord. How then does he feed upon Christ as the slain Lamb in the wilderness? "It is participation by grace in the power of the death and resurrection of Christ," by which we have been brought out of the enemy's territory—delivered from the power of Satan and redeemed unto God. In the wilderness we feed upon the Passover as the memorial of our deliverance from Egypt; and in it we see Christ going down into death, and not only bearing all the judgment that was our due—going through and exhausting it, but also as meeting and conquering all the power of the enemy—destroying him that had the power of death, and thereby bringing us out from the house of bondage, and setting us free as the children,

and for the service, of God. In the wilderness, therefore, we feed upon the Passover Lamb as pilgrims and strangers—knowing deliverance, but not as yet come to the land of which the Lord has spoken. Hence in this character we not only value (according to our faith) the precious blood, and delight to contemplate its wondrous efficacy as clearing us for ever from every charge and claim of the enemy, but we also feed upon the death of Christ as such, because of our death (and resurrection) in Him, by which we have been brought out into a new place, where we can look back upon death and judgment as being for ever behind us.

In the land the Passover assumed another character still, and one too which should also find its correspondence with the believer now. It is very evident that to the Israelite it would have a much fuller significance when he was across the Jordan than when he was in the desert. It would be to him now the memorial, not simply of deliverance from Egypt and Egypt's thralldom and power, but of *accomplished* salvation. For in truth his position in the land, while it was to the glory of God's faithfulness and grace in the performance of all that He had promised ("for there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass," Josh. xxi. 45), was the consequence of the shed blood. In other words, the blood of the Passover lamb laid the foundation for the accomplishment of God's purposes; and hence, to

those whose eyes were opened, the blood would have a far greater value when over the Jordan than when in the waste howling wilderness.

So now. For we have a position which agrees entirely with being in the land; for not only have we been quickened together with Christ, but we are also raised up together, and *made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus* (Eph. ii.). This is the place before God of every believer; but whether we are occupying it depends upon whether we know death and resurrection *with*, as well as *in and through*, Christ; whether we have crossed the Jordan as well as the Red Sea. It is our privilege to do so: indeed, we ought never to be content until, by the grace of God, we do know what it is to be seated in spirit in the heavenly places. But if we are there, we cannot dispense with the Passover. On the other hand, the more fully we apprehend the character of the place into which we are brought, the more the riches of the grace of God are unfolded to us, the more delightedly, and with enlarged apprehensions, we shall look back to the cross, and feast upon the death of Him whose precious blood alone has made our place in the heavenlies possible for us. But our feeding upon Him now will partake more of the character of communion with God in the death of His Son. Our eyes will then be opened to discover, not so much the blessings which have thereby been secured to us, as that God in every attribute of His character

has been fully glorified in that death. We shall thus (if we may so speak) feast with God when we keep the Passover in the heavenly places; and the effect on our souls will be adoration and praise: in a word, worship of the highest character will be the result of our feeding upon the slain Lamb when seated in the heavenlies. For we are seated there in peace before God—already in possession of our place in His presence; and it is only then that we can have communion with His own thoughts, and with His own joy in the death of His Son.

We see, therefore, that we feed upon Christ as the Passover Lamb in every stage of our experience; but the place in which we do so—Egypt, the wilderness, or the land—will depend upon our states of soul. And no doubt, when we are gathered together to show the Lord's death until He come, there are often side by side those who are in the wilderness and those who are in the land. Still they feed alike upon the death of Christ, remember Him as dead, whatever the difference in their apprehensions, or in their experiences or attainments. In heaven itself, indeed, we shall contemplate that death with ever-increasing adoration; for the blood of the Lamb will be the theme of glorified saints throughout eternity.

(2.) Christ as the Manna is also the food of His people. The manna differs from the roast lamb in that it was confined to the wilderness. It was not until

Israel had been brought through the Red Sea that the manna was given (see Exod. xvi.); and it "ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (Josh. v. 12). It was, therefore, the wilderness food of Israel; and in like manner Christ, as the Manna, is the wilderness food for the believer. But a distinction has to be made. Inasmuch as the history of Israel, passing through the desert, crossing the Jordan, and occupying the land, is typical, they could only be in one place at a time. The believer is at the same moment in the wilderness and in the heavenlies. For service, for the expression of Christ down here, viewed as a pilgrim, waiting for the return of the Lord, he is in the desert; his position before God, as united to a glorified Christ, is ever in the heavenly places—whether he occupies it, is another question. Hence, supposing him to know his place, he needs the Manna and the Old Corn at the same time. In other words, he needs to feed upon Christ in both aspects. *He is never in Egypt*, whatever his experiences; for that would be to deny the truth of his deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ. A quickened soul may be in Egypt, but a believer—meaning by this term one who has been brought into the true Christian place by the indwelling Spirit—has done for ever with Egypt; for the world has become to him a moral wilderness; and it is as

being in the wilderness that he feeds upon Christ as the Manna.

What, then, is the Manna for the believer? It is Christ in incarnation—a humbled Christ. “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John vi. 32, 33, 49–51). Christ is thus the Manna in all that He was in the flesh—in the expression of what He was both as the revealer of the Father and as the perfect man. His grace, compassion, sympathy, tenderness, and love—His meekness and lowliness of heart—His patience, forbearance, and long-suffering—His example—all these things are found in the Manna which God has given to us for food during our sojourn in the wilderness.

He is continually presented to us in the Manna-character in those epistles which especially deal with the desert-path of the saint. “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of wit-

nesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*, the author and finisher of faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For *consider Him* that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb. xii. 1-3). That is, we are exhorted to feed upon Christ as the manna to sustain us amid the trials, difficulties, and persecutions incident to the desert. In like manner Peter, who writes particularly "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus," &c., continually leads us to Christ in this aspect. "What glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps*," &c. (1 Peter ii. 20-24; see also chap. iii. 17, 18). The Apostle Paul, too, feeds the saints with manna. For example, though it contains more, we have it in Philippians ii. 5-9—manna, we might say, of the most precious character. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." But it is in the Gospels that the manna lies gleaming round us on every side, and where it is to be gathered for use

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as the needs of each day may require. For there it is that we have the unfoldings of that wondrous life—the life of Him who was the Perfect Man, and, at the same time, God manifest in flesh.

Two remarks, however, may be made as to the collecting and use of the manna. The Israelites *went out of the camp* to gather at a certain rate every day (Exod. xvi. 4). We must *go down* for the same purpose. That is, unless we know our place in the heavenlies, and in truth what it is to feed upon the old corn of the land, we shall scarcely be able to feed upon the manna. This is remarkably brought out in the Apostle Paul's ministry: he began with Christ in glory. So must it be with us. When we know our union with a glorified Christ, our place in Him before God, we shall feast with intensified delight upon Christ as the manna. Historically the manna came before the old corn, but the order should be reversed for the believer—for the simple reason that God has so reversed it in the presentation of Christ to our souls. We preach, as Paul did, a Christ in glory; and when He is thus apprehended, then, and not until then, we can find in a humbled Christ our food while in the wilderness. Hence the great loss, and consequent weakness, of those who are never permitted to hear of Christ in glory; whose only thought of Him is as once dwelling down here in the flesh, when He was made in the likeness of men.

The second remark is the very obvious and often-repeated one, that the manna cannot be *stored* for use. Every one must gather it every day according to his eating (Exod. xvi. 16); and if he gather more—unless it be for “the Sabbath”—it will surely become corrupt. No, beloved friends, there must be the constant feeding upon Christ, day by day, and hour by hour; and we can never receive more than our need for the time requires. Thereby we are kept in continual dependence, and our eyes are ever directed to Christ. “As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me” (John vi. 57).

(3.) There remains to be considered Christ as the Old Corn of the land. In the passage already referred to (Josh. v. 10–12), we have the Passover, the manna, and the old corn mentioned together, and this fact makes the interpretation the more manifest. If, therefore, the manna is Christ in incarnation, the old corn, inasmuch as the land typifies the heavenly places, of necessity points to Christ in glory. And we shall find that He is so presented to us in the epistles as the sustenance and strength of our souls, and so presented as our proper nourishment, even though believers may be regarded in the epistles, not, as in the Ephesians, as seated in the heavenlies in Christ, but, as in Colossians and Philippians (and indeed in 2d Corinthians), as down here upon the earth; for

though still down here, they are united to Him where He is.

Take Colossians first. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection [have your mind] on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 1-3). Here it is true we have "*the things* which are above;" but it is evident that by this term is meant the whole sphere of blessing, of which Christ in glory is the centre—the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in fact, into the possession of which we are brought, and all of which are summed up in Christ. These therefore are "the old corn of the land," "the fruit of the land of Canaan," the proper food and sustenance for those who have died and are risen with Christ.

In Philippians iii. we have the same truth brought before us. For what have we there but a glorified Christ as filling the vision of the Apostle's soul, and as the satisfying portion of his heart? Thus if we have the manna in chapter ii., we most surely have the old corn of the land in chapter iii. One more instance may be cited (2 Cor. iii. 18): "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Hence, too, the value of the constant expectation of Christ. It attracts us to the person of the

glorified Christ, engages our hearts with Him, and fills our souls with longing desires for that time when we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2).

All these passages, and many more of a kindred character, direct us to Christ in glory as the old corn of the land; but this is food with which we cannot dispense: no other will so nourish or impart such strength to the saint. It is heavenly food for heavenly people; and it is only when we are feeding upon it that we can be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might; that we can make war with the enemy for the possession (the occupation) of our inheritance; that we are made willing to undergo anything and everything—fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, being made conformable unto His death, if in any way we may arrive at the resurrection from among the dead (Phil. iii.), when we shall be glorified together with Him who has been the strength and sustenance of our souls.

It should be remarked, too, that there is no power to express Christ in our walk down here excepting as we are occupied with Him in glory.<sup>1</sup> He should thus be, in this character, ever before us; and He will be when, taught of the Spirit, we can say to Him, "All our springs, all the sources of our joy, are in Thee." And He Himself desires this; for He said to His disciples,

<sup>1</sup> See chapter x. for further instruction on this subject.

when speaking of the coming Spirit of Truth, "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 14, 15).

Feeding upon, occupation with, Christ is, therefore, the Alpha and the Omega of the Christian life; occupation with His death—that death which laid the foundation not only of our own redemption and deliverance, but also of the reconciliation of all things; occupation with Him in incarnation, when, though He were the Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, when, as the obedient and dependent Man, He found His meat in doing the Father's will and in finishing His work, and thus glorified God in every detail of that wondrous life; and, above all, occupation with Him in the glory—as the glorified Man—the centre of all God's counsels, and the object of all His delight; yea, the satisfying portion of His heart. It is thus by occupation with, feeding upon, contemplating Christ, that we are brought, in the power of the Spirit, into fellowship with God; enabled to enter into His own thoughts concerning, and even to share His own affections for, that blessed One who is now seated at His own right hand. Surely here, then, is the source of all growth, strength, and blessing! Satan knows this, and hence he is incessantly engaged in seeking to occupy us with other things, to turn us aside to earthly

sources and objects. It behoves us, therefore, to be watchful, to maintain exercised hearts and consciences, that we may at once detect, and unsparingly judge, everything which would decoy our souls from the contemplation of Christ.

Blessed Lord Jesus! keep Thyself so constantly before our souls, and so unfold Thyself in all Thy grace and beauty to our hearts, that, drawing out our affections, we may desire to have nothing, to see nothing and to know nothing, but Thyself; for in Thee dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and we are complete in Thee.

“ Soon shall my eyes behold Thee  
With rapture face to face ;  
One half hath not been told me  
Of all Thy power and grace.  
Thy beauty, Lord, and glory,  
The wonders of Thy love,  
Shall be the endless story  
Of all Thy saints above.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## CHRIST OUR HIGH PRIEST.

THE priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ was strikingly foreshadowed in many particulars, albeit of another order, by that of Aaron. Thus in his consecration we find that in one point he is made to differ from his sons. Together they were washed with water, and then, after putting the priestly garments upon Aaron, Moses “poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron’s head, and anointed him, to sanctify him” (Lev. viii. 6–12). When alone—apart from his sons—he is anointed without blood; while afterwards, together with his sons, the sprinkling of the blood preceded the anointing oil (vers. 13–30). The reason of the difference is evident. Aaron together with his sons prefigures the Church as the priestly family; but Aaron alone is a type of Christ; and hence his anointing without the blood, to set forth the truth that his great Antitype was “harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” and needed not, therefore, the blood, seeing that He was without spot or blemish, that He was holy before God.

But in one respect it was impossible for Aaron to

adumbrate Christ. Having been washed with water, he was made a figure of His purity; but he could not—except officially—prefigure His personal dignity. Accordingly, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and where the subject of the Lord's priesthood is specially exhibited, the first thing to which our attention is directed is the dignity of His person. The epistle opens with it: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (ver. 1); and then we have a long list of His personal glories detailed. He is Son, Heir, and Creator (ver. 2); then He is the brightness of the glory, and the express image of His person, upholding all things by the word of His power; the One who, having by Himself purged our sins, has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Compared with angels, He is shown to have obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than they; to be the Son—the First-begotten. To Him, as God, is said to belong the eternal throne of righteousness; He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows; thereon His unchangeable divinity as Creator of all things is indicated, and His place at the right hand of God, while waiting until His enemies be made His footstool. In the next chapter He is set forth as Son of Man—the heir of all things; as Jesus made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with

glory and honour ; then, as suited to the glory of God, as the Captain of the salvation of His people, made perfect through sufferings ; taking part in flesh and blood ; in all things made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (*ἱλάσκεσθα*) for the sins of the people.

Such is the wonderful character of the person of our High Priest. He is God ; and He is man ; and therefore when the angels, Moses, Joshua, and Aaron, are brought into comparison with Him, they fade away and disappear before His surpassing glory. And surely a lesson is hereby conveyed. We think much of the work and the office of our High Priest, and it is well that we should do so ; but the first thing the Holy Ghost presents to our notice is His person. For, indeed, His qualification for, and His ability to execute, the office depend upon the character of His person. For had He not been God as well as man, He could not have made propitiation for the sins of the people ; and had He not been man as well as God, He could not have through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage ; nor indeed could He have been made perfect through sufferings (Heb. ii.). It is His person, therefore, that gives security for His office ; and hence the Spirit of God would assure and comfort our hearts

by unfolding to us His distinctive glories and dignities, before directing us to the functions of His office as Priest.

The next point to be considered is—those for whom He acts as Priest. It is needful to be particular here; first, because it is a vital question, and, secondly, because there is so much confusion abroad respecting it. Many of the hymns, for example, in popular hymn-books speak as if He were a Priest for all without exception! Is it so? Nothing could be further from the truth. The analogy with the Jewish priesthood should have prevented such a misconception, for Aaron executed the priest's office, not for all men, but only for the people of Israel, for those who had been brought into a distinct and known relationship with God. It is true that amongst these were those who had been born again, and those who were not; but this is not the point to be considered. The whole of Israel were a redeemed people; all alike had been brought out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea; and all, therefore, were *typically* saved. Hence Israel as such prefigures those who are now saved—the people of God on the earth; and consequently Christ only fulfils the office of Priest for believers, for those who are His. It is, in fact, for a redeemed people, though, as passing through the wilderness, like Israel of old, they are looked at as pilgrims and strangers, journeying on toward the rest of God. Thus in the very first chapter

it is said, "When He had by Himself purged *our* sins" (ver. 3). Again, we are told that it "became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, *in bringing many sons unto glory*, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth, and *they who are sanctified*, are all of one : for which cause He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*," &c. (Heb. ii. 10, 11). These terms, which we have emphasized, define most distinctly the class for whom He acts; and we find also such descriptions as these: "Holy brethren," "partakers of the heavenly calling," those "that come unto God by Him" (Heb. vii. 25)—*i.e.*, those that approach into the presence of God for worship—those who are entitled to access within the rent veil, into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. x. 19-21). He thus discharges His office only for those who have been redeemed, who have been sanctified through the blood, whose sins are gone, and who, therefore, have no more conscience of sins; in a word, for the sanctified who have been perfected for ever by the one offering of Christ (Heb. x. 1-14). There must be no mistake here; for it is only to deceive ourselves, and that in the most fatal way, if we think, as men so often teach, that we go to a priest to obtain the forgiveness of our sins. The Word of God never so teaches; the truth is, that we do not go to the priest at all, but we approach God, *through the priest*, on the ground that our sins have for ever been put away.

We may now glance at His special qualifications for the office. We have seen that had He not been God and man, He could not have fulfilled it; and now we propose to notice some other features which are brought before us in this epistle. We read, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but He that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him; called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. v. 4-10).

The essential qualification of all from this scripture is His Divine appointment. No man taketh this honour unto himself; neither did Christ. And this fact is full of consolation to the believer—that He who acts as our Priest—the One through whom we approach God—has been appointed by God Himself; One, therefore, who is acceptable—yea, infinitely acceptable. This is one of the credentials of His office; and one, we may add,

which destroys for ever the claims of any human priesthood. True all God's people are priests—they are an holy priesthood (1 Peter ii. 5); but if any claim to act as such on behalf of other believers, they must be able to prove their qualification to have received their office from God Himself. The blessed Lord Jesus did, and under circumstances of the greatest solemnity: for when contrasting His priesthood with the Levitical, the writer of this epistle says, "Those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. vii. 21). There are, in fact, three things here pointed out: as to His personal glory, He was the Son of God; in His official glory, He was a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; and the source of His office was in the Divine will.

But we now pass to another order of qualification, which He acquired in the days of His flesh, when He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. Though He were Son of God, He was down here as man, and hence all this bitter experience to which allusion is made, when He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, to Him that was able to save Him. In a former chapter, we are told that He suffered, being tempted (chap. ii. 18); and again, that He was tempted in all points like as we are—sin apart (*χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας*); but the reference

here is primarily to His conflict in the garden of Gethsemane, when satan was pressing the power of death upon His soul, and when in spirit He went down into the deeps of death; and when, as a consequence, His anguish was so great that His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke xxii. 44). He thus as man drank this bitter cup, and accordingly was tempted as we are—apart from sin; and thereby learned by His own experience what it was to suffer, being tempted, that He might be able to succour those that are tempted. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; for being the Son of God, He knew not what it was to obey until He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was found in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 7, 8). All that He suffered, therefore, was in obedience: He was doing God's will (Heb. x.), and He did it perfectly, according to the perfection of God's thoughts. Hence when He cried, in His bitter sorrow, to Him that was able to save Him from death, He was heard in that He feared, or, on account of His piety (*ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας*): God responded to the cry of Him who thus glorified Him in His perfect obedience.

But the point here is, that, passing through this bitter sorrow and agony, in obedience to God's will, "He was made perfect." How? Not morally, seeing

He was ever perfect—the One in whom was all God's delight; but He was made perfect *as to qualification for His office*, and so He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him, saluted of God an High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. How blessed for us to know that He is, therefore, not one that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; that, by His experiences down here, He is enabled to enter into and sympathise with us in our weaknesses and sorrows, and that He consequently understands how to present our case before God, discerning exactly what we need. Those around may fail to understand, and disappoint us in withholding their sympathy; but He never, for He has trodden the same path, and knows every step of our way. Blessed be His Name!

Other qualifications—such as the efficacy of the sacrifice which He once offered, and the perpetuity of His priesthood (Heb. vii. 23, 24, 26, 27; ix. 24–28)—we may touch upon in another connection. What has been pointed out is sufficient to show how wondrously adapted our great High Priest is for the office which He fills for us in the presence of God.

The office—the work of His priesthood—will now occupy our attention. Two or three preliminary remarks will clear our way to this part of our subject. First, the scene of the exercise of His office is heaven, and not earth. We have already pointed out that, at the commencement of the epistle, He is shown as having

sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 3). Again, "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man;" and again, "If He were on earth, He should not be a Priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law" (Heb. viii. 1, 2, 4). But it is sometimes asked if He did not as Priest make propitiation for the sins of the people. It was the Priest; but this was only because what He was in Himself cannot be separated from what He did. It was no part of the priest's office to slay the victim, and hence we may say that this was not a priestly act on the part of Christ, though He was the Priest that did it. The passages above cited make it very plain, that it was not until He had sat down on high, that He really commenced the work of His priesthood.

Secondly, He is a Priest, as we have seen, after the order of Melchizedek. But the Melchizedek priesthood has relation to the millennium, as the name itself imports—"First being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Heb. vii. 2). It is not, therefore, until our Lord leaves His present place at the right hand of God—not, indeed, until after He shall have come for His saints, and returns with them, and comes forth in the characters of King of righteousness (the true David)

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and the King of peace (the true Solomon), that He will enter upon the functions of the Melchizedek priesthood. The order of His priesthood remains, but throughout the present interval of grace, during the present dispensation, while He remains inside the rent veil, His present service as Priest corresponds rather with that of Aaron.

One other preliminary remark remains. The foundation of His priesthood lies in the one sacrifice which He has offered. Having "by Himself purged our sins, He sat down," &c. (Heb. i. 3). "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Heb. vii. 27). "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 12). His intercession, therefore, as the Priest is based upon the everlasting virtue and efficacy of that one oblation which He offered upon the cross. **CONSEQUENTLY AS PRIEST HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR SINS.** This is a point as important as it is undeniable. It is important as cutting away the whole foundation on which human, ecclesiastical sacerdotalism rests. The office of the Romish or the Anglican priest were obsolete if it were dissevered from the question of sins; and yet there is nothing clearer, from the teaching of this whole epistle to the Hebrews, than that Christ as Priest has no con-

nection with sins. Thus, He had purged our sins before He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He made propitiation for the sins of the people before He entered upon the office (Heb. ii. 17). He had obtained eternal redemption before He entered into the holy place (Heb. ix. 12). He was once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb. ix. 28). Hence those who come (have access) unto God by Him are looked upon as having no more conscience of sins (mark, that it is not sin, but sins), as having been perfected for ever by His one offering, as those whose sins and iniquities are remembered no more (Heb. x. 1-18). This, indeed, is a fundamental truth of Christianity, that the believer's sins are gone for ever from the view of God, on the ground that Christ once bore them, suffering for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God (1 Peter iii. 18). Having been expiated in the precious blood of Christ, they can never more be recalled; and thus we are qualified for access into God's presence, to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and to be inside the rent veil as worshippers (Heb. x. 19-22); and it is for us as such, for only such, that Christ carries on the office of His priesthood.

Passing now to consider the actual work of the office, we remark: (1.) That He is there before God on our behalf. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for

us" (Heb. ix. 24). He is our Representative before God. It was so with Aaron. We thus read, "And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. . . . And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." And we have similar directions as to the breastplate. There were to be twelve stones in it, "and the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel. . . . And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually" (Exod. xxviii. 9-29). In like manner, the Lord Jesus bears us on His breast, and on His shoulders in the presence of God—*i.e.*, He upholds us there by His intercession. The breast is an emblem of the affections, and the shoulders of strength; and we learn, therefore, that He has the ability—the strength—derived, indeed, from the prevailing, and ever-abiding efficacy of His sacrifice—and the heart to maintain us before God; and hence that His intercession for us is so effectual that we can well say—

"Our cause can never, never fail,  
For Thou dost plead, and must prevail."

This is no small comfort to us as we are journeying onward through the desert—to look up and see our great High Priest ever bearing us up before God, and to remember in all our weakness and coldness that His strength and His affections are in exercise through His intercession on our behalf; and that, therefore, our cause is presented to God, not according to what we are, but according to all that He is.

What confidence this should impart to us—and will, when our eye is not on ourselves, but on our High Priest. Thus if a poor, sick, feeble believer should be tossed with doubt, under the temptation of Satan, because he can neither think nor pray, let him look upward, and recollect that though he cannot pray, Christ has undertaken his case, and, even while he himself is doubting, is engaged in intercession on his behalf. Oh! it is sweet beyond expression to know that I am borne on the heart and shoulders of Christ—a heart of such love that the many waters could not drown, nor the floods quench it, and shoulders of such strength that He upholds all things even by the *word* of His power. And the very fact of His presence before God on our behalf is the everlasting witness that our sins are for ever gone.

(2.) It is through the action of Christ as our High Priest, that we obtain mercy at the throne of grace, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. iv. 16). The High Priest, as pointed out, is in connection

with a people in the wilderness (see Heb. iii. and iv.); and we, therefore, looked at in relation with priesthood, are on our way to the rest of God, even as Israel were on their way to Canaan. While thus on our pilgrimage, God uses His Word to judge everything in our hearts that might lead us aside from the path of faith and induce us to seek a resting-place in the desert. Hence the apostle says, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that (God's) rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 11-13). This might deter us—and would, were we left to ourselves. "But there is another succour, one of a different character, to aid us in our passage through the wilderness; and that is priesthood. . . . We have a High Priest who has passed through the heavens, as Aaron passed through the successive parts of the tabernacle—Jesus, the Son of God. He has in all things been tempted like ourselves, sin apart; so that He can sympathise with our infirmities. The Word brings to light the intents of the heart, judges the will, and all that has not God for its object and its source. Then, as far as weakness is

concerned, we have His sympathy. Christ of course had no evil desires. He was tempted in every way apart from sin. Sin had no part in it at all. But I do not wish for sympathy with the sin that is in me; I detest it, I wish it to be mortified—judged unsparingly. This the Word does. For my weakness and my difficulties I seek sympathy, and I find it in the priesthood of Jesus.” Having, therefore, such an High Priest—One who Himself suffered, being tempted, and One, therefore, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities—we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, to receive mercy, and to find grace to help in time of need—for seasonable succour (*εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν*).

(3.) We have access into God’s presence by virtue of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, and also of His own presence there as our High Priest (Heb. x. 19–22). We may say more; our place is inside the rent veil in virtue of that one sacrifice which has put away our sins for ever; and having an High Priest over the house of God, we can 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 (ver. 21, 22). The place where Christ is, is the place of our worship, and that is inside the rent veil; but we could not be there were it not that He is there as the High Priest, having obtained eternal redemption.

“ By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,  
We pass within the veil.”

(4.) It is through Him as our Priest that our praise and adoration ascend to God. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15). What an unspeakable mercy that we have such a Priest—One who knows how to separate the precious from the vile, and who, therefore, only permits that to come up before God which is acceptable to Him! Just as the priests of old had to examine every offering that was brought, and to reject any that were blemished, so that nothing could be burnt upon the altar which did not meet the Divine requirements, so Christ as our High Priest acts in regard to our sacrifices of praise. This is no small consolation as we remember our ignorance and weakness; for while we ought to possess priestly discernment ourselves, and while we should not extenuate our failure in presenting what is suitable to God, it is yet a gracious encouragement to us to know that nothing will come up before His throne but what is accepted and offered for us by our great High Priest. He knows how to apply the priestly knife, and to cast aside everything that God cannot receive. (See Lev. i. 14-17.)

(5.) Once more, we may add that His continued presence before God as our High Priest is the assurance that we shall be brought through all our difficulties, be completely saved. "Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost" (completely—all the way through—alto-

gether—*εἰς τὸ παντελές*) “them that come (approach) unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. vii. 25). Having once died, He dieth no more; He is alive for ever; and hence He has an unchangeable priesthood. Having, therefore, undertaken our cause, He will never lay it down; and consequently, the perpetuity of His office, and His uninterrupted, effectual intercession afford us an absolute guarantee that we shall not perish in the wilderness; that if Joshua did not give Israel rest—and there remaineth a rest for the people of God—the Lord Jesus, by means of His priesthood, since He has been victorious over death, and lives for evermore, will surely bring us into it.

We have now traced in outline the priesthood of Christ; and surely, as we meditate upon Him in this character and office, our hearts will be filled with adoring gratitude to God, in that He in His grace has made such wondrous provision for us while passing through the wilderness. He gave Israel a Moses, an Aaron, and a Joshua; but He has given us His own beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person—an assurance to us, absolute and unqualified, that He will bring us into all the glory which He has purposed and secured for us in Christ.

What, then, should be the effect upon us of contemplating Christ as our High Priest? “Seeing, then,” says

the apostle, "that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, *let us hold fast our profession*" (or confession) (Heb. iv. 14). Again he says, "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope without wavering" (Heb. x. 23); and he also speaks of Christ within the veil being our Hope, as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast (Heb. vi. 18-20). The effect, therefore, should be to encourage us to confidence—confidence in Him—boldness, and perseverance. Christ is there before God as our High Priest; therefore let us hold fast, knowing that, spite of all our weakness and infirmities, and the strength, activity, and hostility of our foes, we shall be brought through all the perils of the wilderness into the possession and enjoyment of the everlasting rest of God.

“ And though awhile He be  
Hid from the eyes of men,  
His people look to see  
Their great High Priest again.  
In brightest glory He will come,  
And take His waiting people home.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

## CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE.

FOR our knowledge of the advocacy of Christ we are entirely indebted to the First Epistle of St. John. Not that there are not shadows and figures of it; but we have nowhere else any direct statement concerning it. St. Paul speaks of Christ being at the right hand of God to make intercession for us (Rom. viii. 34); and no doubt the term "intercession" will cover both the advocacy and the priesthood; but he does not directly mention this office of Christ. It occupies, therefore, far less space in the Scriptures than the priesthood, which has the greater part of the Epistle to the Hebrews devoted to its exposition. It is not, on this account, an unimportant subject. So far, indeed, from this being the case, there is scarcely one that has more interest for, and demands more urgently the attention of, the children of God. For the advocacy of Christ is the provision which God in His grace has made for our daily sins. Thus, after bringing out the truth of our position in the light, as God is in the light—this being the place of every true believer—the apostle says, "If

we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (1 John i. 8—ii. 1, 2).

Nothing, then, can be clearer than that the advocacy of Christ is exercised in relation to the sins of believers. In the 6th and 7th verses of chapter i. we find the two classes contrasted—those who walk in darkness, those who are not saved, who have no fellowship with God, whatever their claims and pretensions, for He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (ver. 5); and those who had received the testimony of the apostles concerning "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto" them, and thereby had been brought into fellowship with those who declared the message, and their fellowship was with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (vers. 1–3). But if we have fellowship with God, "we walk in the light, as He is in the light"—*i.e.*, our place or sphere is in the light—a thing which is true of every believer; and "we have fellowship one with another," for it is only in fellowship with the Father and the Son that we can have

fellowship one with another, "and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

This last clause needs to be understood, or we cannot apprehend the nature of the advocacy of Christ. It does not mean, as is so often maintained, that the blood of Christ is constantly applied for the continual cleansing of the believer; that, in short, it is the blood which cleanses us from our daily sins. If it were so, what need of the advocacy? Besides, it would contradict the plain teaching of other scriptures. Thus in John xiii. our Lord plainly taught Peter that being once washed (*λελουμένος*—bathed), he had no further need save to wash (*νίψασθαι*) his feet, but was clean every whit (*καθαρός ὅλος*) (John xiii. 10). So also in the Epistle to the Hebrews it is directly said, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14). It is indeed a cardinal truth of Christianity, that every one who is brought by faith under the efficacy of the blood of Christ is for ever cleansed from guilt, and consequently that there can be no second application of the blood. This is the whole gist of the argument in Hebrews ix. and x. We there read, that "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He

often have suffered since the foundation of the world : but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself ” (Heb. ix. 24-26). This scripture shows the contrast between the repeated sacrifices of old, and the one sacrifice of Christ—between, therefore, the temporary efficacy of the former, and the everlasting efficacy of the latter. The consequence is, that the sins of those who are under the efficacy of the blood of Christ are for ever gone from the sight of God ; for “ Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ” (Heb. ix. 28). Hence in the next chapter we find proof upon proof that there is no more remembrance of the sins of the believer ; that now he has no more conscience of sins, since he has been perfected for ever by the one offering of Christ ; and consequently the Holy Ghost testifies, “ Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more ” (Heb. x. 1-17). It is essential for us to be clear upon this point ; for in truth it is one of the fundamentals of our faith.

The truth, therefore, is that St. John does not speak of the application of the blood (for this were inconsistent with the truth of our having no more conscience of sins), but of its efficacy. Its characteristic is to cleanse from all sin, *i.e.*, the blood has this property, just as we sometimes say, to borrow an illustration, Poison kills—this is the nature of poison. In like manner, the blood of Christ has the essential quality or property of cleansing from sin.

Thus understood, the connection is as beautiful as it is evident. "In the light as He is in the light." How, we might be tempted to exclaim, is it possible to be there? Conscious of the defilements daily contracted, and of the sins into which we often fall, we might well shrink from the full blaze of the light of the holiness of God. Hence we are reminded that our fitness for such a place is solely, and wholly, due to the cleansing efficacy of the blood, and that that blood is ever there before the eye of God to answer every claim that might be urged against us.

" Though the restless foe accuses,  
Sins recounting like a flood ;  
Every charge our God refuses :  
Christ has answered with His blood."

Having then asserted the truth as to our place in the presence of God, the apostle now reminds us of our practical condition. We cannot say, "We have no sin," for that were to deceive ourselves, and to overlook the fact that sin is in us, though not on us, until we depart to be with Christ, or He comes to receive us unto Himself; for the old nature is, and remains, incurably evil and corrupt. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," &c. (the bearing of this scripture will be explained farther on). Neither can we say that we have not sinned; if we did, we should make God a liar, for He says all have sinned, and His word therefore would not be in us. Thereon, the apostle

proceeds, "My little children, these things I write unto you that ye sin not." There is therefore *no necessity* for the believer to sin. This truth must be tenaciously held, and urgently insisted upon. "But if any man sin, we have an Advocate;" and thereby the apostle shows, as before remarked, what God's provision is for the daily sins of His children. Its character, the method of its application, and its effect will be explained as we proceed with the subject.

The term "Advocate" is never applied to the Lord Jesus except in this scripture. He Himself applies it to the Holy Ghost. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (John xiv. 16; also 26th ver.; and xv. 26; xvi. 7). The word here translated "Comforter" is the same as is rendered "Advocate" in John. It is *παράκλητος*—Paraclete in both cases. The word is very difficult to translate so as to preserve its full significance. The word "Advocate" seems to have been chosen, to set forth the fact that Christ is with the Father, charged with our interests, and entrusted with our cause, as One who has assumed the conduct of our case, to maintain our communion with the Father; and hence it is that, when we sin, He pleads for us, and secures for us that ministration of the word through the Spirit which brings about our self-judgment and confession, so that, in accordance with 1 John i. 9, our sin may be forgiven and our communion be restored. Christ

is our Paraclete (Advocate), in this sense, on high; and the Holy Ghost is our Paraclete (Comforter) down here, as dwelling within us, His actings being in relation to the actings of our Advocate with the Father; and He, therefore, being charged with our interests below, as Christ is above.

The difference between advocacy and priesthood is twofold. The Priest is *with God*; the Advocate is *with the Father*. The Advocate has to do *with sin*; the Priest *with our infirmities* (Heb. iv. 15)—never with sins. It is true that He has made propitiation for our sins (Heb. ii. 17); and no doubt it was the Priest who did so—but not as a function of His office, rather because the character is inseparably connected with His person. The propitiation which He made (as indeed in the case of the advocacy) is the foundation on which He commences to exercise the office of the Priest. Hence Hebrews opens with, “When He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” It was, therefore, not until He had taken this place that He entered upon the functions of His office as Priest: if He were on earth He should not be a priest (Heb. viii. 4).

So with the Advocate. The proper exercise of this office commenced with His session at the right hand of God; and the foundation of its exercise is twofold—His work and His person. He is the propitiation for our sins—this is the ground, the efficacious basis, on

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which He is enabled to be our Advocate with the Father. And what a basis it is! It reminds us that He has for ever cleared away our sins, that the blood which He shed has been accepted by God as a full and complete atonement for all our guilt; that, therefore, it is a basis on which His intercession can never fail. But He is Jesus Christ the righteous; and thus we are reminded of what He is in Himself—the One who has met every claim of God, according to the standards of His own immutable holiness, glorified Him in every attribute of His being; One, therefore, who answers completely to the perfection of His own nature—of that God who desires truth in the inward parts, and has found it in the Man who is at His own right hand. Both the person and the work, therefore, of Christ constitute for Him, as our Advocate, an irresistible claim upon God. Nay, this were not fully to express what is in the heart of God Himself. It is not enough to say that He cannot deny the plea of our Advocate; for surely His own heart rejoices to hear and to answer His intercession; for because of what Christ is, and has done, He can righteously—He is free to go out in righteousness, according to His own heart of love, and forgive when we confess our sins. Surely it will cheer our souls to remember this when overcome by the tempter.

There are two aspects of the work of Christ as our Advocate. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with

the Father.” This shows us its aspect toward God—that as our Advocate, as before explained, when we sin, He undertakes for us, and intercedes with the Father on our behalf. It is, therefore, not His presence alone that constitutes His advocacy, but rather His active intercession for us when we have fallen into sin. He has given us a sample and illustration of this in regard to Peter. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired [to have] you, that he may sift you as wheat: *but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*” (Luke xxii. 31, 32). It is not forgotten that this scripture is often adduced in illustration of the priesthood, and in one aspect there is no objection to this; but, more strictly speaking, it connects itself with the advocacy, because it is spoken, not in respect of infirmity, but of Peter’s sin. When we thus say, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,” we speak of One who actively pleads for us when we are in the circumstances which call forth His advocacy.

On the one hand, then, the advocacy of Christ is towards the Father. On the other hand, it is ministry towards us—this ministry being the effect of His intercession. To understand this aspect of the office, we must turn to John xiii.; for while 1 John ii. gives us the advocacy itself, John xiii. gives its effect—the method of its application to our needs, as well as the object for which it is exercised. Let us, then, examine this scripture somewhat in detail. The

first thing to be noticed is that this ministry of Christ flows from His own heart of love. "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (ver. 1). The words, "He loved them unto the end," do not simply mean, we need scarcely say, that He loved them unto the end of His earthly sojourn. The phrase is much stronger. It signifies His perpetual love for His own; and it is stated here to show that His love is the source of His unwearied ministry on our behalf, now that He is absent in the glory.

In the next place, the object of His ministry, symbolised by washing His disciples' feet, is brought before us. "And supper being ended" (or rather, during supper, or supper being come—*δείπνου γενομένου*), "the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel and girded Himself" (vers. 2-4). Jesus is thus seated in fellowship with His own at supper, and the prospect of His departure is immediately before His soul, and the place, too, which He would hereafter occupy as Man, for He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to

God. He rises from being seated at supper with His disciples, and He does this to teach them, that He could not remain longer with them in the place where they were; and then, having laid aside His garments, He took a towel and girded Himself, the sign of service. "After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter; and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me*" (vers. 5-8). In these last words we have the object of the washing declared. We have seen that His rising from supper signified that He could no longer continue with them in the place where they were; and now He shows how He would fit them to have part with Him in the place where He was going. John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). And in this scene the Lord teaches His own how He would fit them for, and maintain them in, this fellowship. The object of the feet-washing, therefore, is to enable His people to have communion with Himself, and hence also with the Father, in the place to which He was about to go in the glory.

But we have then another thing. Peter does not

understand the words, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me;" and hence he replies, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed (*λελουμένος*) needeth not save to wash (*νίψασθαι*) his feet, but is clean every whit" (vers. 9, 10). This statement is the key to the understanding of the subject, and needs, consequently, careful attention.

(1.) As we have already remarked, the Lord here teaches that there was no need of a second cleansing, save as to the feet. They were washed, bathed, and that could never be repeated, for they were "clean every whit." This was indeed prefigured at the consecration of the priests. Thus Aaron and his sons were washed with water—type of the new birth through the instrumentality of the word in the power of the Holy Ghost—before they were arrayed in their priestly garments (Exod. xxix. 4); and through this process they never went again; but the laver was provided at which they were to wash their hands and feet, when they went into the tabernacle for their priestly service (Exod. xxx. 17-21). We cannot emphasise this point too strongly, that the believer once cleansed is cleansed for ever—that he remains "clean every whit." Otherwise, indeed, we should have no qualification for access into God's presence; for if one spot only could be found upon us, we could not enter inside the rent veil.

(2.) While they were clean every whit, their feet would need continual washing. The feet signify walk, and the thought is that, though we are in a position of abiding acceptance before God, in our walk through this scene we constantly contract defilement, which, while it cannot touch our standing—our being in the light as God is in the light, inasmuch as we have this in virtue of what Christ is and has done—it yet disturbs, interrupts our communion. We need on this account our feet washed for our restoration to fellowship—for the enjoyment of all that belongs to us in the position in which we have been set by the grace of our God.

It may, however, be inquired, What is the nature of the defilement which we thus contract? Connecting, as we have done, this scripture with that already considered in 1 John ii., we cannot but answer that it is sin. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate." It is true that it is often maintained that defilements are not necessarily connected with sin; but does not this view lose sight of what God is in His holiness? Besides, what else can defile but sin? We do not overlook the fact that in the Old Testament a Nazarite, for example, might be even accidentally defiled by the occurrence of sudden death by his side (Numb. vi. 9). But death is the fruit of sin, and the Nazarite in some way came under its power, though his contact with it, in such a case, might seem to be entirely fortuitous. And in all such instances as these, the lesson taught

is how utterly repellent holiness is from sin and death (see also Numb. xix. as to causes of defilement). The mistake is often made of taking ceremonial defilement as an exact *illustration* of moral defilement, whereas the former is but a type or shadow of the latter. It might even lead to dangerous consequences to maintain that we might be defiled apart from sin, for nothing else can unfit the believer for the presence of God; and the very fact that our feet need repeated washing makes it clear that defilement has been incurred—it may be unknown and unconsciously by ourselves, but, as seen by the eye of God, it can only come from the polluted and polluting source of sin. We may, therefore, be sure that, whenever our communion is interrupted, we have contracted defilement, and that through sin in some one of its manifold forms. It is this which makes us need, and calls forth, the incessant activity of our Lord and Saviour as the Advocate with the Father.

(3.) We have now to answer the question, How does the Lord wash the feet of His own? Here He poured *water* into a bason, and washed the disciples' feet, &c. Now water is a well-known symbol for the Word. Thus in this very Gospel the Lord says that a man must be born of *water* and of the Spirit. St. Peter speaks of our being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter i. 23; see also James i. 18). The Word,

therefore, is that which water, in the language of our Lord, adumbrated. The Psalmist says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" His answer is, "By taking heed [thereto] according to Thy Word" (Ps. cxix. 9). St. Paul speaks even more directly when he uses the term, "the washing of water by the Word," &c., and this in connection with cleansing—though here it is the Church, and not the individual believer (Eph. v. 26). It is very evident, therefore, that when the Lord used water in the scene before us, He did it to signify that after His departure He would effect the cleansing of their feet—their walk—by the application of the Word. How, then, is this application of the Word produced? When we sin, as we have seen, the Lord undertakes our cause with the Father. He thereon exercises the office of the Advocate. The result to-usward is that the Spirit of God begins, in God's due time, to deal with us about it—to bring the sin to our remembrance, to apply the Word to our consciences, to produce thereby in us self-judgment, leading us on to confession of our sin; and God is then faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (John i. 9); and thus we are restored.

Such is the method of the advocacy; and we have a striking illustration of it in one of the Gospels, and again in connection with Peter. The Lord had forewarned him of his danger; but the warning, if not

unheeded at the moment, was soon forgotten ; and time after time, this devoted disciple denied that he even knew Christ. Truly this was sin of the darkest hue. But the question is, Will he ever repent? No; he will never repent—if still left to himself; and he never would have repented—but for the gracious action of his Lord. Even the crowing of the cock, which had been given him as a sign, failed to recall his sin. But at that moment, “ *The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly*” (Luke xxii. 61, 62). So is it now. When we fall into sin, we should never repent but for the gracious ministry of Christ as our Advocate. Thereby He secures by His intercession, as He did with Peter by His look, that the sin shall be brought to our minds by the action of the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of the Word, and our consciences thus be awakened, so that we also might take the place of self-judgment and confession, and thereupon be brought back into fellowship both with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. And let us never forget, that it is the propitiation which He made for our sins by His death which gives Him the title thus to act. Peter shrunk from permitting the Lord to wash his feet. Ah! it was necessary that He should thus humble Himself—yea, that He should go down even to the death of the cross,

—down under all God's waves and all God's billows of judicial wrath, that He might make propitiation, and be able, on that foundation, to serve us throughout the whole course of our earthly pilgrimage. What love and what grace! Surely our hearts would cry for ever, Blessed be His Name!

It is worthy once more of distinct remark, that the advocacy of Christ does not wait for our repentance. The scripture says, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Our repentance, as before remarked, is the consequence of the activity of our Advocate. How this thought enhances our conceptions of His grace, His tenderness, and love. If any one sins against us, we are prone to wait for signs of contrition before we permit any outgoings of heart towards the offender. Not so with our blessed Lord. As soon as—yea, as in the case of Peter, even before—we sin, He bears us on His heart before the Father, pleads, and secures for us restoring grace.

But if, on the one hand, we are reminded of our indebtedness to His grace, we should remember, on the other, our responsibility one towards another, arising out of Christ's service to us as our Advocate. "So, after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also

ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither He that is sent greater than He that sent Him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 12-17). We are to imitate the action of our Advocate; for if we rejoice in His present service to us in this character, we are never, at the same time, to forget the obligation under which we are laid to serve one another. Is there not room for many heart-searchings on this question? to ask ourselves whether we are as familiar with our obligation as with the doctrine of Christ's service to us? Nay, how often, if we were honest, should we have to confess that we have been unmindful of this responsibility! May the Lord Himself, while He teaches us to rejoice more and more in the thought that He washes our feet, give us the needful humility, grace, and love to wash one another's feet!

“ Thy love we own, Lord Jesus;  
 In service unremitting,  
 Within the veil, Thou dost prevail,  
 Each soul for worship fitting:  
 Encompass'd here with failure,  
 Each earthly refuge fails us;  
 Without, within, beset with sin—  
 Thy name alone avails us.”

## CHAPTER IX.

## CHRIST OUR OBJECT.

**F**ROM the first moment that we are awakened by the Spirit of God, Christ is presented to us as our object. Thus when the jailor, wrought upon by the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of what he may have heard, and the supernatural occurrences of that eventful night, came and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts xvi. 29-31). This is in accordance with the Lord's own words—"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 eternal life" (John iii. 14, 15). The reason is evident. When the sinner is made to feel his guilt, God appears to his soul in the character of a Judge—of a holy God, whose claims he has failed to meet, and under whose righteous judgment he has consequently fallen. His one need, therefore, is to find a way of escape, both from his state and the condemnation under which he

is groaning; and since this is found alone in Christ, Christ is the first object to which his eyes are directed. St. Paul brings out this truth most fully in the Epistle to the Romans. He says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare [I say] at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 23-26). Having thus Christ in all the efficacy of His atoning work presented to him, and believing, receiving God's testimony concerning Him—concerning what He is and what He has done—the sinner (now a believer) is justified, cleared from all his guilt—from everything that was against him—and he has "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 1). He has much more besides; but now we only call attention to the fact that, looking believably to the object held out before his soul in the time of his need, he is saved. Has he then done with Christ? Far be the thought! For it will be found, on examination of the Scriptures, that the object to which his eye was directed as a guilty sinner, is the object which is still kept before him after that, by the grace of God, he has been saved. Yea, the object to which the sinner turns to find relief from

the heavy burden of his sins, is that which is to fill his gaze in all his pathway as a saint, and, indeed, throughout eternity.

We propose, then, to collect a few examples of this—to show that the eye of the believer is ever to be fixed on Christ; that He is held out to us as the one object that is to fill our gaze, and absorb our souls.

(1.) As He is the object of faith for salvation to the sinner, so is He the object of the life of faith to the saint. St. Paul thus writes, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: *and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. ii. 20). That is—touching only on the clause we have emphasised—the life which the apostle lived down here had the Son of God as the object of its faith. Corresponding with this are the words of the Lord Himself. When the disciples were plunged into great sorrow at the prospect of His speedy separation from them, He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me” (John xiv. 1). He thus teaches that though He was soon to be absent from them, no longer to be seen by their natural eyes, they were to believe in Him, have Himself as the object of their faith, even as they already believed in God; and thereon He revealed to them the character of the place to which He was about to go. It was the Father’s house, a house of many mansions,

in which He would prepare a place for them, in anticipation of the time when He should return for them. Meanwhile, they were to be occupied with Him, have Him as their object; and how sweet and blessed a thing it is to raise our eyes to—nay, to have them always upon—Christ as occupied with and for us in the Father's house! The clouds may be very dark round about our earthly path, and trials may abound, but nothing can obscure Him—Him in all the tenderness of His love, in all that He is for us before God—from the gaze of our faith; and light, and joy, and peace always stream from His presence.

But there is more than this. It is not only that He is the object of our faith, but our faith is sustained—we live by Him as our object. Christ as our object is the life of our faith. Thus He said, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by (because of—*διὰ*) the Father: so he that eateth Me shall live by (because of—*διὰ*) Me" (John vi. 57). Now eating Christ (as has been shown in a former chapter) is but the constant appropriation of Him, in all that He is, by the exercise of faith; and it expresses, therefore, our entire dependence upon Him as the source of life; that just as food sustains and nourishes our bodies, so Christ sustains and nourishes our souls. Thus He is the object, and we live by the exercise of faith, according to that word in the Hebrews, "Now the just shall live by faith" (Heb. x. 38). With Him is the fountain of life, and faith is the channel

which connects us with the fountain, and through which, in the power of the Spirit, the life flows. We therefore live both by faith in, and by dependence upon, Christ.

(2.) Christ is also our object in service; nay, the whole of our life has Him as its end and aim. St. Paul thus says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, *but unto Him* which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). Still more comprehensive (though of the same character) is his language in another epistle: "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). At this time he was in prison, and yet he was so utterly oblivious of self, that he was able to cherish the earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing he should be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ should be magnified in his body, whether it were by life or by death; and he gives as the ground of this confidence, "To me to live is Christ." That was the one object of his life; in all his manifold activities, in all that he desired, and in all that he did, everything had respect to Christ. He was thus, perhaps, the closest approximation to the example of our blessed Lord that has ever been seen on earth. For Christ never sought to please Himself; but always did those things that pleased the Father; He found His meat in doing His Father's will and

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finishing His work (John iv. 34; vi. 30; viii. 29). This truth is strikingly set forth by the apostle in connection with the death of Christ. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, *an offering and a sacrifice to God* for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. v. 1, 2). True that He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; but it was God who was the object before His soul; His glory which He sought, and which was the governing motive of His death; for He became obedient—obedient surely to God—obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

So also it should be with us—Christ alone the object of our lives, of our thoughts, feelings, designs, occupations, activities. We are His, for He has redeemed us with His own precious blood, and He therefore claims us for His own—that we should live not to ourselves, but to Him who has died for us and risen again. What a searching, practical test does this supply! Do I purpose this or that? Is it then for Christ? Do I desire anything? Is it for Christ? Am I busy in service? Is it for Christ? Can I look round my dwelling, and say of all that I behold, It is for Christ? Thus, "for Christ," supplies us with a principle that can be applied to the whole of our daily lives—a principle that should reign supreme, governing us in all our works and ways—a principle which makes nothing of self—of man—but which makes everything of Christ.

(3.) Again, Christ is brought before us as an object to be possessed. This aspect is unfolded to us in Philipians iii. In the beginning of the chapter the apostle gives a list of the advantages which he had as a Jew—as a man in the flesh—and which formed his ground of confidence as such. “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church: touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” He thus had everything which could exalt a natural man in his own eyes before God. Morally, religiously, and ecclesiastically he wanted nothing, according to man’s judgment. Nay, more; writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he is able to say that “touching the righteousness which is in the law” he was “blameless.” Like the young man who asked of the Lord Jesus, “What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” and, when referred to the commandments, replied, “All these things have I kept from my youth up,”—so Saul; and he might have added with the young man, “What lack I yet?” (Matt. xix. 16–20). But when Saul, in his zeal persecuting the Church, was on his way to Damascus, the Lord in glory met him—that same Jesus, whom Saul had with his nation rejected and cast out, but now risen from the dead and glorified, appeared to him; and thereon Saul

discovered the true value of *his* precious things in the light of the glory which shone round about him—saw their utter worthlessness, and hence by grace was able to say, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for (because of—*διὰ*) the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for (because of—*διὰ*) whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, *that I may win Christ*” (Phil. iii. 7, 8). Now he had discovered the fine gold, and by the side of it he could see that what he had been priding himself upon was but wretched tinsel, and, estimating it at its proper value, he now desired only to win Christ—*i.e.*, to have Christ as his gain. Everything which had been so precious in his eyes disappeared, and Christ only remained; and it was Christ only that he now desired to possess, not only as his ground of confidence before God, but also as his everlasting possession. For Christ had won his heart, and the heart can never rest until it has gained the object of its affections.

But inasmuch as it was a Christ in glory whom he had thus seen and desired, it was only in the glory that He could be possessed. Hence the whole future course of the apostle was governed by this fact. With heart and eyes fixed upon his object, he says, “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended” (if I may get possession of that for which

also I have been taken possession) "of Christ Jesus." And in the energy of his soul—being all aglow with fervent desire—he adds, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling (the calling on high—*τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως*) of God in Christ Jesus." This was the prize on which his heart was now set, and, like a racer, he bent his rapid steps towards the goal, and the varied objects of the surrounding scene passed by him unheeded, or were seen but dimly as he hastened onward, for his eyes were on a glorified Christ, and he could see nought else for the glory of that light. This was the object that possessed his heart, controlled and formed his life below, and drew him unweariedly forward in the race he ran; while he waited for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would change the vile body of His servant, that it might be fashioned like unto the body of His glory; and then Paul would be both like, and with, his object for evermore.

Such also is the object set before every believer. Well might we examine ourselves by the light of this scripture—by the light of the energy, the ardent desire, the concentrated affection of the apostle. Does Christ, let us each ask ourselves in the presence of God, so possess our hearts that we desire no other object? Are we satisfied to lose everything but Himself? Do we,

like Paul, count all that the natural man esteems, but loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord? The prayer is often heard, and, it may be, presented by ourselves, that our hearts *may be* set upon Christ. But He Himself said, "Where your treasure is, there *will* your heart be also" (Matt. vi. 21). If our hearts, therefore, are not upon and occupied with Him, it is because He is not sufficiently our treasure. If, then, we would have our hearts detached from this scene and its objects, we must begin with Christ; we must trace out His manifold perfections, His varied beauties, His ineffable grace and unchanging love, and then our hearts will be drawn out towards Him, and, enflamed with holy desire after Him, He will absorb our affections, and attract us wholly to Himself. We often sing—

"Jesus! Thou art enough  
The mind and heart to fill;"

and nothing can be truer; but the question for us to answer, when the words are upon our lips, is, Do we know this practically? Can we take the ground of wanting nothing outside of Christ? If we were bereft of everything else, should we be able to say, we are satisfied with Christ? These are searching questions; but questions that need to be answered. For it is only when we know this truth, that no other object will divert our gaze; and then we shall long for the

moment when, like Him, we shall see Him as He is, and are with Him for ever.

“ For ever to behold Him shine !  
 For evermore to call Him mine !  
 And see Him still before me ;  
 For ever on His face to gaze !  
 And meet the full assembled rays,  
 While all His beauty He displays  
 To all the saints in glory ! ”

(4.) He is also set before us as the object to which we are to be conformed. This is implied in what we have just considered ; but we have it distinctly set forth in another scripture. We are thus told that God has predestinated us “ *to be conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the first-born among many brethren ” (Rom. viii. 29). St. John likewise alludes to the fact when he says, “ Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and 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 ” (1 John iii. 2). But it is St. Paul who brings out this truth in its most definite form. Writing to the Corinthians, and contrasting the ministry of righteousness with the ministry of condemnation, and being led to state the full and blessed place into which believers are now brought, he says, “ We all with open (*i.e.*, unveiled) face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord ” (2 Cor. iii. 18). He refers to

Exodus xxxiv., where we read that Moses was compelled to put a veil upon his face to conceal the glory that lingered there (after he had come down from the Mount, where he had been with the Lord forty days and forty nights), because that Aaron and all the children of Israel "were afraid to come nigh him." "And [till] Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But when Moses went in before the Lord, to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out" (vers. 28-34). Only Moses went in, under that dispensation, before the Lord with unveiled face; but now we all—all believers—with open (unveiled) face behold the glory of the Lord, &c.

The truth, then, is, that all who are in the Christian place and position are set down in the light, as God is in the light, and there they behold with unveiled face the glory of the Lord. Christ in glory is the object on which they gaze. This was shown, albeit in an extraordinary way, in the death of Stephen. "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 55). This scene is significant from the fact that now the heavens are opened for every believer, and that he therefore sees, by faith, without a veil, with nothing between, a glorified Christ at the right hand of God. For upon the death of Christ the veil was rent, expressive of the fact that the atonement He made by His death was accepted by

God, as a full and complete answer to all the claims of His holiness, so that He could now come forth in all His grace and love to meet the sinner, and bring him, through faith in Christ, unto Himself, to dwell in His own immediate presence, in the holiest of all. Such is the place of every saint of God.

A caution, however, may be needed. It is undoubtedly true that this place belongs to every believer; but it is another, and, indeed, a most momentous question, whether we are occupying it. We are brought into it according to the efficacy of the work of Christ, and through His death and resurrection, and it is thus our blessed privilege to be ever occupied with Christ as our object. God would have us thus occupied; for He would have us share His own delight, in gazing upon the face of Him who has retrieved His glory by becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Are we, then, occupying the place into which we have been brought by the grace of our God, and having fellowship with Himself as to the object of His own heart? Perhaps there is no greater danger at the present time, than knowing the full truth of our position without seeking to answer to it practically. But if we boast in our standing, and neglect our state, we fall into the very evils which characterised the Jews in the time of our Lord. It should, therefore, be a very solemn matter of inquiry with us whether we maintain the attitude of Stephen; whether our faces,

like his, are ever turned upward to the glory of the Lord.

But the marvellous thing is, that the Christ we thus behold as our object, is the model to which we are to be conformed. God, according to the purposes of His infinite grace, and delighting to mark His appreciation of the work of Christ, will have us to be like Him whom He has glorified. Even now we can say, "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17), that is, that our acceptance, even now, while in this scene, is as perfect as His at the right hand of God. But the time will come when we shall be fashioned after His own likeness, when even these poor bodies of ours shall also be conformed to the likeness of His glorious body. What grace! That we—such as we were, and such as we are—should be able to raise our eyes to Christ in glory, and be able to say, "We shall be like Him!"

How, then, we may inquire, is this change wrought out in us? This same scripture gives the answer—"We all with open face *beholding* the glory of the Lord, *are changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). While on the one hand Christ in glory is the model to which we are to be conformed, beholding Him there is, on the other, the instrumentality in the power of the Spirit by which it is effected. How simple! We behold and are changed—changed into the same image from

glory to glory—for it is a gradual process—as by the Spirit of the Lord. We receive the impress of the One on whom we look; the rays of the glory of His face falling on us, penetrate into, and transform us morally into the likeness of our Lord.

Herein then lies our responsibility. The object is before us; before Him we stand with unveiled face, and it is Divine power alone that can mould us into His likeness; but the activity of that power—through the Spirit—God has been pleased to connect with our beholding. Who, then, would not ever stand with upturned face, catching every ray of the glory that falls from such an object, in the earnest desire to attain growing conformity to Him on whom we gaze? This is the secret of all growth in grace—uninterrupted contemplation of Christ on the Father's throne. But it should be remembered that it is only increasing likeness we attain even by such a process. Full conformity waits, as St. John teaches, for the moment when we shall see Him as He is. There is no perfection, therefore, here, since God's standard of holiness is Christ in glory, and He will never rest until we are perfect according to it. May we keep our eyes ever upon the object, that we may daily grow in resemblance to Him to whom we are to be conformed!

“To see Thy glory, and to be  
In everything conformed to Thee.”

(5.) Since He is God's object, He is also ours; for our fellowship is with the Father as well as with the Son (1 John i. 3). When He was down here on the earth, twice a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son." He was all God's delight, and God rested in Him with perfect complacency. Ere He left this scene He said, "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again" (John x. 17). By the work which He accomplished on the cross, glorifying God therein, even about the question of sin, and laying the foundation on which God could righteously save the believer, and reconcile all things to Himself (Col. i. 20), He established a new claim upon God. Hence He said, in anticipation of the cross, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him" (John xiii. 31, 32). And God has done it, and Christ, the glorified man, now sits at His right hand; for God rejoiced thus to respond to the claim which had thus been established upon Him, and (if we may reverently use the words) to mark thus His estimate of the value of His work. There He sits, the object of God's heart as well as the centre of the glory, and God feasts upon the One who has retrieved His honour, glorified Him in every attribute of His character; and He invites us to participate with Him in His own joy. This is what we

are called to—to share with God in His feelings and thoughts concerning His beloved Son. He is enough for the heart of God ; and surely also enough for ours ; and if He fills the eye of God, He may well absorb our gaze.

It is well for us to consider this aspect of the truth. It is not only that Christ is a Saviour suited to all our needs, but He is one who is suited to the heart of God—the Man after God's own heart ; and God would have us prize Him according to His own thoughts of His value and preciousness, to enter into, and to rejoice with Him in, His appreciation of the worth of Him who gave up all for His glory. “ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ” (Phil. iii. 10, 11).

And as He is our object now, so He will be throughout eternity. We shall be ever with the Lord. Himself will be with us—the Lamb that was once slain ; then, as now, the Man—for He will nevermore lay aside the humanity He has assumed ; and then He will fill our gaze, and our hearts, perfectly and completely. What an infinite study to trace out and contemplate His varied and manifold excellences ! We shall see His face, and shall never weary of drinking in His beauty !

We shall hear His voice, and oh! how we shall hang upon every word that falls from His lips! And all that we see, and hear, will but fill our souls with ineffable delight, and our ceaseless joy will be to prostrate ourselves at His feet in adoration and praise. Lord, in anticipation of this time, turn our eyes from all that might obscure Thee from our view, and Thyself attract and occupy us altogether!

“ Thou art the everlasting Word,  
The Father’s only Son ;  
God manifest, God seen and heard,  
The Heaven’s beloved One ;  
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou  
That every knee to Thee should bow.

“ In Thee most perfectly express’d  
The Father’s self doth shine ;  
fulness of Godhead, too : the Blest,—  
Eternally divine.  
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou  
That every knee to Thee should bow.

. . . . .

“ Of the vast universe of bliss,  
The Centre Thou, and Sun :  
Th’ eternal theme of praise is this,  
To Heaven’s beloved One :  
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou  
That every knee to Thee should bow.”

## CHAPTER X.

## CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

ONE of the most familiar truths to all is that Christ, in His pathway through this world, is our example. There are several scriptures which distinctly state and enforce it; and the truth itself is implied in almost every book of the New Testament. St. Peter, when treating of the duties of domestics, points them to Christ, who, he says, has left us an example that we should follow His steps (1 Peter ii. 21). In like manner, the Apostle John says, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6). In the Epistle to the Hebrews also, after detailing the long catalogue of the men of faith in the past dispensation, the writer proceeds, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the

cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb. xii. 1-3). The force of this scripture is often unperceived by the superficial reader, because of the insertion of the word "our"—making the Lord Jesus to be the Author and Finisher of *our* faith. This is altogether to miss the teaching of the Spirit of God. The truth brought before us is that the Lord Jesus is a complete example of faith; that as man, He is our example in the life of faith. This would be more readily seen if, instead of Author and Finisher, the words were translated, as they sometimes are, Leader (*ἀρχηγόν*) and Completer (*τελειωτήν*) of faith—*i.e.*, that He is the Leader in the pathway of faith—and He is the Completer of it, that all the way through, from beginning to end, He is the perfect example of it, as the obedient and dependent Man. Hence our eyes are ever to be fixed upon Him; we are to be looking unto Jesus, to mark His example, that we may be sustained in following in the same steps. Our Lord Himself often presented the same truth. It is involved in all the passages wherein He speaks of discipleship. For instance, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. xvi. 24). It is true that the prominent thought here is the condition of discipleship; but "following" is nothing less than, in obedience to

His Word, owning Him as Lord, and walking in His steps.

It is, then, abundantly clear that our blessed Lord, in His life down here as man, is our example; and we desire to consider this subject,—not only to press its importance, but also to show the ground of it, and the means of carrying it into practice.

The ground of it lies in what He was as man in the world. Before His incarnation He had presented Himself to God, saying, “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. x. 7). And this is the keynote of His whole life, coming as He did, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him (John vi. 38). And this He did perfectly, and uninterruptedly, from Bethlehem to Calvary. Every thought, feeling, and act were in obedience to God’s will. For the first time since the Fall, God found truth in the inward parts of a man—of that One who answered all His requirements, so that God could rest in Him in perfect complacency and love. And what joy it must have been to the heart of God, to be able to look down upon this scene, where all had failed and gone out of the way, where there was none good, no not one, and to see Christ in the midst of unparalleled difficulties, exposed to all the malice of men and Satan, ever responding, and that perfectly, to His own desires—to behold Him glorifying God on the earth in every circumstance in which He was placed, and all through His life!

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“ Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,  
 'Mid darkness only light,  
 Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,  
 And in His will delight.”

In Him, then, at last, God found the Man who was, without exception, after His own heart—the One who embodied the perfection of His own thoughts, and answered to the ideal of His own mind—**THE PERFECT MAN**. In every circumstance, therefore—what He was toward God, and what He was toward man; what He was in the presence of friend, or enemy, whether in sorrows, persecutions, or temptations; in all possible scenes, whether in retirement, or in public—in all things, in every manifestation of His life down here, He was our example; for all His manifold experiences were but occasions for the unfolding of what He was as the obedient and dependent man; and hence the revelation of God's standard for all that are His. If, therefore, I would know what God desires that I should be, I must look at Christ, and trace out His steps in His pathway through this world.

Accepting, then, the truth that Christ is our example, we must be very careful to define the class for whom it is intended. Mistake here would be of the most fatal kind, and has indeed been the cause of shipwreck to many a soul. The Unitarians, for example, make the whole duty of man to lie in the imitation of the life of Christ; and, moreover, they contend that success in this end is the passport to a happy immortality; and books,

like Thomas à Kempis' *Imitatio Christi*, proceed more or less on the same principle—that it is possible for the natural man to walk in the steps of the Lord Jesus. We need hardly point out, that such teaching ignores the whole subject of man's relationships with God, the question of sin, and man's depravity through the Fall. "They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God" (Rom. viii. 8) is a statement which some men either ignore or disbelieve, to their own destruction. What presumption for a sinner under condemnation—a sinner alienated from God, whose very nature is enmity with Him (Rom. viii. 7)—to claim the power to follow the steps of the Holy One of God! It only shows us the power of Satan to deceive, and allure to ruin, when such a delusion is cherished in the minds of men. Just as he enticed Pharaoh and his host to think they could follow Israel through the Red Sea, and all alike "sank as lead in the mighty waters," so now he leads men to imagine that by their own efforts they can imitate Christ, and thereby produce a righteousness fit for God's presence; and thus deluded, they perish for ever. It behoves us, therefore, very carefully to indicate the qualifications which are necessary in order to follow the example of Christ.

(1.) The essential one of all is that we must have the same nature. It is quite true—indeed, a fundamental dogma of Christianity—that Christ became Man. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth

His Son, made of a woman" &c. (Gal. iv. 4). He was as truly born into this world as we are; but the words the angel spake to Mary must never be forgotten, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; *therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke i. 35; see also Matt. i. 18-20). While, therefore, Christ really took part of flesh and blood (Heb. ii. 14), and was consequently "very man," as well as "very God," it could not be said that He took *our nature*, that He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. That were indeed to declare that He had a sinful nature; to disqualify Him from being the Lamb of God—the Lamb without spot, or blemish—and to undermine the very foundations of the atonement, and consequently of Christianity. No; He was ever holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; while we were by nature the children of wrath.

How then could it be possible for us (in whose flesh there is no good thing) to imitate the life of Him who was absolutely holy? The leopard cannot change his spots, nor the Ethiopian his skin, neither can the natural man alter the character of the flesh in which he is born. Hence the first necessity is to be born again; as the Lord Himself said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is

born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John iii. 5-7). Until, then, we are born again through faith in the Lord Jesus, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and have received, therefore, a new nature, we cannot follow Christ. Let us be very clear upon this point; for to speak otherwise is only to delude and to imperil souls. If there be not the same nature, there cannot be likeness in the life. There may be outward resemblances between an action of a natural man, and an action of Christ; but this does not constitute, in God's sight, imitation of His example. The nature of the two actions—in their motive, character, and end—must be the same. We may tie roses on a gooseberry bush, but they have not been produced by the tree. So actions—to be like Christ's—must be produced, and they can only be produced in those who have the new nature—a nature like His. In other words, we must be like Christ (as to nature), before we can imitate Him.

(2.) Having even the nature is not enough, because the power is still wanting. The characteristic of the new nature is feebleness—weakness itself; and hence I may be really born again, a child of God, yet utterly unable to take a single step after Christ. We have an example of this in Romans vii. The one whose case is there put says, "That which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I" (Rom. vii. 15). What a confession! and yet he tells

us that he delighted in the law of God after the inward man (Rom. vii. 22), showing that he had a new nature—had been born again. What he, therefore, needed was power. And where was this to be obtained? The pre-requisite of it was deliverance—the knowledge that sin had been judged, as well as the guilt of sins cleared away, that, through the death and resurrection of Christ, he had been brought out of his Adam-condition into a new place in Christ, so that, having the Spirit of God dwelling in Him, he was no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Rom. viii. 9). *The indwelling Spirit is our only power for the imitation of Christ.* Indeed, this was Christ's own power. We thus read that "Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness;" and again, that "He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke iv. 1-14). He Himself says, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God" (Matt. xii. 28); and St. Peter, speaking of Him, says, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him" (Acts x. 38). Unless, therefore, we have the Holy Ghost, we are still without power to walk as Christ walked; for nature, as we have seen, and even the new nature of itself, cannot tread in His footsteps.

(3.) There is another important condition. I may be born again, and have the Spirit of God, and yet be not

imitating Christ. I am qualified to do so; but the Spirit of God does not of necessity act because He dwells in me. Indeed, every believer carries about with him a great hindrance—and that is the flesh, the old nature. For though it has been judged in the death of Christ; and is, therefore, judicially gone from God's sight, it is still in us, and is always in opposition to the desires and aims of the new man. Satan knows this, and finds in it the means, if we are not watchful, of hindering our progress, and even of compassing our fall. St. Paul, writing on this subject, says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot (rather, "in order that ye should not"—*ἵνα μὴ ἂν ἂν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε*) do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 17). The flesh and the Spirit are, therefore, in everlasting contrariety, and the object of each is to hinder the other. When the flesh desires to act, the Spirit leads in opposition; and when the Spirit would act, the flesh obstructs—both seeking to nullify the will of the other, that neither the one nor the other should obtain its desires. It may be, therefore, that though I am, as already said, qualified to imitate the example of the Lord Jesus, I shall be effectually hindered—must be so, if I allow the flesh to have its own way.

The next condition, therefore, is, that the flesh be not

allowed to act, but that it be kept in the place where God has put it—under judgment in the death of the cross. Hence St. Paul says, “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. viii. 13, 14). And if we add to this scripture another, the whole subject will be explained. “Always bearing in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor. iv. 10). The flesh, therefore—all indeed that is of nature—has to be kept under the power of death, under the constant application of the cross, the putting to death of Jesus—the Spirit of God being our enabling power for this; that nothing of self, nature, or the flesh, may ever be expressed, but only the life of Jesus. For it is only when we are following that we can present the life of Jesus; and if the slightest thing of self, of the flesh, is manifested, the presentation is at once marred. Death must then be accepted if we would imitate Christ. This is what He Himself said, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. xvi. 24). Self must be refused, the cross—death—accepted, before we can follow. May we learn the lesson!

(4.) The eye must also be upon Christ, and upon Christ where He is. We might have, indeed, every qualification of which we have yet spoken, and still, if

the eye were not on Christ, there would be most certain failure. Take the familiar illustration of Peter walking on the sea as an explanation. When he saw Jesus walking on the sea, he said, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me," &c. (Matt. xiv. 25-31). At the outset Peter walked, even as the Lord Himself walked, on the sea; but the moment his eye was off Christ and on his circumstances—the difficulties that surrounded him—he began to sink.

So is it ever with us. We can never walk after His example unless our eye is upon Him. But we have said it must be on Him where He now is, not where He once was. Peter, of course, looked on the living Christ before his eyes; but we must look upon a living Christ where He now is—in the glory, at the right hand of God. Let us explain. St. Paul says, "We all with open (*i.e.*, unveiled) face beholding as in a glass (the words, "as in a glass," are better omitted) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Here we are taught, as we saw in the last chapter, that our growth, our gradual transformation into the likeness of Christ, is dependent upon our eyes being fixed upon Him—upon the glory of the Lord. We

gaze by faith, and the rays of that glory, falling upon our souls, are used by the Holy Spirit to change us morally into the likeness of Him on whom we thus look. Herewith is connected another thing. It is only as we are thus occupied, that we receive power to bear about in the body the dying of Jesus (2 Cor. iv. 10). Two things are thereby gained—growing likeness to Christ, and the flesh kept under the power of death. The consequence is, that Christ must be expressed; or, in other words, that we imitate His example. For imitation of Christ must come from within, and not from without. According to the principle before stated, we must be like Christ before we can imitate Him; and hence the closeness of our walk to His, will depend upon the degree of our likeness to Him.

It would save much disappointment, and many mistakes, were this remembered. For it would then be seen, that to walk as Christ walked is not the result of any effort we can make—we can never imitate Him by any efforts of our own—but that it must be the outcome of what we are. See how beautifully this was exemplified in the case of Stephen, when he was martyred. “He being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts vii. 55, 56). Such was his attitude; but his testimony did but enrage his

persecutors ; “ for they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him . . . . and they stoned Stephen, calling upon, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (vers. 57–60). Now if we compare this scene with the death of the Lord Jesus, as recorded by St. Luke, we shall find a remarkable correspondency. He also uttered two prayers. When on the cross, He cried, “ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do ;” and also, “ Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit ” (Luke xxiii. 34, 46). Even on the surface one cannot fail to be struck with the similarity of the two cases. Why was it, then, that Stephen followed so exactly in the footsteps of his Lord ? Was it because that he had heard that the Lord had uttered such prayers, and he thought, therefore, that he would copy His example ? This would have been a valueless imitation, if not altogether a counterfeit. No ; he was occupied in beholding the glory of the Lord, and the effect was that he was changed into the same image, and therefore of necessity he expressed himself in the same way. And this is the secret of all likeness to Christ in our ways. If the eye is upon Christ as He was down here, and we say, “ He did this,” or “ He did that,” and we, therefore, will do the same, we shall most

certainly, and repeatedly, fail. But when the eye is upward, fixed on Him where He now is, the dying of Jesus will be always borne about in our body, and the Spirit of God, ungrieved and unhindered, will work mightily within us in transforming power, and then of necessity lead us in the footsteps of our Great Example, because His pathway was that of the Perfect Man.

It is the same even in the natural domain. Suppose, now, an artist desires to reproduce one of the great masterpieces. How does he begin? Does he at once go and copy the picture? Not at all; but his first task will be to study it, to get the impression of it in his mind; and then, when he is imbued with the spirit and colour of his model, he can reproduce it. So Milton once wrote, "He who would write an heroic poem must first live a hero's life." This is the true principle for the imitation of Christ; and hence the more we are occupied with Him in glory, the more faithfully we shall reproduce His life in our walk and ways.

Does any one say, Are we, then, not to trace out the life of the Lord Jesus here below? Certainly; for what greater enjoyment can the believer have than to follow Him in His wondrous path, to study every detail recorded, to hear His every word, to watch Him in every possible circumstance, to note how He comported Himself, before both friends and enemies, to mark His ways in His secret retirement, His communings with

His disciples, especially with those whom He was able to admit to greater intimacy, to follow Him in that blessed home of Bethany—all these things we shall ever delight to trace, and to retrace, and perhaps even in the glory. But it is not thus that we receive power to walk in the same steps; this can only come from beholding Him—looking by faith to Him where He now is, at the right hand of God. We shall feed upon Him (as explained in another chapter) as He was down here; for the manna is a humbled Christ—Christ in the unfoldings of His life in His sojourn in this scene. And very blessed it is to have Christ in our circumstances—to have His grace, His tenderness, His sympathy as we follow His example. Blessed, however, as all this is, we reiterate, that if we would walk as He walked, it can only be by occupation with Him in the glory.

There are, however, uses in the consideration of Christ's example which must not be overlooked. His example is our standard; and hence nothing can be more profitable than to measure ourselves by it, that we may discover our defects, and learn our failures. It is on this account that St. Peter, when exhorting servants to take it patiently, even when they might suffer for well-doing, adds, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He

suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously : who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter ii. 21-24). The apostle thus held up the example of Christ as their model, that they might see in its light their failure, and be encouraged to walk in the same steps.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews adduces it, in like manner, as an encouragement and stimulus to those who might be suffering from persecution. For after urging them, in the race set before them, to look off themselves unto "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith ; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," he says, "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Heb. xii. 2-4). The word "consider" in this scripture is a most striking one ; it means, to draw an analogy, or to make a comparison, between Christ and yourselves. You may be pressed, almost beyond measure, by your sufferings and persecutions ; but compare your circumstances with His ; follow Him in His course, and behold Him at last dying as a martyr (for this is the aspect of His death here presented) for righteousness' sake. Ye have not yet resisted unto

blood (as He did); you have not yet been made martyrs, striving against sin. Be encouraged, strengthened, therefore, by His example: learn from Him to endure, and to be faithful even unto death.

The Lord Himself gave the same kind of instruction to His disciples. He reminded them, that if the world hated them, it had first hated Him; that "if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My sayings, they will keep yours also" (John xv. 18-20). The path of the disciple must correspond with his Lord's; and hence it is that His example must ever be our model and standard. But let it be once more added, that while we cannot too often, or too lovingly, trace out the course of our blessed Lord through this world, to learn what our conduct should be, to detect our failings, and to gather encouragement and consolation, it is only by having our eyes fixed upon Him where He now is, that we shall be enabled to tread in His steps. May He ever fill our gaze, that we may reflect His likeness in our walk and ways!

“ Master ! we would no longer be  
Loved by the world that hated Thee,  
But patient in Thy footsteps go,  
Thy sorrow as Thy joy to know ;  
We would—and oh, confirm the power—  
With meekness meet the darkest hour,  
By shame, contempt, however tried,  
For Thou wast scorned and crucified.”

## CHAPTER XI.

## CHRIST OUR PEACE.

IT is as interesting as profitable to trace the ways of God on the earth. Unless, indeed, we have a measure of dispensational truth, as therein unfolded and displayed, it is impossible for us to understand the past, present, or future—the dispensation of law, the nature of Christianity, or the character of the millennium. It is in the Epistle to the Ephesians, that we find the fullest development of God's counsels as to the present dispensation, or rather as to the place He has given, in the sovereignty of His grace, to believers in Christ Jesus. And this necessarily involves the notice of some of the characteristic differences that have prevailed between Jews and Gentiles; but they are noticed, only to indicate their utter abolition in the present dispensation. Now it is in connection with this that Christ is termed our Peace, as having made both—*i.e.*, Jew and Gentile—one, having broken down the middle wall of partition between us (Eph. ii. 14). Hence, if we would understand the full import of the phrase, we must glance at the character of the truth which this epistle contains.

In the first chapter, from the first to the fourteenth verses, the counsels of God are unfolded, first, as to the individual blessing of the saint, and then as to the universal headship of Christ. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (in contrast with Israel, who were blessed with all temporal blessings in earthly places) in Christ; “according as He [the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ] 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. i. 3-6). Then we are told, that God has made “known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ (or head up all things in Christ—ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ), both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him” (Eph. i. 9, 10). Thereon we have a distinction, which is afterwards frequently repeated. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, &c., that *we* should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom *ye* also trusted,” &c. (Eph. i. 11-13). The “we” and “ye” are characteristic—the former refer-

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ring to the Jews who had believed, and the latter to the Gentiles. For after having reminded the Gentile believers that in Christ, after that they had believed, they also were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, he says, "Who is the earnest of *our* (now Jews and Gentiles together) inheritance," &c.

We have thus, in this scripture, in this brief statement of the counsels of God, the essential feature of the present dispensation introduced—the union of Jew and Gentile—all their national distinctions obliterated—in Christ. On the truth thus revealed, the apostle founds a prayer, which leads to a statement of the present place of exaltation which Christ occupies at the right hand of God. He shows us Christ raised from the dead, according to the working of the might of God's strength, and set down "at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and given Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 19-23).

If the first part of the chapter gave us God's counsels concerning believers individually, as to the place He would have them occupy near to and in relationship with Himself, the last part introduces His counsels concerning Christ as the Head of the body, and the

place of the body as united to Him. For no sooner has the apostle given us to see the exalted Head, than in the next chapter he teaches us how it is that believers have been thus linked up with the glorified Christ. But before he can do this, because it is God's counsel altogether, and, therefore, to magnify His grace and His love—to show that it was God acting from His own heart, according to what He is in Himself, and after His own sovereign will, he depicts the past condition both of Gentiles and Jews. Nothing can be more striking than the way in which He commences this part of his subject. He had just mentioned the Church as the body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. This is the Church seen according to the perfection of God's counsels; but it is composed of those who once were Jews and Gentiles; and indeed is a thing at present existing on the earth. Hence, in descending from the Head, in all His supreme exaltation, to the members, He thus speaks: "And *you* (Gentiles), who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also *we all* (Jews as well as Gentiles) had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. ii. 1-3).

Such is the picture of the past condition of the members of the body of Christ—a picture so dark that it is unrelieved by a single ray of light. Dead in trespasses and sins, without a single thought, desire, or movement towards God; for death reigned in all its awful stillness and solitude. But since they were men on the earth, the character of their walk as such is depicted—a walk governed by this age, the power of Satan, and the lusts of the flesh. Such is man! Can we wonder that it is added, that by nature they were the children of wrath? Surely it is well for us to ponder upon this description, both to learn what we were, and what man ever is, and what we deserved. There is not one single thing for which we can take credit before God. We were totally evil, and under the power of sin, satan, and death.

How, then, came it to pass that those who were thus situated were brought out of such a condition, and associated with a glorified Christ? The next few verses give us the answer. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, (even when we were dead in sins), hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” &c. (Eph. ii. 4–6). It was God, who acted according to what He was, being rich in mercy, who intervened in the scene of our wretched and lost condition; and intervened, as the

first chapter shows, according to His own eternal counsels, and, as we here read, because of the great love wherewith He loved us. The source of all our blessing is thus shown to be the heart of God; and hence it is only in redemption that we can behold Him fully revealed. God came upon the scene because of what He was as God; and (mark the contrast) "even when we were dead in sins." He would have us remember that there was nothing but evil in us, and nothing but good in Him.

God, then, moved by His own heart, according to His own nature, when we were in that condition, "quicken'd us together with Christ." Christ, therefore, must have died. And it was this, indeed, that made it possible for God to act in mercy and love towards us; for until He had been glorified on the cross by the death of Christ, in every attribute of His character, He could not come forth and reveal Himself as a God of grace and love. But there is a peculiar feature in connection with the introduction of Christ here. It is not a dying, but a dead Christ who is brought before us. So in the first chapter, the power spoken of was displayed—wrought in Christ when He raised Him *from the dead*. We are not permitted in this epistle to see Him going down into death, but we see Him dead. And this brings out one of the grand characteristics of the epistle. Jews and Gentiles alike are looked upon not, as in Romans, as alive in their sins, but as dead;

and then we have this wonder of grace, Christ going down into their condition—lying dead, as it were, by their side; for since we are here on new-creation ground, everything commences anew. Then it is, at that moment when Christ is seen as dead, and Jews and Gentiles as likewise dead (but these in their sins), that God in His infinite mercy, and for the great love wherewith He loved us, comes in, and quickens us (Jew and Gentile) together with Christ. “The exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe” is, therefore, “according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,” &c. (Eph. i. 19, 20). For the body is already looked upon as complete, because it is the fruit of God’s counsels; and hence, in this view, every member of the body is regarded as having been quickened together with—at the same time as—Christ. Christ Himself first came, and went down into our condition of death. His death removed every barrier out of the way of, and laid the foundation for, the accomplishment of God’s counsels—set His heart at liberty; and immediately there was this stupendous display of power, coming down into the scene where Christ lay with the members of His body, and lifting Him out of death, and setting Him down at God’s right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name

that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and that same power quickened us together with Christ.

But there is more. The apostle, however, before he proceeds, reminds us that it is by grace we are saved; and surely by nothing but pure and sovereign grace; but he would have the knowledge of it produce in our hearts praise to God. Then he adds, "And hath raised us up together (Jews and Gentiles), and made us sit together (*i.e.*, again Jews and Gentiles alike are made to sit together) in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Thus the power that quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and carried us upwards still, and set us down in Christ Jesus in the heavenly places—and that even now, while as to our bodies we are still on the earth; and all this is, that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7). "Poor sinners from among the Gentiles, and from among the disobedient and gainsaying Jews, are brought into the position where Christ is by the power which raised Him from the dead and set Him at God's right hand, to show forth in the ages to come the immense riches of the grace which had accomplished it. A Mary Magdalene, a crucified thief, companions in glory with the Son of God, will bear witness to it."

Having thus developed the counsels of God in their accomplishment, and revealed to us the perfectness of

the new creation into which we are brought even now as united to Christ, inasmuch as he is writing to Gentiles, he now proceeds to remind them of their past condition, and the means by which they had been brought into the enjoyment of their present wondrous privileges and blessings, as well as of the position which they, together with believers from among the Jews, occupied upon the earth. "Wherefore," he says, "remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision, by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made with hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 11, 12). Such was their condition as Gentiles in contrast with that of Israel; for while, as the commencement of the chapter shows, they were by nature the children of wrath equally with the Gentiles, yet as a people on the earth, chosen in God's sovereignty, they had advantages (see Rom. iii. 2; ix. 4, 5) to which the Gentiles had no title or claim. Hence they—the Gentiles—were without Christ; the Messiah as such was never promised to them; they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and thus outside all its privileges and blessings. "But now," St. Paul proceeds to say, "in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off"—the usual designation of the Gentiles (see Acts ii. 39)—"are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He

is OUR PEACE, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [between us]; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain (Jew and Gentile) one new man, [so] making peace; and that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off (Gentiles), and to them which were nigh" (Jews) (Eph. ii. 13-17).

First of all, it is striking to notice the place which the Spirit of God ever delights to give to the blood of Christ. Here, as everywhere in the Scriptures, it is made the foundation of everything, the basis on which everything has been accomplished according to the purpose of God. For, indeed, it was by the blood of Christ, the laying down His life (for the life is in the blood), that God has been set free (if such an expression may be reverently used) to act according to His own heart in the work of redemption, because it met every claim of His holiness, and glorified all that He is, so that now He is glorified in the salvation of every one who believes in Jesus. So here the Gentile sinners have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ; for "having made peace by the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20), He can reconcile to God those that were sometime alienated, and enemies in mind by wicked works (Col. i. 21).

This truth paves the way for the statement that Christ is our Peace. He is our Peace, not now with God only, but as between Jew and Gentile; and He becomes this by that same death on the cross, which laid the foundation for the reconciliation of both the one and the other; for thereby He has broken down the middle wall of enclosure (*τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ*) that fenced off the Jews from all the other peoples of the earth. It was God who had thus separated them unto Himself, and put them under His law and government; but we know how immediately they broke His law and transgressed His commandments, so that the law became a ministry of condemnation and death. The death of Christ met alike the claims of God upon the Jew and the Gentile, for He took upon Himself the whole of our responsibility, and thereby He broke down the wall of separation between the two, since both the one and the other must now be saved, not by works of law, but on the principle of faith. He thus abolished in His flesh the enmity between the two—the law of commandments in ordinances—that of the two He might make in Himself (Jew and Gentile alike on believing being united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven) one new man, so making peace; and that both might be reconciled to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. Hence, on the foundation of what He had accomplished on the cross, He could come preaching peace both to Jews

and Gentiles ; for all being justified by faith, would have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is therefore in connection with the body of Christ that He is our Peace. In the past dispensation Israel was a separated people ; in the millennium Israel will still have a distinct and pre-eminent place ; but now all such distinctions are abolished. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female : for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28 ; Col. iii. 11). This was foreshadowed even in the call of the apostle, to whom was specially intrusted the ministry of the body of Christ. Narrating the account of his conversion before Agrippa, he describes the appearing of the Lord, who said to him, "Rise, stand upon thy feet : for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee ; delivering thee (rather taking thee out—*ἐξαιρούμενός σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ*) from the people (the Jews), and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee" (Acts xxvi. 16, 17). He is thus regarded as having (as it were) no nationality, having been taken out from among both Jews and Gentiles, that he might be a kind of pattern of his ministry.

This was the new thing "which in other ages was not made known" (Eph. iii. 5), but was reserved for communication—though the subject of the counsels of

God from all eternity—until after the rejection of Christ. The Jews knew from their own prophets that the Gentiles would be brought into blessing under the sway and by the means of their Messiah; but “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God’s promise in Christ by the gospel” (Eph. iii. 6), they had no conception; and the truth, when proclaimed to them, excited their bitterest hostility. But such was the purpose of God, and His purpose was accomplished in Christ; and hence we can say, “He is our Peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” First He made peace by the blood of His cross (Col. i. 20); then He came and preached peace both to Gentiles and Jews (Eph. ii. 17); thereon He reconciled to God those that believed (Eph. ii. 13; Col. i. 20, 21); and, moreover, He made peace between Jew and Gentile by making in Himself of both one new man (Eph. ii. 15). We may, therefore, say, in the widest possible sense, that Christ is OUR PEACE.

There are consequences of this truth in its special aspect which must be indicated to complete the subject.

After showing how that Jews and Gentiles are merged, by being united, in the body of Christ, the apostle speaks of other consequent positions and relationships. Peace is proclaimed both to them that are afar off and to them that are nigh; “for through Him we both have access

by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). What a contrast to that which had existed! In the former dispensation, and up until the death of Christ, the Jews alone of all the peoples of the earth had access, by means of their high priest, into the immediate presence of God. But now the veil was rent, and after the ascension of Christ all who believed, whether Jews or Gentiles, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is also the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom. viii. 15). Hence, through Christ, both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Christ stands in the same relationship to both; both have the same Spirit, and both are equally children; and therefore all are in the same position of nearness, and enjoy the same privilege of access.

This leads to further blessings. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 19-22). Inasmuch as all national distinctions and privileges are abolished in the body of Christ, so also in the relationships they commonly sustain towards God on the earth. All are upon the same footing, so that no one can boast over the other.

The Gentiles have lost their strangership, and are brought in, together with Jews, to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; for both are built up upon the same foundation, even Christ, the chief corner-stone.

The apostle then points out two characteristics which attach corporately to the saints who are thus united to Christ on earth, which are of the highest importance. First, as being built up together on the same foundation, they, or the building thus being formed, is said to grow unto an holy temple in the Lord. The expression will be observed—"groweth unto an holy temple." It is therefore not yet complete, but is in process of building, and it will be carried on until the Lord returns, when every living stone will be found in its predestined place. Like the temple of Solomon when it was in building, which was "built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was building" (1 Kings vi. 7), so the erection of this temple is carried silently forward, every stone previously prepared, and then laid upon the foundation in its appointed place. For God Himself is the builder, and His work is unseen by men; but when it is completed, it will bear the impress of His hand, and be stamped with the perfection of His own thoughts and counsels. St. John says, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the

seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal," &c. (Rev. xxi. 9-11). This is the temple completed; for after the new heavens and the new earth, we find that this same city comes down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband. And the apostle says, "I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men" (ver. 2, 3). What a wondrous privilege to be a stone in the temple of God—of that temple which will be eternally robed and beautified with the glory of God! The Jews were singularly blessed in having the temple in Jerusalem, the place where God dwelt between the cherubim, and manifested Himself to His people in the Shekinah of glory. But believers now are to *form* the temple, and thus be the eternal dwelling-place of God.

Not only so, but even now on the earth they form the habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22). We do not enter here upon different phases of the house of God in this dispensation, nor stay to point out the difference between the house as built by God, and that which is intrusted for building to man's responsi-

bility (1 Cor. iii.). It is the fact only which is presented in this epistle—the fact that believers in this dispensation form the house of God—that God in very deed dwells upon the earth, since we are builded together in Christ for His habitation through the Spirit. Hence even now there is a place of blessing on earth, the sphere which is occupied and dwelt in by the Holy Spirit. All else outside this sphere is under Satan's power; and hence it is no small privilege to be in God's habitation on earth.

Such are some of the distinctive features of the present dispensation, some of the consequences which flow from Christ being our Peace. May He give us to understand more fully the wondrous place in which He has set us, consequent upon accomplished redemption, upon His own ascension to the right hand of God, and upon the presence of the Holy Ghost upon the earth!

“ Unto Him who loved us—gave us  
 Every pledge that love could give;  
 Freely shed His blood to save us;  
 Gave His life that we might live;  
 Be the kingdom,  
 And dominion,—  
 And the glory evermore!”

## CHAPTER XII.

## CHRIST OUR HEAD.

**T**H**ERE** are several senses in which Christ is said in Scripture to be Head. In the first place, "He is the head of every man" (1 Cor. xi. 3); then, "He is head over all things to the Church" (Eph. i. 22); and lastly, "He is the head of the body, the Church" (Col. i. 18). The first sets forth His lordship over all men, for He has authority (*ἐξουσίαν*) over all flesh; the second, His universal supremacy over all things; and the last sets forth His special relation to the Church. Into all these glories He has entered by virtue of redemption, and, therefore, as man. This truth cannot be too urgently repeated, that He fills this wondrous place, inherits these varied dignities, as the Man—the Man who once in this scene was rejected and crucified, but is now the Exalted One at the right hand of God.

This is specially brought out in one aspect in Hebrews ii. Thus the apostle says, "Unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying,

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What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him; *but we see Jesus*, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour: that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (or, for everything—*ὑπὲρ παντός*) (Heb. ii. 5–9). It is, therefore, as Son of Man, as taught in this scripture, that the Lord Jesus receives the subjection of all things under His feet. For God hath "made known unto us," writes St. Paul, "the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ (or, head up all things in the Christ—*ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ*), both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, in Him" (Eph. i. 9, 10).

It is also as man, as the glorified Man at God's right hand, that Christ is the Head of His body, the Church. "And He is head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence"

(Col. i. 18). It is, therefore, as the Risen One, the First-born from the dead, that He occupies this place; for it is scarcely necessary to point out that when He is spoken of in connection with resurrection it is always as Man. It follows from this, that the Church could have had no existence until after He had taken His place at the right hand of God; for until the Head was in heaven, the body, the Church, could not have been formed below. This will be placed beyond a doubt if we refer to another scripture. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13). The language here employed is remarkable. Instead of saying, as we should expect, when introducing the comparison of the human body with its many members, "So also is the *Church*," it is, "So also is Christ"—more exactly *the* Christ. "The Christ" is thus a term which includes the Head in heaven and the members on earth; and in the next verse the secret is explained—"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." It was not, then, until Christ had ascended up on high, and the Holy Spirit had come down, that the body could have been formed. Accordingly we find our blessed Lord, after His

resurrection, saying to His own, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts i. 5). This promise was verified on the Day of Pentecost; and on that day—although the truth of the body had not then been revealed—the body of Christ was formed. Then by the Holy Ghost sent down believers were by the baptism of the Spirit united with a glorified Christ on high, forming together with Him—wondrous thought, and still more wondrous grace!—one body. And this remains the characteristic of the present dispensation—that believers, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, are members of Christ's body, He the Head and they the members. (See Rom. xii. 4, 5; Eph. iv. 1-16, &c.)

When, then, we speak of Christ our Head, it is not an individual relationship that is signified, but a relationship which we share in common with every believer who has received the Holy Ghost. As, therefore, we are in common united to Christ, we also are united to one another, members of His body, and consequently members one of another. What an overwhelming thought, as we tread this scene—and yet what solace, what strength it imparts, that we are livingly associated with Christ at the right hand of God; and that also we are livingly associated with all our fellow-believers! And this twofold thought covers the whole ground of our responsibilities as members of the body of Christ—our responsibility to Christ as

Head ; and our responsibility to one another, to all believers, as being with us members of that body. We may profitably consider both the one and the other.

(1.) Christ is our Head. The Church, therefore, is subject to Christ (Eph. v. 24). Surely there should be no necessity to dwell upon and to enforce such a self-evident truth. What delight it was to the heart of God to bestow upon His Christ this exalted place, thus expressing His estimate of the work which He wrought out in His life and His death ! “ He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him,” &c. (Phil. ii. 8, 9). If, then, we have any fellowship with the heart of God, what delight to us to accord Him such a place of supremacy. When we consider, moreover, how deeply we are interested in His occupancy of it ; how that all our blessing has flowed to us through Him in that place, in virtue of His finished work ; how that it is by His unceasing love and ministry that He maintains us in the blessing in which we are set ; how, in a word, that we owe all that we are, and have, and hope to receive, to Him, we might conclude that the hearts of His people would find their joy in acknowledging His Headship, and in taking the place of submission to His will. But what are the facts of the case ? Look around for the answer, and what do we see ? Emulation in obedience to the Head of the Church ? Nay, but man’s supremacy and man’s will in the

Church. Take all the denominations of Christendom that exist to-day, and you will find more or less that they are grounded upon human constitutions and governed by human laws; *that the Headship of Christ in its proper force and sphere is practically ignored.* With sorrow we write the words; and we are confident that the godly of all names have fellowship in our sorrow. But if the assertion of self-will on the part of the members of His body be so grievous to us, what must He—the Head of the body—feel? True that it is largely owing to ignorance—ignorance of the truth of the body, and ignorance of the Scriptures. The fact, however, remains—a fact which, if estimated in its proper significance in relation to Christ, and according to His own heart, would fill us all with intolerable shame, abase us in the dust in humiliation and self-judgment.

If Christ is our Head, our responsibility is entire and unreserved obedience. For the head must govern, direct the body, not the body the head. How, then, can the will of the Head be ascertained? From the Word of God. And the most cursory glance over its pages will show what infinite pains He has taken to communicate it to us. Indeed, not only has He revealed His will, but He has given us, in the Holy Ghost, the power to apprehend it (John xiv. 20; xvi. 13, 14; 1 Cor. ii., &c.). We are therefore without excuse if we remain in ignorance. But the question is sometimes put, Has He not left us largely to our own

discretion, to arrange matters connected with worship and government as we think best? This argument is continually advanced, and advanced to justify all the existing divisions in the Church of God. It needs, however, but a moment's consideration to show its futile character. Search all down the line of God's dealings with man, and what do we find? That in every dispensation, whatever has been intrusted to man's responsibility, has utterly failed. It was so with Adam in the garden, Noah on the new earth, Israel under law, the priesthood—and even the Church—and in spite of the most precise directions and commandments. And yet it is gravely contended that the Lord has left us to use our discretion! The Head leave the members of the body to act as they should severally—or in twos or threes—please! Impossible! No; search the Scriptures, and it will soon be confessed that the Lord has never once left us to our own wisdom, but has provided for every emergency, so that the Church should be able in every situation, and in all circumstances, to have the certain guidance of His own infallible mind. This is where our failure has been—in the neglect of the study of the Scriptures. And it should be always remembered that every believer is responsible to know his Lord's will. True that He, when dealing with His servants, will make a distinction between those who were wilfully, and those who were ignorantly, disobedient (Luke xii. 47, 48); still the responsibility remains;

and it is open to every godly soul who desires to know the mind of the Lord, to ascertain it from the Word of God. "If any man will (or desires to) do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John vii. 17).

Our responsibility thus to our Head is summed up in this one word obedience. Hence, as He was, when on the earth, in subjection to the Father, so are we in subjection to Him. He never did His own will; for He came down from heaven to do His Father's will (John vi. 38); and He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. It would save us much difficulty, as well as anxiety, if we always remembered that the characteristic of a Christian is that he has no will. The will is connected with the old man, and the believer has put off the old man—it was crucified with Christ (Col. iii. 9; Rom. vi. 6). He must, therefore, be governed by the will of another—even that of Christ. This is rather individual responsibility; but when we speak of the responsibility of the members of the body of Christ, the thought is, that collectively they must be subject—it is the Church which is subject to Christ. Hence, when assembled, as well as in our individual path, we must be in obedience—have everything sanctioned and regulated by the Word of God.

And what perfect rest it gives to have no will, to be in obedience! There can be no conflict where there is no will, but peace and harmony would be the

necessary consequence. Obedience would heal every existing division, and secure once more the answer to our blessed Lord's own prayer, that they all may be one (John xvii. 21). Who is there amongst the children of God that does not long for such a consummation? Who is there that does not mourn continually that he is separated, here on earth, from so many of the members of Christ's body? Let us, then, not accept it as a dire necessity, but let us, each one for himself, acknowledge our responsibility, seek in all things to be subject to the will of our Head, and then to bring others into the same place of rest and blessing, that we all may be seen to be, as we really are, one in Christ.

(2.) Our responsibility is no less marked in reference to our fellow-members of the body of Christ. For, as we have seen, the same Spirit that unites us to Christ as our Head, unites also all the members in one living whole. Thus, writing to the Ephesians, and pointing out the end and object of the gifts which proceed from the ascended Christ as Head of the Church, the apostle proceeds, "But speaking (or rather, holding—the word is difficult—*ἀληθεύοντες*) the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edify-

ing of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 15, 16). The welfare, blessing, and increase of the whole body is thus dependent upon the harmonious activity of its every member. It is, however, in another epistle that we have the character of our mutual responsibilities specially indicated. We have already referred to it when speaking of the formation of the body by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 13). The apostle then insists on two points: first, that the body is not one member, but many (ver. 14); and, secondly, that though there are many members, it is yet but one body. On the one side, therefore, we have to maintain the manifoldness, the diversity, of the members; and on the other, the unity of the whole. Then he proceeds to specify the interconnection of the members, and their consequent relationships and responsibilities.

First, every member needs all the other members. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more, those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary," &c. (ver. 21, 22). All, therefore, are necessary the one to the other. We know this in regard to our human body; for if we have suffered the loss—if but for a time—of the least of our members, what inconvenience has immediately resulted, affecting the comfort of the whole body! In the same way the Spirit of God would have us to feel the need of every member of the

body of Christ. And this feeling should govern our attitude towards all. We cannot be independent one of the other; and the state of the Church to-day is but the consequence of forgetting this truth. Our own welfare—the welfare of all—demands that we should all be owning our mutual need; instead of, alas! in many cases, agreeing to differ, and to separate the one from the other for the sake of peace. What God hath joined together—we may also say in respect of the body of Christ—let no man put asunder; and we cannot be too thankful that, though outwardly it be not maintained, its unity cannot be destroyed. Still we must never forget our responsibility; and surely we should have more power to deal with souls who are ignorant of this blessed truth, if we dealt with them in this spirit of yearning after them, because they are necessary to the glory of the Head, in the maintenance of the unity of the body on earth, and to the blessing of all its members. Like the members of a family who are grieved because some of their number have absented themselves from their home, and cannot be happy until they return, so we should feel, when we think of so many saints wandering away, and heeding not their responsibility to their fellow-members of Christ's body.

And let it be distinctly observed that it is not gifts which are here mentioned; but it is members of the body. What a responsibility then devolves upon us all, however insignificant we may be, or others may

deem us to be! I, whatever I am, am necessary to all the saints. Every one needs me; and I need all the rest. Our very needs—to say nothing of the mind of Christ—should, therefore, draw us together, and effectually hinder all the sectarian divisions which the will of man and the malice of satan have brought into the Church of God. Would that this truth were laid upon the hearts of all the saints, and in such power that it might disentangle them from all that is so opposed to the will of the Lord, and bring them together on the ground of the unity of the body of Christ!

Secondly—and arising out of our mutual needs—there should be mutual care. The apostle says, “And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; *but that the members should have the same care one for another*” (vers. 23–25). Here it is plainly seen that our responsibility flows from what God has done. He has tempered the body together, adjusting it in all its parts for mutual help and blessing, and we are to act in the line of His purpose to preserve that which He has made, thereby having His own mind, and fellowship with His own thoughts and aims. He teaches us our duty

from our own bodies, which are also the work of His hands. We all lavish our greatest care upon our weakest members, and all the resources of the other members are brought to their aid. The care of the weakest is the concern of all; and so it should be in the Church of God. Is there no danger of forgetting this truth?—of our caring chiefly for prominent members of the body—splendid gifts—to the neglect of those members of the body which we think to be less honourable? It is, indeed, by no means infrequently the case that the assemblies that have the most distinguished gifts are spiritually the weakest. For their danger is of losing their sense of dependence on the Head, and also upon one another, and of looking too much to the gift or gifts which command their admiration. Gifts may thus easily become a snare to the Lord's people, and always do become so, when they possess undue prominence, obscuring the principles of God's assembly, or when in any measure they come between the assembly and the Lord. But if we have learned the truth already insisted on, that those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary, we shall then escape the danger, and own our responsibility of exercising the same care one for another.

It would be for the profit of all, if we often questioned ourselves as to whether we are really owning our duty in this particular, whether practically we confess to the responsibility of having "the same care" for all the

members of the body whom we know. A very manifest tendency with many of us is to form our own circles within the Church of God, and sometimes, it is to be feared, circles of friendship rather than of spiritual fellowship. It is not forgotten that of necessity those who are closest to Christ will be themselves drawn closer together, and those who are farther from Christ will also be mutually attracted. This is true; but the responsibility here enjoined is based upon common membership of the body, so that I owe care to my fellow-members simply because they are of the body. Family relationships might teach us this lesson. The parents care for their children because they are their children, and not at all on the ground of their answering to their own mind. So we must have the same care one for another on the ground of common membership of the body. Hence, too, our responsibility goes out far beyond those who are gathered on the ground of the body. There will be certainly more frequent opportunities for the exhibition of the care towards those who are associated together, but the debt is owing to all, wherever they may be found; for we must not forget to claim them as Christ's members, even if they do not recognise us as such. Indeed, we must express the heart of Christ, and in the same circle; and His affections embrace all who are His.

We have, lastly, mutual sympathies. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or

one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (ver. 26). Suffering with one another has two aspects. We do this in one way necessarily—just as, for example, our whole body suffers with the suffering of the least of its members. So in the body of Christ, if one member be suffering spiritually from lukewarmness, backsliding, or through falling into temptation, all the members, though it may be unconsciously, will be affected. The state of the whole is the state of its individual members. Take, for instance, a bason of hot water, and if you add but two drops of cold, the temperature of the whole will be lowered. It is so also in the Church. Let there be but one who is cold at heart in the assembly, and its tone will be affected—all will suffer with the suffering member.

This is true, but here it is rather active suffering, because it is connected with responsibility. It is what we owe one to another. And how blessed it is—and thank God its exhibition is not rarely seen—when the sympathy of the whole assembly is drawn forth towards one of its suffering members. And practically how it binds the hearts of the members of Christ together—this manifestation of sympathy with suffering! Surely it is one of the most blessed presentations of what Christ Himself is, who is not one who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Let us, then, seize such opportunities, not only as owning our responsibility of suffering with those who suffer, but also

for the purpose of the exhibition of the grace of Christ, who Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.

The other side of this responsibility—if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it—is more difficult. The case supposed is that of some member of the body on whom the Lord has put some special honour, giving him some special prominence, or using him in a striking way in service. When this is the case, it is assumed that all the members will rejoice in his exaltation—in his being honoured, “glorified.” I say that this is assumed; and indeed, if the oneness of the body be practically maintained, there will be this perfect sympathy. It is often exemplified in a family. If one of its members receive some promotion, or some special mark of approbation from the sovereign, the whole family feels honoured, and rejoices with its distinguished member. So should it be in the Church of God. But is it too much to say that, as a matter of fact, sympathy in this direction is more rare than in that of suffering? We are such poor feeble creatures, that, instead of rejoicing with the brother whom the Lord may have singled out for honour, we find in his Lord’s choice food for envy or jealousy. Such feelings ought not even to be named among saints, and yet, alas! are they uncommon? We all need to watch over ourselves, for we know what the flesh is—and it is still in us, that we may unsparingly judge ourselves when

we fail in this particular. Nay, more; we are responsible to rejoice with the honoured member. The Lord so counts upon our oneness of feeling that He expects to see it exhibited. John the Baptist may be cited as an illustration, though he knew nothing of the body of Christ. "Rabbi," say his disciples, "He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him. John answered, and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from God. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. *He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John iii. 26-30). What blessed, lowly grace—thinking all of Christ and nothing of self, and entering into, and rejoicing because of, His joy! It is precisely this spirit which we should cherish; and it is in the expression of it, that we proclaim that we are Christ's, following thereby in the path of lowliness and self-abasement that ever characterised His ways while here below. Then we should have no difficulty when one member is honoured, in rejoicing with it.

All these responsibilities—those that have passed under consideration—flow from our being united to Christ, and having Him as our Head. May we delight

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more and more in the relationship into which, by the sovereignty and the grace of God, we have thus been brought! And may we be ever found owning in practical power, that we are both members of the body of Christ, and also members one of another, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!

As members of His body, we know Christ now as our Head. But He will soon return to receive us unto Himself; and those whom He will thus gather to Himself, those who have been His members on earth, will then form the bride, the Church He loved, and for which He gave Himself, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27). It is of this Church St. John speaks, when he says, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. xxi. 2). The thousand years have then passed, and still she has the unfading beauty of the bride; for in truth she has been robed in the glory of God (ver. 11); and thus throughout eternity, she will be always the meet companion of the Lamb. What honour then to be a member of the body; and what surpassing grace that has put us into such a place of blessedness; and hence with what adoring gratitude we should now acknowledge Christ as our Head!

## CHAPTER XIII.

## CHRIST OUR HOPE.

ONLY once do we find in the Scriptures the expression, "Christ our hope." "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, our hope" (1 Tim. i. 1). But although the term itself is not repeated, the thing signified by it is found in almost every book, and in some books almost in every page, of the New Testament. For the characteristic of every Christian is that he is waiting for the Lord Jesus, who will return, according to His own promise, to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also (John xiv. 3). It belongs, therefore, to our position, as left in the world, that we are waiting for Christ, because it is at His coming that we shall enter upon the full fruits of our redemption. For it is then that our bodies are also redeemed (Rom. viii. 23); "that He will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 20). Hence we are said to be saved by (rather, *in*) hope

(Rom. viii. 24). Even now we receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls (1 Peter i. 9); but we look forward to the moment, when our bodies likewise shall be redeemed from the power of death and the grave; for God hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren (Rom. viii. 29).

Accordingly it belongs to our present position that we are waiting for the coming of our Lord; for it is at His return that this consummation of our blessedness will be effected. He is our Hope, therefore, because it is Himself for whom we wait in connection with it. And not only so; it is for Himself we wait, because the One who has redeemed us is He on whom our hearts are set. Apart, therefore, from every other consideration, Christ is our Hope—Christ in His coming—because we desire to be with the object of our affections. We are thus brought into fellowship with His own desires, for if we wait for, and desire to be with, Him, He waits for the moment when the desires of His heart will be fulfilled in having us with Himself (John xvii. 24).

We shall find, therefore, that during His sojourn with His disciples He continually prepared them, and exhorted them to watch for, His return. Sometimes He presented this truth—the hope of His coming—in relation to their responsibility as servants. “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing” (Matt. xxiv. 46); again, “Let your loins

be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching" (Luke xii. 35-37). Sometimes, He presented His coming as ushering His waiting ones into fulness of blessing, as bringing them into His own presence, to be with Him for ever. For example, in the scripture already referred to, when His disciples were plunged into sorrow at the prospect of His speedy departure, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John xiv. 1-3). The Lord here not only presents Himself to His sorrowing disciples, as the object of their faith in His absence from them, and as one who was departing in their interests to prepare a place for them, but also as the object of their hope in returning to receive them unto Himself.

In entire accordance with this is the teaching of the epistles. The apostle says of the Thessalonians, that they "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, *and to wait for His Son from heaven*" (1 Thess.

i. 9, 10). This scripture is exceedingly important, inasmuch as it shows, beyond dispute, that the coming of Christ was no advanced truth imparted to a few of the spiritual, and no peculiar doctrine adopted by a class, but an essential part of the Christianity of these early believers. It may be well also to remark, that this was St. Paul's earliest epistle, and that it was written, therefore, to very young converts; and it is such that he reminds that, by their conversion, they were not only turned to God, &c., but that they also were brought upon the ground of waiting for God's Son. His coming was their hope.

Evidence of the same character might be adduced from almost every epistle. A few citations will suffice. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle says, "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 7); to the Philippians, "Our conversation is in heaven; whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," &c. (Phil. iii. 20). James also says, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James v. 7); and in the last chapter of the inspired canon, the blessed Lord Himself announces three times His speedy return (Rev. xxii. 7, 12, 20). But it is St. Paul who was especially commissioned to reveal this truth in its specific character as the hope of the Church; and he does it with precision and fulness in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians. He says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,

concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." He then proceeds to explain, how it comes to pass that the saints will return with Jesus, *i.e.*, at His appearing; for if they return with Him then, they must have been with Him previously; and he is specially charged to unfold this mystery. Hence he adds, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (an old word, signifying to go before, or anticipate) them which are asleep. For 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: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). Two things plainly appear from this scripture: first, that the Lord will return for His saints, both those who have fallen asleep, and those who may be alive at that time on the earth, before His appearing; and, secondly, that when He comes back to earth, His saints will be with Him. (See also Colossians iii. 4.)

There is another class of passages which speaks of our looking and waiting for the appearing rather than

the coming of Christ. One of these has been cited (1 Cor. i. 7). We add another, "For 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 (rather, the appearing of the glory) of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," &c. (Titus ii. 11-13). There is a reason for this. It will be found that whenever believers are looked at as under responsibility on the earth—as, for example, in service—the "appearing" is the goal rather than the "coming." Thus St. Paul says to Timothy, "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Tim. vi. 14). Some have concluded from this, and similar passages, that the Church will be left down here until the appearing, having to pass through the sore tribulation of which our Lord speaks in Matt. xxiv. This is, however, an entire mistake, as seen, indeed, from the scripture already cited (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). The fact is, the appearing is spoken of in connection with responsibility, because as earth has been the scene of the service, earth also shall be the witness of the displayed recompense. Hence in 2 Thessalonians, after that the apostle has unfolded the proper hope of the Church in the coming of Christ, in writing to the same saints, and speaking of their patience and faith in all their

persecutions and tribulations that they were enduring, he points them on to the time when they should have rest, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (have believed) (2 Thess. i. 4-10). This is in no way inconsistent with, but is rather the complement of, the truth of the Lord's coming for His saints being our proper object of hope.

It may perhaps tend to make this, if possible, more evident, if we show that there is nothing, as far as the Scriptures reveal, between us and the return of the Lord—that He may return at any moment to receive His waiting people. If, indeed, there were a single event which must necessarily, to our knowledge, intervene between us and His return, His coming would not be our immediate hope. In that case, we should look first for the predicted event or events, and after that we might be able to expect the coming of the Lord. Two or three scriptures will show that it is our privilege to look at any time for the return of the Lord.

After our Lord's resurrection, and ere His ascension, in one of His interviews with His disciples, Peter said to Him concerning the disciple whom Jesus loved, "Lord,

and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me" (John xxi. 21, 22). Now, without pausing to enter upon the special significance of these words as applied to John, it is clear upon the surface, that had there been necessarily a long intervening space between the Lord's departure and return, rendered necessary by the accomplishment of earthly events, these words could not have been spoken. Again, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, when dealing with the resurrection of the body, the apostle says, "*We* shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," &c. (1 Cor. xv. 51); and also in the passage from the Thessalonians which has been remarked upon, he says, "*We* who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." A great deal of ingenious reasoning has been expended upon these scriptures to destroy their evident teaching, that St. Paul knew of nothing to hinder the Lord's return during his lifetime. Had he known that a long course of prophetic events and earthly judgments must first be accomplished, he could not have thus classed himself, as he does by the word "we," among those who might never die.

But it is objected that our Lord Himself prepared the minds of His disciples, in other scriptures, to expect a long course of events before His return; and Matthew xxiv. is freely adduced by those who seek to obscure the distinctive hope of the Church. What, then, do we find

there? After describing a time of special tribulation, the Lord thus speaks, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 29-31). Now, it is freely conceded that if this be a description of the Lord's return for the Church, there must yet elapse, it may be, a long interval of time. But does this scripture contemplate the Church? There are several reasons in the chapter itself which forbid the conclusion. In the fifteenth verse the Lord gives a sign, "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not," &c. This sign, as all must confess who will take the trouble of reading the prediction of Daniel, refers exclusively to a temple (hereafter to be rebuilt) in Jerusalem. Again, our Lord urges upon them to pray that their flight might be "not in the winter, *neither on the Sabbath day*"—a prayer which could scarcely be offered by a Christian, seeing that the Sabbath—the seventh day, and no other, *i.e.*, Saturday—is to him as any

other day of the week. If, moreover, one should come, according to the twenty-third verse, and say to a believer, "Lo, here is Christ, or there," how could he be deceived? Would he not reply, "Christ is at the right hand of God?" But there would be nothing so calculated to deceive the Jew who was eagerly looking for the advent of the Messiah. Indeed, it is undeniable that the whole chapter applies to the Jews who will be, at the time spoken of, in Jerusalem and Judea. It can be shown even more convincingly. Examine the order of events detailed in the passage cited. After the tribulation, the sun is darkened, &c., and *then* appears the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and *then* all the tribes of the earth mourn, and *then* they see the Son of Man coming, &c.; *and it is not till after all this* that He sends His angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather together His elect, &c. *So that, if this applies to the Church, it is not gathered together until after the appearing.* But what says St. Paul? "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*" (Col. iii. 4). Both scriptures cannot, therefore, apply to the same thing, or they would be mutually contradictory. Since, then, the scripture in Matthew xxiv. differs from that in Colossians iii., it is evident that it cannot apply to the Church. Indeed, the application is to the elect remnant among the Jews, who will be gathered, in the manner there described, when the Son of Man shall come in His glory.

In Revelation xix. we shall find confirmatory evidence. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called the Word of God" (vers. 11-13). This is a description of the coming of the Lord Jesus in judgment, as the sequel shows; in other words, of His appearing. It is at this time that He returns *with* His saints. Let the Word speak for itself. "And the armies that were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean" (ver. 14). Who are these? Their dress is distinctive, and supplies the answer. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed *in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses*" (τὰ δικαιώματά) *of saints*" (vers. 7, 8). The armies, therefore, who followed upon the white horses are saints; but if saints, they must have been with Christ before He issues forth for judgment at His appearing. This is in accordance with St. Paul's statement, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4).

It is thus abundantly plain that the Lord returns for

His people before He appears in judgment, and hence that there are no necessarily intervening events between us and the Lord's coming. This might be gathered, indeed, from the Lord's own words, "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star"—for the star of hope which burns aloft in the sky is the herald and harbinger of the coming day, the star to which we turn in earth's darkest hours, in the longing expectation that we shall soon be caught up, and associated with Him in all His heavenly splendours. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." Happy they who can from full hearts respond, "Amen; even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20).

Such is the teaching of the Word of God, and very many profess to receive and to hold it. But it is one thing to hold the doctrine, and quite another to live in the power of it, to be possessed and moulded by the truth which it expresses. To hold the doctrine that the Lord is at hand, and to be living as if this scene were our home, to be engrossed in its cares, activities, or pleasures, or to be associated with things which are not suited to Him for whom we profess to wait, is practically to deny our hope, and even to turn the grace of God into an occasion for the liberty of self-will and the pleasing of self. It behoves every one, therefore, who believes that the Lord is at hand, to judge himself, his heart, and his ways, by the light of the

Word, that he may be brought into a state conformable to his expectation, suited to the presence of Him whom we so soon expect to see face to face, and with whom we hope to be for ever. Let us, then, collect a few examples of the effect which this blessed hope should practically produce upon our walk and ways.

The parable of the ten virgins (Matt. xxv.) shows that, whatever our profession, we are not prepared to meet the Lord unless we have "oil" in our vessels; and the effect of the cry, "Behold the bridegroom," was to awaken both the wise and foolish as to their condition and needs. But every one will understand, that none but those who are born again through the Word and by the power of the Holy Ghost can be ready for the Lord's coming. There was a second thing. The cry was, "*Go ye out to meet Him.*" With this corresponds another scripture. St. John, after revealing to us that when Christ is manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, adds, "Every man that hath this hope in Him (in Christ) purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 2, 3). The effect of the expectation of Christ, therefore, when held in living power, will be to separate, and to produce in us an ever-increasing separation. With Himself before our souls, and looking for Him hourly, our desire will be to be apart from all which would not please His eyes, and to be possessed of all that would delight His gaze. Hence we may measure the reality and intensity of our

hope by its separating power upon our hearts and lives. How were it possible, indeed, to cleave to a single thing, however innocent even in itself, if it be not distinctly for Christ, if we were expecting every moment to see His face? No; waiting for Him, our aim would be to be found just as He would have us to be, so that, weaned from every earthly thing and object that might bind our heart to the scene through which we are passing, we may have nothing to leave but the wilderness itself, when He descends from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

It will also help us to keep our lamps trimmed and burning. All the ten virgins had fallen asleep, and when roused from their unfaithful slumbers, their first anxiety was for their lamps. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps" (ver. 7). They had been careless about this before, but immediately they hear the cry, "Go ye out to meet Him," they turn to see if their lamps can be prepared in time to meet Him. But they should have been kept both trimmed and burning all through the darkness of the night; and had they really been waiting for the bridegroom, it could not have been otherwise. How is it now with us who profess to be expecting the Lord? Are our lights burning—burning steadily and brightly through the surrounding darkness? The light is Christ. Are we then reflecting Him? "A city that is set on a hill

cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house" (Matt. v. 14, 15). In like manner if, by the grace of God, Christ is in us, it is that He may be displayed. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, *for the shining forth* (πρὸς φωτισμὸν) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

St. Paul applies this truth in many ways. "The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing," &c. (Phil. iv. 5, 6). He would thus have us without a single care in the prospect of His coming. He uses the same truth to comfort the hearts of the sorrowing in the passage already adduced (1 Thess. iv.). And what can comfort the heart of the bereaved like the expectation of Christ? For even while the bodies of our dear ones are lying in the house, or on their way to the grave, we are entitled to hope that the Lord may return; and then, raised from their sleep of death, and we ourselves changed, we shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The Apostle James exhorts to patience on the same ground. "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter

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rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James v. 7, 8). The prospect of the Lord's return is thus an antidote to the weariness, the trials, and the difficulties of our wilderness journey.

The Lord Himself continually uses the uncertainty of the time of His return as an incentive to fidelity. When He represents Himself in the parable as departing to receive a kingdom and to return, and delivers the "pounds" to the servants, His word is, "Occupy till I come" (Luke xix. 12, 13). Again He says, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that He shall make him ruler over all His goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxiv. 45-51).

These are but samples of the practical uses of the truth of the coming of Christ for His people. An examination of all the passages that treat of the subject

will show that it is interwoven with every detail of Christian life and walk. To ignore it, therefore, is to lose one of the most powerful motives to holiness which is given to us in the Scriptures. More than this: it is, as before remarked, an integral part of Christianity; and hence the Christian who has not received the truth of the Lord's coming is ignorant of the character of the place into which he is brought, as well as of the fulness of the grace of God. Is the coming of Christ—Christ Himself in His coming—your hope, dear reader? Can any prospect be so fraught with joy to the believer? To see the face of Him, whom not having seen we love! To be like Him, and to be with Him for ever! Surely if our hearts respond in ever so feeble a measure to what He is to us, and to His love, we must long for the moment when He will enter upon the fruition of His own joy in receiving His own to Himself, and when our joy will be consummated in the everlasting possession of the object of our affections.

May the Lord bring many more of His beloved saints into acquaintance with it, and enable those who by His grace do wait for Him to maintain the truth in living power—walking under its full separating influences every step of their wilderness path!

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