

Selected Writings

of

J. G. Bellett

The Evangelists

by J. G. Bellett

On the Gospel by John

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Introduction.

The four Gospels are coincident testimonies to the Lord Jesus Christ, and valuable as such. But we are not to read them as merely explanatory or supplemental. We get a complete view of our Lord Jesus Christ only by discerning their distinctness in character and purpose.

Even in the histories of men we may perceive this. One biographer may give us the man in his *domestic*, another in his *political*, life; but in order to our being fully acquainted with him, we must see him in both of these, and perhaps in many other connections. And one of such biographers will not only select particular facts, but notice distinct circumstances in the same facts. The same thing we see in the four Gospels. And if we know, if not the necessity, at least the desirability, of this, when a mere man is the theme, how much more may we expect to find it so when we have rehearsed to us the ways of One Who fills such a blessed variety of relationships, both to God and man, as the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost, Who spake by the prophets and other ancient and holy penmen of Scripture, had done this before the times of the evangelists. In the First Book of Chronicles, for instance, we see David in a light different from that in which we see him in the Books of Samuel. In the Books of Samuel we get his history generally; but in the First Book of Chronicles we see him not in all the events of his life, as in Samuel, but in those scenes and actions which constituted him a type of the Lord Who is David's Son. And

so, in the Second Book of Chronicles, as to Solomon. We do not get his full history there, as in the First Book of Kings. All his sins are passed by. For it was not as his historian that the Spirit of God was employing the pen of the scribe, while tracing Solomon in the Chronicles. He was rather setting him forth as the type of that greater Son of David, and King of Israel, in his full beauty, the boast of his own people, and the object of the whole earth's desire.

All this is only fulness and variety, and not incongruity; and we should have grace to admire the perfection of the wisdom of God, in His holy oracles, in this. And as to the ways of the blessed Lord which are, in this variety, given to us, I need not say that all is perfection. Whether it be this path or that which He takes before us — whatever relationship He sustains — whatever affection fills His soul — though different, all is perfect. He may pass before us in the conscious elevation of the Son of God, or in the sympathies of the Son of man; we may see Him in Jewish connection, in *Matthew*; or more widely abroad, as among men, in *Luke*; as the Servant of the varied need of sinners, in *Mark*; or as the solitary Stranger from heaven, in *John*; still, all is perfection. And to discern and trace this, is at once the disciple's profit and delight. "Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them."

My present desire, with God's grace, is to speak more particularly of the Gospel by John; or, as the expression is, "according to John" — that is, that form or character of the Gospel which it has been the good pleasure of the Holy Ghost to convey through him.

It is a portion of God's Word which has been very precious to the saints. Many a soul has enjoyed it as such, without, perhaps, exactly knowing why it was so; for the correctness of our spiritual tastes and desires is often above the measure of our spiritual intelligence. And it is well that it is so.

Before, however, I give what appears to me to be the general character and order of this Gospel, I will suggest some introductory things which have helped me, as I judge, to a fuller understanding

and enjoyment of it myself. May the Lord control and guide our thoughts!

From the whole of their history, the people of Israel might have learnt how entirely dependent they were on those resources which God had in Himself, beyond, and independent of, their own system; for by such resources they had, in all stages of their history, been sustained and conducted. Their father Abraham had been called by an act of sovereign grace. Joshua 24: 2, 3. God's own hand had preserved and strangely multiplied them in Egypt. Ex. 1: 12. In distant solitudes, where Israel was not known, Moses was prepared to be their deliverer from Egypt. All through the wilderness their journey had shown them their utter dependence on God. By His Spirit, and not by might nor by power, did Joshua, after Moses, fulfil his ministry, reducing the nations of Canaan. And afterwards, though in different circumstances, there was still the same thing. Joshua's sword, which had been the verifier of the Lord's faithfulness to Abraham and his seed, had no sooner been sheathed, and the blessing transferred from the hand of God which had brought it, to the hand of Israel which was to keep it, than it was lost: it slipped away from its new guardian at once. Faithlessness and weakness were as clearly now marked in Israel, as truth and power had been in Jehovah. Israel and Canaan were Adam and the garden again. Ere the first chapter of the Book of Judges closes, Israel, by disobedience, had forfeited every thing. The inhabitants of the land were not driven out. But the rest of that book only shows us the presence of God among them; repairing the mischief, from time to time, with His own hand, and by the energy of His Spirit.

And this must needs be the character of God's acting in a time of forfeited blessing. Either judgment must be executed in righteousness, or blessing be brought in in sovereign grace. Man, by the previous trial, having been found wanting, must be humbled and set aside, and God come in with some new energy of His own to do a strange act — something beside the order of the dispensation, and independent of what were properly its resources. All the

deliverances wrought for Israel in the times of the judges are accordingly of this character. The appearance in Israel of Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, is such a thing as the system, if maintained by its own resources in its own path, would never have led to.*

*We have a sample of this even previous to the times of the judges. The irregular ministry of Eldad and Medad and their companions was the sovereign provision of God, through the Spirit, for the failure in Moses, for his refusal, through impatience, to proceed with the work that had been exclusively committed to himself. He learnt, to the rebuke of his unbelief, that the Lord's hand had not waxed short. Num. 11.

Thus as to Deborah — "She judged Israel at that time." But this was not quite such a successor to him who was "king in Jeshurun" as we might have counted upon. The honour had passed into the hand of a woman, for Israel was out of order. Trespass had come in with a disturbing force, and the remedy must be applied, if at all, by God's own hand. And so it was. Therefore, in her magnificent song she sings — "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength;" a confession that the source of her strength and victory was all in God, and that in the energy of the Spirit, and in that only, she had fought the battle of the Lord, and conquered.

So with Gideon. He was not of Judah (to whom such honour by ancient right belonged), but of Manasseh; and his family the least in Manasseh. But such a one is called away from his threshing, to bear that sword which was soon to distinguish itself as "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon." And what was this sword of such renown? Three hundred men with trumpets and pitchers! Strange weapons of war against the host of Midian! But Midian ran before them. A cake of barley bread tumbled in, and overturned the tents of the enemy! For it was the Lord Himself Who was now in action again, and the treasure of Israel's strength might therefore lie in an earthen vessel.*

* 2 Cor. 4: 7 seems to be an allusion to Gideon's lamps and pitchers.

And Jephthah, in his turn, tells the same tale. The son of a strange woman, he had been disclaimed by his brethren in Israel, and cast out among the Gentiles. But this is the one whom the Lord chooses to be Israel's saviour in the day of their trouble. But where is Israel's honour now? Where is the glory and worth of their own system, when he whom his brethren despised and cast out as a base thing is their only hope in their calamity? The honour was not theirs, nor was the strength of their own system their help grace to and defence now. The Spirit of God, in sovereign grace to Israel, comes upon Jephthah. The battle was the Lord's. Israel had again destroyed himself, but in God was his help.

And all this we have again displayed in Samson. All that ushers in and conducts him in this strange course of action, speaks of the strength and way of God alone. There was nothing in the system of Israel that could account for it. Samson was a child of promise, raised up in the dishonoured tribe of Dan; and, thus, was a sign of God's grace and sovereignty. And according to this, he is at once separated to God, and drawn, as far as might be, out of the strict Jewish order and line of things. The path which he trod lay right across the beaten path of Israel. The secret of God was with him. None knew the riddle but himself. His kindred in the flesh did not know it; and he has done with father, and mother, and country, and the law of Israel, and is under a new and special dispensation. Contrary to the law, and yet by the direction of the Law-giver, he marries a daughter of the Philistines. He did not go the common way of Israel, or use the resources of Israel; but strange and surprising acts marked his course, from the time that the Spirit first moved him in the camp of Dan, to the time when he died in the midst of the Philistine lords. All that he did was of one great character. An unknown energy stirred and conducted him. Israel's resources were by all this again set aside, and God Himself was displayed in His grace and power.

So, after the Book of Judges closes, we see the same thing. Samuel, like Samson, was a child of promise; and a child of promise is

always the sign of grace (Rom. 9: 8); for it says, "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And, therefore, at his birth, his mother celebrates, through the Holy Ghost, the praises of grace. He becomes at first a mere waiting-boy in the tabernacle; from thence he is called forth that all Israel might know him to be the prophet of God; and finally they see in him the raiser of the stone Ebenezer, the deliverer and help of the nation.

And after him, in David, we again see God's own way and resources displayed in the time of Israel's need. For David was taken from the sheep-folds to feed Israel. His father and his brethren took no account of him; Israel know him not; but the Lord chooses and anoints him. He becomes, for a while, an exiled and a needy wanderer; but at last he has the kingdom settled in his house by a covenant of sure mercies for ever.

Thus, from the call of Abraham their father to the exaltation of David their king through Moses, Joshua, the judges, and Samuel, every stage in this wondrous journey is accomplished in the grace of God — the resources of their own system, that which lay in their own hands, proving utterly vain.

And I would add, that the prophets were another line of witnesses to the same truth. They were raised up, for Israel's guidance, by an extraordinary energy of the Spirit. The primitive settlement of things in Israel did not provide such a ministry. The nation was to stand in the remembrance and obedience of the words which Moses had delivered. See Deut. 6, 11, 31. But upon their forgetting these words, an extraordinary presence of the Spirit of God is called for, and then displayed in the person and ministry of the prophets.

Thus, by a line of teachers or prophets, as by another line of rulers or deliverers, testimony to the need of God's resources in their behalf was left with every succeeding generation of Israel. This was continuously telling out to them that they could not stand in their own covenant, and that all their hope of final honour and rest lay in the grace and power of God. And so we know it will be. Israel will

stand as God's people, in the latter day, in the strength that is laid up for them in Jesus; to Whom, therefore, these two lines of witnesses point, and in Whom, as the true Prophet of Israel, and as the true King of Israel, they will both end. And what refreshing will it be for those who are weary of man, and "sick of his wisdom and his doings," to walk in a sphere where man shall be hid, and God alone displayed! "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

But there was another and a deeper purpose of God, which was also constantly seen in the history of Israel. The eminent persons I have been noticing were all *of Israel*, and pledged only *Israel's* mercies. But God had purposes beyond Israel — purposes touching *the Gentiles* of a very exalted character; and this He signified by another line of witnesses, formed, as we shall now see, of eminent personages who were all of them *Gentiles*, or strangers to Israel.

There appears to have been a body of Gentiles at all times living in the midst of Israel, who take an inferior rank to Israel, though enjoying blessings and ordinances with them.* But there was also a line of distinguished Gentiles, who, whenever they appeared in the history, took a place, and were called into scenes and services, as did, on the other hand, greatly raise them above the level of Israel. Both of these things are, I judge, very significant, illustrating the plans then reserved in God's counsels for the Gentiles and strangers, the great body of whom will hereafter in the kingdom take a place subordinate to Israel, though in Israel's joy; while there will be an elect and distinguished body of them (those who are now called out to form the Church of God), whose place and dignity will be far above the place and dignity of Israel. Rev. 21: 9-11, 23, 24.

*See Ex. 20: 10; Lev. 17: 12; Lev. 18: 26; Lev. 26: 22; Num. 9: 14; Num. 15: 14, 15, 16, 29; Num. 19: 10; Num. 35: 15; Joshua 8: 35; 1 Chr. 22: 2; 2 Chr. 2: 17; 2 Chr. 15: 9; 2 Chr. 30: 25

The first of these distinguished strangers who meets us is Melchizedek. The honour that was put upon him needs not to be particularly spoken of; it is generally so well understood. but he only begins a series of persons, illustrious in their generation and day, like himself.

After him we meet with Asenath and Zipporah, the wives respectively of Joseph and Moses. They were both strangers to Abraham; but they became the mothers of those children who were given to these two illustrious fathers in Israel, while they were in their days separated from Israel; and they held dignities which the chiefest daughters in Israel might have envied.

We are next introduced to Jethro, who, on Israel's coming out of Egypt, takes upon him, without rebuke, though he was but a stranger, to do priestly service in the presence of Aaron, and to give counsel touching affairs of state to Moses. This was occupying for a while, a very eminent place in the midst of Israel. The brightest glories in Israel were out-shone. Moses and Aaron, the king and the priest in Jeshurun, are set aside by this stranger. Fair token, like Melchizedek before, of great things to come to the Gentiles.

After Jethro we see Rahab, another stranger, but one who, we may all remember, was brought to have a high memorial in Israel; such a memorial as the daughters of the land longed for continually. For the Hope of Israel comes through her after the flesh (Matt. 1: 5); and she is the one whose faith is spoken of in connection with that of their father Abraham. James 2.

Next, in Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, we see the stranger again illustrious. It was by her hand, in a very special manner, that God subdued the king of Canaan before the children of Israel, so that her praise is thus rehearsed: "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent."

Then, in another female, in Ruth the Moabitess, we see the stranger again. Though the daughter of an unclean and rejected people, she is given a place equal to the chiefest mothers in Israel. Like Rahab before her, the Hope of the nation comes through her, according to the flesh (Matt. 1: 5); and she is given a standing equal in dignity with that of Rachel herself. Ruth 4: 11. She had no natural kinship with Israel; but, through grace, she is grafted on Israel, to become the bearer of the Stem of Jesse, on Whose branch, as we know, every hope of the people hangs.

And afterwards, in the times of David, we have the stranger kept most honourably in view. This appears first in Uriah. He was a Hittite; but his fidelity to the God of Israel, and self-devoting zeal in the cause of Israel, shine out blessedly in contrast with even Israel's chiefest and noblest and best child in that day. This poor relic of the defiled Gentiles rebukes no less a son of Israel than king David himself.

We get the stranger again in these times of David, in Ittai the Gittite. 2 Sam. 15. He, with all his men, appears to have joined himself to David, and the language of such an act was what Ruth's had been before to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." He was not of Israel, but more true to Israel's king than Israel; for when his people had revolted to Absalom, and the land was in rebellion, it was this stranger that clung to David whether for life or death.

But in these same days of David, the stranger, or Gentile, is again introduced to us in the person of Araunah; and, as usual, in a way of eminence and honour. David's transgression had brought the nation under judgment; and the angel of the Lord was going through the land slaying his thousands, when, at the bidding of the Lord, his hand is stayed at the threshing-floor of this Jebusite. There it was that mercy *first* rejoiced against judgment. Sin was reigning in Israel unto death; but grace is made to reign unto life *first* in this inheritance of the Gentile. What a high distinction was this! What a

note of favour to the Gentiles! Surely all this had a voice, though there was no speech nor language.

Then again, in the times of the kings, I may notice both the widow of Sarepta, and Naaman the Syrian; not that they were either of them ever brought to high estate in Israel, as were other strangers whom I have noticed, but they were made the standing monuments of distinguishing and electing grace. See Luke 4: 25-27. And after these we reach Jehonadab the son of Rechab. 2 Kings 10. He is made assessor, with Jehu, in judgment on the house of Ahab.

Thus, among the patriarchs, and successively in the times of Moses, of Joshua, of the judges, of David, and of the kings, the stranger, is occasionally presented to us, and always in distinction. But beside this *occasional* testimony, there was the *abiding* presence and testimony of the Gentile in Israel: I mean in that family to which this Jehonadab belonged: the family of the Rechabites, who continued in Israel from the earliest times down to the latest, from Moses to Jeremiah. Judges 1: 16; 1 Chr. 3: 55; Jer. 35: 8. And all through these many centuries they dwelt as strangers in the land. At the very first they went up from the *city* to dwell in the *wilderness*, and at the very end they are seen maintaining the same character. They neither built houses, nor bought fields, nor sowed seed, nor planted vineyards; all the days they dwelt in tents, and did not eat of the fruit of the vine. *They were a standing order of Nazarites, more separated to God than even Israel;* and so faithful were they to their consecration vows, that at the end, when the Lord was pronouncing judgment upon His own people, He pledged to them that they should not want a man to stand before Him for ever. Throughout the long period of their tabernacling in Israel, wherever we hear of them, it is always to their praise, always taking such a place of honour, and sustaining such a character of holiness, as distinguishes them, like the other strangers, quite above the level of the nation.*

*I may add the cases of the centurion and the Syrophenician, as the strangers who appear in the midst of Israel when the times of the

New Testament had begun. For, like their more ancient brethren, they appear in great distinction. The Lord signalizes them both.

Now, upon all this I would observe, that, as Melchizedek ought to have been to the Jews a notice of a better order of priesthood than that of Aaron (Heb. 7), so this line of strangers, following, as it were, in the train of Melchizedek, might have been the constant notice of better things in reserve for the Gentiles than all that which had distinguished Israel. Israel might by them have been prepared for the calling out of the Church, which, with the Son of God as her Head, is the true stranger upon earth, and which is to hold a more honoured place under God than Israel ever knew. The Church is that to which all these eminent strangers pointed beforehand. For the Church does not tread in Israel's path. She is a stranger where Israel was at home. Her citizenship is in heaven, and not on the earth. The saints are the sons of God, and the world knows them not, even as it knew not Christ. They stand as at the end of the world (1 Cor. 10: 11), dead and risen with Christ. Jesus was given no place on earth; and they, as with Him, do but sojourn here, separated in principle from all around them, as the Rechabites were separated from Israel, among whom they did but tabernacle, or pitch their tents.

I do not, however, speak of the *histories* of these strangers as typical. I only point to the fact of their high exaltation in Israel as being a notice from God of His high, exalted purposes concerning the Church, the true stranger. The histories of some of them; may have been typical. But it is not the details of their histories that I have been looking at, but simply the fact of their exaltation in Israel.*

*I would not, however, refuse to observe how sweetly Ex. 2: 16-22 unfolds the Church, during the interval from Israel's rejection of Messiah to Messiah's final deliverance of Israel. Zipporah (to whom I have already alluded) becomes debtor for deliverance and life (of which water, or a well, is the constant emblem) to Moses, in the day of his exile from Israel; and by this he entitles himself to receive her

as his wife from the hand, and with the full approval, of her father. All this is beautifully significant of the mystery of Christ, and the Father, and the Church. And in further proof of this being a type, we may remember that Stephen speaks of the rejection of Joseph and of Moses by their brethren, as kindred with the rejection of Christ by the Jews. Joseph's and Moses' marriage with Gentiles clearly, therefore, set forth the Lord's union with the Church during His rejection and estrangement from Israel.

And I would just notice, that Jehovah's estimate of what a *stranger* was to expect, and the Holy Ghost's estimate, by Paul, of what a *saint* should expect, are the same. Deut. 10: 18; 1 Tim. 6: 8.

Thus two lines of personage end in Christ. The line of distinguished Israelites or Jewish worthies, who were called forth in the special energy of the Spirit for the help and guidance of Israel, ends, as I have already noticed, in Christ, as Israel's true Prophet and King, the God of Jeshurun, Who, in the latter day, is to be the Shield of their help, and the Sword of their excellency. The line of distinguished Gentile strangers, who sustained a character, and bore dignities and honours, far above the level or ordinary calling of Israel, ends in Christ as the Head of His body, the Church. And the coming kingdom will manifest Him, and those who are severally associated with Him, in these several glories. All things in heaven and on earth shall be then gathered in Him. The true strangers, or the saints, will shine in the heavens, "as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," and Israel will find their rest, their holy rest, on the earth, under David their Prince and Shepherd.

Now, all this leads me to our Gospel; for of Christ as the Son of God, the stranger upon earth, and of the saints who have association with Him in that character, and in relationship to the Father, the Gospel by John is the appropriated witness. Indeed, it is that which gives it its distinction, and makes it, I believe, a portion of the oracles of God most precious to us.

May we have understanding hearts, to understand the secrets disclosed in this heavenly Word! Could we but discern it, every line of it carries with it its own divine authority. But, beloved, the only safe and profitable knowledge is that which we get in communion with the Lord through the Spirit; and that which, when acquired, ministers to still more enlarged communion. May we prove this more and more!

I would now follow our Gospel in its order, observing briefly, and as I may have grace given me, upon it. It will be found naturally to distribute itself into four parts; at least as I have judged, and would now submit to the judgment of my brethren.

THE GOSPEL BY JOHN.

JOHN 1 - 4.

John 1: 1-18. — I read these verses as a kind of preface, serving to introduce this Gospel in its due character as the Gospel of the Son of God — the Son of the Father; and the Baptist's testimony is here summarily appended to this preface as serving the same end.

And here I remark, that the place which our blessed Lord *immediately* takes, on His appearing upon earth, is that which I have already observed belongs to Him as the Son of God, and to the Church with Him; that is, the place of *a stranger*. He is here shown to us at once in this character. He is as light in the midst of darkness; the Maker of the world, and yet not known of the world; coming to His own, and yet not received of His own; become flesh, and yet only tabernacling for a while among us. All this shows Him to be the Stranger here; it is thus that this Gospel introduces Him. And accordingly, at the beginning it assumes that His question with the world, and with His earthly people Israel, were both determined. vv. 11, 12. The Spirit of God in our evangelist at once shuts up the world under the condemnation of being "without God," and concludes Israel in unbelief; and, upon this, brings out an elect family, not registered in the earth, or born of flesh, but born of God, for whom "grace and truth," the fulness of the Father in the Son, were now provided.

The Book of Genesis opens with creation; but the Gospel by John opens with Him Who was before creation and above creation. It is to Him that we are immediately taken. Creation is passed by, and we get to "the Word," Who was with God, and Who was God.

This is the opening of our Gospel, defining it to be the Gospel of the Son of God, the Creator of all things, the Declarer of the Father, the Fountain and the Channel of grace and truth to sinners. And,

according to this, the glory which John tells us he had beheld is that "of the Only-Begotten of the Father," that is, a *personal* glory; while the glory which the other evangelists record as having been beheld, was the glory on the holy mount; that is, an official glory merely. And this again characteristically marks the end and bearing of this Gospel.

Very blessed, as well as very elevating and divine, are the thoughts suggested by these introductory verses. They tell us, beside what I have observed above, that the Light, the living Light, shined in darkness ere the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; yea, ere His harbinger, the Baptist, was sent forth by God. Just as in the old creation. Light was the first element under the forming power of God. It went before the sun. The sun was the creature of the *fourth* day, but light was the prime creature of the *first*. The first three days, therefore, walked in the light of light merely, without the presence of that which afterwards ruled the day. And so has it been, as these verses tell us, in the history of the living Light. Christ was the earliest thought from God that rose upon the moral darkness and chaos of apostate man. In the promise, "It shall bruise thy head," the living Light sprang forth! Days or dispensations succeeded. The first three days again, as it were, took their course. The ages of the patriarchs and of Moses spent themselves. But the light of life had gone abroad, though as yet the Word had not become flesh. The light shined before the sun was set in the heavens. And this is a happy thought. The Christ of God was the earliest revelation that arose upon the ruins and darkness of Adam; and though for a season that divine depository of all Light that great source of all vivifying beams, remained unmanifested, yet effulgences worth of Him, and which belonged to Him, came forth to cheer and guide preceding ages, the first, the second, and the third day.

But heat, as well as light, is ours, I might say. For this same wondrous scripture tells us that "the bosom of the Father" has been disclosed to us. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." There is nothing like that. The

deep, unspeakable, unfathomable love that dwells in that bosom is the love that has visited us, in the warmth of which we have been addressed. And how surpassing all knowledge is such a thought as that! Well may we ask to be strengthened with might by the Spirit to comprehend it. Eph. 3: 16-19. It is the heaven of the heart to be still and silent, and in simple faith to let such a revelation tell out its tale upon us.

John 1: 19-28. — These verses are also somewhat introductory; the action can scarcely be said to have commenced; for they give us, *by way of recital*, the Baptist's testimony to the Jews, before the Lord Jesus had been manifested to him as the Son of God. For so little had the Spirit of God in John to do with Jewish testimony, that all this is given here, as I have just observed, by way of recital, telling us what *had been* the Baptist's confession to the messengers of the Jews.

John 1: 29-42. — Here, however, the action fully opens. And this is with the Baptist's direct testimony to Jesus, after the manifestation of Him as Son of God. But having borne witness to Him, the Baptist appears as one who had consciously fulfilled his course. In the 35th verse he is as one who had retired from his ministry, and was simply enjoying that in which it had all resulted — the manifestation of the Lamb of God. He is heard uttering the hidden satisfaction of his soul when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" For he does not appear to have addressed these words to his disciples; but they, hearing him thus, in holy, happy contemplation of Jesus, follow Jesus. And, beloved, it is this which gets the same honour now. Our power in drawing others after the Lord mainly rests in our joy and communion with Him ourselves. John had done with himself, and was lost in thoughts of the Lamb of God; and his disciples seem to catch his mind, for they leave him, and follow Jesus.

This was real ministry, ministry in power over the affections of those who heard. As the apostle speaks in 1 Thess. 1: 5, 6.

But where, I ask, do John's disciples follow Jesus? We are not told. In all grace the Lord encouraged them to follow, and they came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day; but where it was we know not. They follow Him along some untold path, and were with *Himself*: but that is all we learn. For the Son of God was but a stranger on the earth; and they, if with Him, must be strangers too, without place or name here. And so is it here signified. This little gathering was to the Son of God, and to the Lamb of God; but it was not here — in principle, the *earth* did not own the place, for this was the first handful of wheat for the *heavenly* granary, the firstfruits of the heavenly family unto God and the Lamb.

The Baptist speaks of Jesus being really before him, though coming after him; and he repeats this as with some jealousy. vv. 15, 27, 30. And Paul, referring to John's ministry, alludes to this feature of it. Acts 19: 4. But this is very blessed; for in this the Holy Ghost, Who spake by John, honours Jesus as the great Subject of all the divine counsels, the great Ordinance of God, to Whom all other ordinances pointed. And therefore, though He came after them, He was before them; and John, as if speaking the mind of all ordinances and ministries, says, "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me." For it was the Son alone that had been set up from everlasting (Prov. 8: 23), the great first Object of all the divine counsels; and every prophet and ordinance was but His servant, for a testimony to Him.

And again I observe, that John and the Lord had no knowledge of each other till Jesus came forth in ministry. John had been brought up in Judea; our Lord in Galilee. But on the Lord's approaching John to be baptized, John at once acknowledged Him — acknowledged Him without any introduction. There seems to have been in his soul some consciousness that this was He. Matt. 3: 14. He had, indeed, acknowledged Him even before He was born. Luke 1: 44. The world knew Him not, but John knows Him, and thus condemns the world. But he does not know Him so as to bear witness to Him as the Son

of God, till the Spirit descends and abides on Him — for that, as John was admonished, was to be His divine attestation.

And further — I must observe that this Gospel, in full consistency with its general character, gives us, in these verses, what I may term the *personal* call of Andrew and Peter — while Matthew, not noticing this, gives us their *official* call. But this is in beautiful order with the mind of the Spirit in the two evangelists; with such thankfulness and delight should we mark the perfection of the divine testimonies. Matt. 4: 18-20.

John 1: 43-51. — In these verses we have the action of a subsequent period, called "The day following." This action is the ministry of Jesus Himself, and the fruit of that ministry in the persons of Philip and Nathanael.

This is a new thing. This was not a gathering to Him as "the Lamb of God," in a secret, unnamed place, as the former had been, but a gathering to Him as the One "of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write."* And, therefore, this is a sample, not as the former was, of the Church or heavenly family, but of the Israel of God that is to be saved in the latter day, and which will be known to Him in grace, in the midst of the nation, as Nathanael here is known to Him while under the fig-tree — the standing symbol of the Jewish nation. Matt. 21: 19. And they will make the same confession to Him as Nathanael makes. They will own Him and receive Him as the Son of God and the King of Israel. And when this comes to pass, all will be ready for the display of the glory, the distant glimpse of which the Lord here accordingly catches, and a sight of which, in due season, He promises to Nathanael, the representative, as we have seen, of His Israel.

*This is characteristic; that is all I mean. Of course, all who are gathered to Jesus, at whatever time, know Him as the Lamb of God.

All this is very significant, and will be found to be confirmed by the opening of the following chapter.

John 2: 1-12. — We have just had the Church and Israel severally manifested in the two gatherings to Christ in the previous chapter. Accordingly, we here get "the third day," or the marriage, the wine for which Jesus Himself provided.

Now these circumstances give notice of the mystic import of the scene. For "the third day" (which is the same as the resurrection-day), the marriage, and the wine of the Lord's own providing, are things which, in the thoughts of those who are familiar with Scripture, stand allied with *the kingdom*. And thus, I doubt not, this marriage sets forth the coming kingdom of the Lord, where He is to appear as both King and Bridegroom.

To this marriage in Cana the Lord had been bidden as a *Guest*; but at the close of it He becomes the *Host*, providing and dispensing the wine. So, by-and-by, when we have tasted of the inferior joy which our skill or diligence may have provided, He Himself will prepare the joy of the kingdom, and drink anew with us there of the fruit of the vine. And by this easy, gracious action, He transforms the mere marriage feast of Cana into a mystery, and makes it the occasion of manifesting His glory, setting forth in it that kingdom which Nathanael had owned in His person. He becomes Himself the Host or Bridegroom. The governor sends to the bridegroom who had bidden them; as though he were the one; but it was Jesus who provided the joy of the place, and who is still keeping "the good wine" for His people till the last — till all other joy is over. Jesus was the true Bridegroom. This was the feast where He turned the water into wine; as He will in the kingdom again pass by all our resources of joy, and give what eye hath not seen, nor the heart of man conceived.

And from this let me take occasion to say, that we should deeply cherish the assurance that joy is our portion, the ordained or necessary element in which our eternity is to move; for our hearts are wont "to entertain joy with suspicion." But we must deny that tendency, and urge and keep the heart in another direction. "Joy is

that which is *primary*; toil, danger, and sorrow are only *subservient*," as another has said. And this is a truth full of comfort. When the counsels of old were taken, and the order of creation planned, that was a scene and season of divine joy. The Lord delighted in Wisdom then, and Wisdom (or Christ) delighted in the sons of men, and in the habitable parts of the earth. Prov. 8. And this joy of God Himself was communicated. The angels felt and owned it. Job 38: 7. And, of course, creation, in that day of its birth, smiled also.

And the ruin of this system, through the apostasy of man, has not hindered joy, but only changed its character. Redemption becomes another source of gladness, enhanced and enlarged, and of deeper tone. The new creation will be the occasion of a far richer joy than the old had been. What meat has the eater yielded! What savoury meat, which the soul of Jesus Himself loveth! What sweetness out of the strong one even unto God! What springs have been opened in the barren sands of this ruined world for the refreshing even of heavenly regions!

All Scripture gives us this witness, and we need not further rehearse it. But upon the verses now before us I cannot refuse adding (so sweet are these notices of the saints' interest in these things), that it is *the servants*, and they only, who are thrown into connection with the Lord. They are in His secrets, while even the governor knows nothing about them. And the mother also (kindred with Him in the flesh) is thrown at a distance from Him. v. 4. It was *the servants* who were brought the nearest to Him in the whole scene. And so with us, beloved. Jesus, the Lord of glory, the Heir of all things, was a Servant here. He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and those who are humblest in service are still cast the nearest to Him. And in the day when He will provide the true wine of the kingdom, His servants that have served Him shall, as here, be dispensers of the joy under Him, and be distinguished as in the secret of His glory. "If any man *serve Me*, him will My Father *honour*."

John 2: 13-22. — After all this we see our Lord at Jerusalem, with authority cleansing the temple, and thus asserting the royal prerogatives of the Son of David. See Matt. 21: 12.

To this authority He is challenged for His title, and He simply pleads *His death and resurrection*.* "Destroy this temple," says He, "and in three days I will raise it up." And so it is. This is His title. His rights and honours as Creator of the world and Lord of Israel were, as we saw, denied Him. See John 1: 10, 11. His title to them was disallowed. And we know that He has acquired all power in heaven and on earth by another title — death and resurrection - which has displaced the usurper, and regained for man the forfeited inheritance. This gives Him sure, unquestionable right to every thing. The apostles constantly interpret the Lord's death and resurrection as establishing and sealing His titles to His many crowns and glories. The preaching of Peter in Acts 2 is a testimony to this. He tells the people of Israel that with wicked hands they had put Him to death, but that God had raised Him, and made Him both Lord and Christ. The teaching of Paul in Phil. 2, among other scriptures, tells us the same. And in this place, in answer to the challenge of the Jews, the blessed Jesus Himself pleads His death and resurrection as His title to His highest functions, and the exercise of royal and priestly authority. Because He humbled Himself, God has given Him a name which is above every name. The Son of David, according to Paul's Gospel, was raised from the dead. 2 Tim. 2: 8. The *crown* of Jesus rested on His *cross* in the sight of all the world, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Luke 23: 38. All the testimony thus publishes, as Jesus Himself pleads here, that His sufferings lead to His glories (1 Peter 1, 2), that death and resurrection constitute His title.

*In the Gospel by Matthew, when the Lord is challenged for His title to the same authority, He refers to the ministry of John the Baptist, and not, as here, to His death and resurrection. Matt. 21: 23-27. But this only preserves the characteristic difference of the two

Gospels; for John's ministry was the verifier of His authority to the Jews; death and resurrection verify it to every creature.

John 2: 23 - 3: 21. — Thus the joy of the kingdom was exhibited, the power of the kingdom exercised, and the Lord's title to the kingdom set forth and pleaded. Now, in due course, the title of others to enter into the same kingdom with Him becomes the question, and this question accordingly is here discussed. And deeply affecting to us all is this holy and solemn matter.

Man is a creature whom the Lord the Creator cannot trust. Adam's breach of allegiance in the garden made him such. Man did all he could to sell God's glory into the hand of another. The dispensation of the law has proved him to be still unworthy of the confidence of God, and this character is here stamped on him by the Lord Himself. "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men." He knew what was in man, and He could find nothing that He could trust. What a sentence! Nay, more than this. Man, as he is, can never be so improved as to be trusted again by God. Man's affections may be stirred, man's intelligence informed, man's conscience convicted; but still God cannot trust men. Thus we read, that "many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them." Man in this was putting forth his best; he was moved by the things which Jesus did; but still the Lord could not trust him. Hence, "Ye must be born again."

The necessity of being born again (or, from above), or, as it is commonly expressed, of regeneration, is well understood and most surely allowed among the saints. But is there not a more simple and distinct character in the new birth than is generally apprehended? I judge there is. For *the doctrine commonly raises in the mind a sense of something strange and indefinite*. But this need not be.

Nicodemus had come as a pupil to Jesus. "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God," he says; upon which the Lord tells him, at once, that he must be born again. But He does not end His words

with him till He directs him to the brazen serpent, teaching him that it is *there* he must go in order, as it were, to gather up the seed of this needed new life.

In what character, then, must he take his place there, and look at the Son of man lifted up on the cross? Simply *as a sinner*, a conscious sinner, carrying, like the bitten Israelite, the sentence of death in himself. Such a one Nicodemus had still to know himself to be, for as such a one he had not now come to Jesus; and therefore he must begin his journey afresh, he "must be born again," he must reach Jesus by a new path, and in a new character. He judged himself to be a pupil, and Jesus a Teacher come from God; but himself as a dead sinner, or as a man bitten by the old Serpent, and the Son of God as a quickening Spirit, a justifying Redeemer, he did not yet understand; and so the ground of his heart had never yet received the seed of life.

The *character* of this life, this eternal life, this divine nature in us, is thus as simply defined as its *necessity*: The secret of it lies in learning Jesus the Son of God *as a Saviour*, in coming to Him as a convicted sinner, looking at Him in that virtue which the brazen serpent carried for the bitten Israelite. And, as suggested by other parts of this Gospel, it is very sweet to trace the onward path of Nicodemus from this stage of it. He had, as we have seen, hitherto mistaken his road; but, though that may give him a longer journey, it proves, from the direction which Jesus here gives him, in the end a right and safe one. For, in the next stage of it, we see him standing for Jesus in the presence of the council, and meeting something of the reproach of the rejected Galilean. John 7. And, at the close, he stands where the Lord at this outset directed him, at the place of this brazen serpent. He looks at the Son of man uplifted on the cross. He goes to Jesus, not as a pupil to a teacher; but he goes to Him, and owns Him, and honours Him, no longer *by night*, nor in *the presence of the council* merely, but in *the broad daylight*, and in *the presence of the world*, as the smitten, bruised, and wounded Lamb of God. John 19.

Thus we discern *the character*, as simply as we learn *the need*, of this new life. We find out the seed that produces it. The divine power, the Holy Ghost, Who presides over all this in His own energy, works after a manner beyond our thoughts. Whether the wind or the Spirit, we know not the path thereof. But the nature of the seed He uses, and of the soil into which He casts it, are thus made known to us. The one is the word of salvation, the other the soul of a convicted sinner.

And this life which flows through the family of God is *spirit* — because Jesus, the Second Man, the Head of it, is "a quickening Spirit" — and "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," as our Lord here teaches. This is our new life. It is eternal, infallible life, standing, whether in the Head or members of the body where it moves, in victory over all the power of death. And our divine Teacher further says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." There is no entrance there for any but new-born ones, *and such new-born ones as we have seen, sinners justified or quickened by the word of salvation*. There are no righteous ones, no wise or rich ones, in that kingdom, none who stand in such like confidence in the flesh. This truth is thus established. Blessedly so, for our joy and stability of heart. For while this is very decisive, it is very comforting. It is very comforting to see that the word which says, Except ye be born again ye cannot see the kingdom, thereby clearly lets us know that if we be born again we shall see it — no fraud or force of men or devils shall prevail to keep us outside of it. If we will take (drawn doubtless by the drawing of the Father, in the secret power of the Holy Ghost) the place of convicted sinners, and receive the word of salvation from the Son of God - if we but look as bitten Israelites to the uplifted serpent — then the kingdom is already entered, life is now enjoyed, and glory shall be hereafter. The song that we then sing is but echoed through the eternity of heaven. The sight that we then get of Jesus and His salvation is but enlarged in the sphere of coming glory. We *have* eternal life, and the principles of heaven, in us.

But to return for another moment to Nicodemus. I may say that, when the Lord had thus disclosed the seed of this new life to him, He seeks to sow it in him, to sow it (where it ever must be sowed, if unto fruit) in *the conscience*: for Nicodemus had come to the Lord by night, as though his deeds could not bear the light; and the Lord aiming, as it would seem, to reach his conscience, just on their parting, says, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Thus our Lord teaches the need of the new birth through the word of salvation. Without it man cannot be trusted of God; and without it the kingdom of God could not, as our Lord here further teaches us, be either seen or entered. What association, for instance, had the elder brother with that which was the characteristic joy of the father's house? None! He never had so much as a kid to make merry with his friends: none but a returned prodigal could draw forth the ring, the best robe, and the fatted calf. And so the kingdom is such a kingdom as none but *redeemed sinners* can apprehend its joys, or have any place in it. All there are "new creatures," persons of an order not found in the first creation. Adam was made upright; but all in the kingdom are blood-bought sinners. Every thing in it is reconciled by blood — as it is written — "and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether things in earth, or things in heaven."

John 3: 22-36. — After the Lord had thus discussed with Nicodemus the question of man's entrance into the kingdom, He is seen for a little moment pursuing His ministry, as Minister of the circumcision in Judea. v. 22. But we see this only for a moment; for to detain such things before us would not have been within the general scope of this Gospel, which takes the Lord, as we have seen, out of Jewish connection. And in the next passage we may notice the same (vv. 23, 24); for the Baptist is seen in connection with Israel; but it is, in like manner, only for a passing moment; and in order, too, as it would seem, to give him occasion, under the Holy Ghost, to bear a

testimony to Jesus, not at all in His Jewish glory, but in higher honours and sweeter joys than Christ could have ever known as Son of David. See vv. 27-36.

I would, however, linger here a little; for this appears to me to be an occasion of great moral value. John is called into the same trial as Moses in Num. 11 and as Paul in 1 Cor. 3.

Joshua, who was Moses' minister, envied for his master's sake when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp. But Moses rebuked him, and that too, not with a word only, but also by an act — for he goes at once into the camp, evidently for the purpose of enjoying and profiting by the gift and ministrations of those two, on whom the Spirit had just fallen.

This was a noble way in this dear man of God. No grudging or jealousy soiled the fair form of his heart, or disturbed the even flow of his soul; but, endowed vessel as he was, rich and large in the gifts of the Spirit himself, he would still receive through any other vessel, though of smaller quantity, and receive with thankfulness and readiness of heart.

Paul, in his day, was summoned to a like trial. In the midst of the saints at Corinth rivalries had risen. One was saying, "I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos." And how does Paul meet this? Does he triumph in this day of the tempter, as Moses had triumphed? Yes, only with a different weapon. With strong hand and fervent heart he breaks every vessel to pieces, that He who fills all vessels, and He only, might have all the praise. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" says he — "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." This was victory in a like evil hour, but only in a different form, or with another weapon.

But how are we to contemplate John? On this occasion he meets the same way of the tempter. His disciples are envious of Jesus, for his sake. But, like Moses and Paul, he stands in the evil day, though in a

somewhat different attitude. He cannot, with Paul, break to pieces his companion-vessel. He cannot say, "Who then is John, and Who is Jesus?" — as Paul says, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" He could not deal with the name of Jesus as Paul deals with the name of Apollos. but he breaks one of these rival vessels, that is, himself, to pieces, under the eyes of his fond disciples, and glorifies Jesus, Whom they were envying for his sake, with glories beyond all their thought, and such as no other vessel could hold.

How perfect was all this! How beautiful a witness is all this method of John, in handling such an occasion, to the guiding and keeping of the Spirit of wisdom! Jesus, it is true, was, in one sense, a Vessel of God's house, like prophets and apostles. He was a Minister of the circumcision. Like John, He preached the coming of the kingdom He piped, and John lamented. God spake by Him, as by any prophet. And thus He was, most surely, a Vessel in God's house, as others. But He was of a peculiar order. The material and the moulding of that Vessel were peculiar. And if occasion bring Him into question with any other vessel, as in this place of our Gospel, the peculiar honour which attaches to Him must be made known. John delights to be the instrument for this. He delights, as under the Holy Ghost, and as in full concord with the mind of God, to bring out the budding rod of the true Aaron, blooming with its fruit and flowers, and to expose every rival rod in its native dead and withered state, that the murmurings of Israel, the fond and partial thoughts of even his own disciples, may be silenced for ever. Num. 17. He acknowledges that all his joy was fulfilled in that which was thus provoking the displeasure of his disciples. He was but the Bridegroom's friend. He had waited for such a day as this. His course was now therefore run, and he was willing to retire, and be forgotten. Like his fellow-servants the prophets, he had held up a light to guide his generation to Christ, to lead the Bride to the Bridegroom; and now, he had only to retire. He stands here, as at the end of the line of prophets; and, in his own name and theirs, leaves all in the hand of the Son. And when he takes up this theme (the glories of Him Who was greater than he), how gladly does he go on

with it. The Spirit leads him from one ray of this glory to another; and blessed it is when Jesus is the theme that thus awakens all our intelligence and desire. Blessed, when we can, each of us, be thus willingly nothing, that He alone may fill all things.

Be it so with Thy saints, Lord, through Thy heavenly grace, more and more!

John 4. — Thus John is gone, and with him every thing but the ministry of the Son. All now lies in His hand alone; and, accordingly, He goes forth simply as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He appears before us here (4: 1) as One that was rejected of Israel, and is now leaving Judea, the place of righteousness, simply as the Saviour of sinners. And, going forth in this character, He must needs go through an unclean place, and find His journeying among us to cost Him bitter pain and weariness; the sample of which we get here.

It was quite in consistent righteousness that the Jews refused all commerce with the Samaritans. It was according to their calling to say, "It is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation;" for this was a testimony against evil; and such testimony was the very trust which Jehovah had committed to Israel. They were to be God's witnesses against the world; they were the clean separated from the unclean, for a testimony to the righteousness of God against a corrupted earth. But Jesus was now standing aloof from Israel. He had left Judea, the place of righteousness, and was standing in defiled Samaria as Son of God, the Saviour of sinners. He had already gone to Judea looking for righteousness, the proper fruit of that country, but had not found it. He is not now to look for it in Samaria. Here He must be in another way altogether, in the way of grace only; and in the consciousness that He was so, that He was here only in grace, as the Saviour of sinners, He addresses Himself to a woman who had come to draw water at the well of Sychar.

There had been from the beginning a secret with God, beyond and behind all the revealed requisitions and order of righteousness which had been established in Judea. There were "grace" and "the gift by grace." The Jew might have committed to him a testimony to righteousness *against* the world, but the Son was the Gift of God *to* the world, entrusted with life for it. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." and in the blessed consciousness that He carried with Him this secret of grace for sinners, He says to the woman, "Give Me to drink." She wonders, as well she might, that He did not keep His distance as a Jew. But she did not yet know that the secret of God was with Him. This, however, was soon to be disclosed. The glory that excelleth was about to fill this unclean place. The Lord God is now taking, His stand, not on the burning mount in righteousness but at the head of the river of life, as its Lord, ready to dispense its waters.

What blessing is thus in preparation for this poor outcast! None other than an outcast could know it. But such must also know that the source of this blessing is not in themselves. And this the Samaritan learns. She is made to know herself, to look well around on all things that ever she did, and to see that it left her only a wilderness and land of darkness. Her conscience is dismayed. "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband." But wilderness and land of darkness as it was, the Son of God was there with her. This was blessing, such blessing as an outcast in a wilderness could know. It was to outcast Jacob, who had only the stones of the place for his pillow, that heaven was opened, and God in fullest grace and glory was revealed. So here, with this daughter of Jacob. The Lord was again opening the rock in the desert. The ark of God was now again planted with the camp in the midst of the wilderness. The unclean Samaritan is spoken to, by the Lord, of the well of life; and this was joy and the power of love to her. It separates her from her pitcher, and fills her spirit and her lips with a testimony to His name.

Beloved, this is divine! A poor Samaritan, whom righteousness had bidden to stand by in an unclean place, is made the pattern of the

workmanship of Jesus, and taken into the secrets and intimacies of the Son of God! It is her very place and character of *sinner* which throws her in His way. It is only the *sinner* that lies in the Saviour's path. And, brethren, whatever of sorrow or of trial the entrance of sin may have caused us, or may have still to cause us, yet without it we could not have had our God, as we now have Him, opening His own treasure-house of love, and from thence giving us forth the Son.

The disciples, on their return, wonder, like the woman, that Jesus had not kept His Jewish distance. But still they are conscious of the presence of a glory that was above them; for "no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest Thou with her?" They did not as yet know the secret which the Son of God carried; and He then shows them, as white already for harvest, fields which their faith had never surveyed. They knew of no fields but such as, of old, had been parted among the Tribes. In their esteem God's husbandry must be confined to that sacred enclosure; and Samaria, they judged, was now outside that, and but an unclean place. But there was, as we have already seen, a secret with God. It was the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, who had now gone forth with seed, and His toil had prepared a harvest for the reapers, in the defiled plains of Samaria.* He shows His disciples a company just coming out of Sychar, who were soon to say, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." And thus were they ready for the sickle. The harvest in Judea was *plenteous* (Matt. 9: 37); but in Samaria it was *ripe* for *the reapers*. The Lord had borne the toil of the sower; had talked, weary and faint, with the woman; but He would now share with His disciples the joy of the harvest; and, in pledge of this, He abides for two days with this little gathering out of Sychar, believed on and owned as the Saviour of the world.

*I would observe, that, in our Lord's considering the question of "worship," to which the woman drew Him off, He still speaks in His character as Son. The woman addresses Him as a Jew, but He does not answer her as a Jew. He rather shows that all Jewish worship was now ending; and in the consciousness that the Son had now

come, He teaches her that the hour was come when all accepted worship must be in the spirit of adoption, that it was *the Father* Who was now claiming worship. His whole reply expresses the consciousness of this, that He was addressing the woman, not as the Son of David Who had come to purify the temple, and bring back the revolted Samaritans from "this mountain," but as the Son Who was come to give sinners access by one Spirit unto the Father.

The nearness to Himself to which the Lord invites the soul, the intimacy with which He seeks to invest the heart of a believing sinner, it is most blessed to know. He does not deal with us *in the style of a patron or benefactor*. The world is full of that principle. "They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors." Luke 22: 25. Man will be ready enough to confer benefits in the character of a patron, occupying all the while the distant place of both conscious and confessed superiority. But this is not Jesus. He can say, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." He brings His dependent one very near to Him. He lets him know and feel that He is dealing with him as a kinsman rather than as a patron. But that makes all the difference. I am bold to say that heaven depends on this difference. The expected heaven of the soul, and which in spirit it tastes now, depends on the Lord Jesus not acting with us on the principle of a patron. Heaven would then be only a well-ordered world of human principles and benevolences. And what a thing that would be! Is it the condescendings of a great one that we see in Christ? "I am among you as he that serveth," says He. Every case, I may say, tells me so. His was never the style of a mere benefactor; never the distance and elevation of a patron. He bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows.

Just look at Him at this well, with this Samaritan. She had, at that moment, the most exalted thoughts of Him. "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things." This was her high and just sense of the Messiah, not knowing that He to Whom she was then speaking face to face could say immediately in answer to her, "I that speak unto thee am He."

But where was He, the exalted Christ, all this time? Talking with her, as they had met together, by the side of a well, where (in order to give her ease in His presence) He had said to her, "Give Me to drink."

Was this patronage after the manner of men? Was this the distance and condescension of a superior? Was this heaven or the world, man or God? Condescension or the world will confer what favour you please, but will have the elevation of a superior and the reserve of a dependent kept and honoured. But heaven or love acts not thus. Blessed, blessed be God! Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, was *Kinsman* to those whom He befriended. And as a kinsman He acted, not as a patron. He seeks to bring us near, to invest our hearts with ease and confidence. He visits us. Nay, He comes to us upon our invitation — as He went and dwelt two days with the Samaritans who came out and sought His company on the report of the woman. He requires a favour at our hand, that we may take a favour from His without reserve. He will drink out of our pitcher, to encourage us to drink of His fountains; and eat of our calf at the tent door while revealing eternal secrets to us. Gen. 18; John 4.

Surely our hearts may rejoice over this. The heart of the Lord rejoices in this His own way of love. For these two days at Sychar were to Him a little of the joy of harvest. They were some of the most refreshing which the wearied Son of God ever tasted on this earth of ours. For He found here some of the brightest faith He ever met with; and it was only the faith of sinners that could ever have refreshed Him here. Nothing in man could ever have done this — nothing but that faith which takes man out of himself.

But this joy was only for two days. He is quickly called down to a lower region; for after these two days He goes on to Galilee, thus getting into Jewish connection again; but He goes with this sad foreboding, "A prophet hath no honour in his own country." And with increased trial of heart must He feel this now, from the liberty which He had just been knowing among the sinners in Samaria. And

His foreboding was found to be true. He finds faith in Galilee, it is true, but faith of an inferior order. The Galileans receive Him, but it is because they had "seen all things that He did at Jerusalem." The nobleman and his house believed, but not until they had carefully verified Him by their own witnesses. The gathering at Sychar had believed Himself, the Galileans now believe Him for His works' sake (see John 14: 11); the Samaritans knew Him as in Himself, the Jews were now, as it were, asking a sign again. The one accordingly, came into communion with the Son of God, the other receive health from the Physician of Israel. Defiled Samaria is, in blessing, before righteous Judah.

Here the first section of our Gospel closes. It has led us in the paths of the Son of God, the Son of the Father, through this evil world of ours. At the opening of it we saw His glory, and found that, the moment it shone out upon the world, it proved the darkness of the world. It met no answer from man. The world that was made by Him knew Him not. But He carried with Him a secret, the secret of the grace of God to sinners, deeper than all the thoughts of men. A Stranger He was on the earth; but the revealing of His secret to sinners had virtue to make them strangers with Him.

John 5 - 12.

HAVING followed our Lord through chapters 1 - 4 of this Gospel, I desire now, in God's grace, to track His further way; and may He, through the Spirit, make this work the occasion of holy and thankful delight!

In chapters 5 - 12 we see our Lord in intercourse with the Jews. But to exhibit His public life and ministry is not the purpose of the Spirit in this Gospel. He is not seen here, as in the other Gospels, going about the cities and villages of Israel preaching the kingdom, if haply they would repent; but the departure from God of that world through which He was passing seems to be ever on His mind; and *only at times* is He seen coming forth to act in power or in grace on all around Him, as the Son of God, the Stranger from heaven, the Saviour of sinners.

And so towards His disciples. They are not the companions of His ministry in this Gospel, as they are in the others. He does not appoint the twelve, and then the seventy - but ministry is left in His own hand. The apostles are seen but little with Him till John 13, when His public ministry has closed. And when they are with Him, it is with some reserve. See John 4: 32; John 6: 5; John 11: 9.

But, on the other hand, in no Gospel is He seen so near the sinner. He is *alone* with the Samaritan, *alone* with the adulteress, *alone* with the outcast beggar. And this gives its highest interest to this precious portion of the Word of God. The joy and security of being alone with the Son of God, as is here exhibited, is beyond every thing to the soul. The sinner thus learns his title to the Saviour, and discovers the blessed truth, that they are suited to one another. The moment we learn that we are sinners, we may look in the face of the Son of God, and claim Him as our own. And what a moment in the very days of heaven that is! He came to seek and to save sinners; and He walked as a solitary man on the earth, save when He met a poor sinner. Such alone had title, or even power, to interrupt the solitude

of this heavenly Stranger. The world knew Him not. His paths were lonely among us, save when He and the sinner found their way to each other. The leper outside the camp met Him, but none else.

And let me say, this being alone with Jesus is the sinner's first position. It is the beginning of his joy; and no one has a right to meddle with it. That which has called itself the Church, in every age of Christendom, has sought to break in upon the privacy of the Saviour and the sinner, and to make itself a party in the settlement of the question that there is between them. But in this it has been an intruder. *Sin casts us upon God alone.*

And indeed, beloved, in the variety of judgment nowadays, it is needful to our peace to know this. Others may require of us to join them in particular lines of service, or in particular forms and order of worship; and may count us disobedient if we do not. But however we may listen to them in those things, we dare not give up, in fear of them, God's prerogative to deal with us *as sinners* Himself alone. We must not surrender to any the right of God to talk with us *alone* about our sins. Nor should our anxiety on a thousand questions which may arise, righteous as that anxiety may be, be allowed to lead us for a moment to forget that, as sinners, we have been already alone with Jesus; and that He has, once and for ever, in the riches of His grace, pardoned and accepted us.

This solitude of Christ and the sinner our Gospel most comfortingly presents to us. But as to all others Jesus is here only at a distance, and with reserve. And so as to *places* as well as *persons*. The Son of God had nothing to do *especially* with any place; the wide wilderness of the world, where sinners were to be found, was the only scene for Him.

But I will continue now to follow the chapters in order.

John 5. — I have already shown, from various instances, that there was, through all the stages of the history of Israel, the occasional putting forth of a special energy of the Spirit, by which, and not by

the resources of their own system, the Lord was sustaining Israel, and teaching them to know where their final hope lay. From the call of Abraham to the throne of David we saw this.

Now I judge that *Bethesda* was a witness of the same thing. Bethesda was not that which the system itself provided. It was opened in Jerusalem, as a fountain of healing, by the sovereign grace of Jehovah (as, indeed, its name imports). Neither was it an abiding, but only an occasional, relief, as the judges and prophets had been. Like them it was a testimony to the grace and power which were in God Himself for Israel, and it had, perhaps, yielded this its testimony at certain seasons all through the dark age which had passed since the days of the last of their prophets. But it must now be set aside. Its waters are to be no more troubled. He to Whom all these witnesses of grace pointed had appeared. As the true fountain of health, the Son of God had now come to the daughter of Zion, and was showing Himself to her.

It was a feast time, we are told. v. 1. All was going on at Jerusalem as though all were right before God. The feasts were duly observed; the time was one of exact religious services. But Bethesda alone might have told the daughter of Zion that she needed a physician, and was not in that rest which faithfulness to Jehovah would have preserved to her. And the Lord would now tell her the same truth. He heals the impotent man, thus taking the place of Bethesda; but He does so in a way that tells Israel of their loss of the Sabbath — the loss of their own proper glory. "The same day was the Sabbath."

The nation is at once sensitive of this. It touched the place of their pride; for the Sabbath was the sign of all their national distinction; and they resent it — they "sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath-day."

But I must tarry a little longer here.

Jesus beside the Pool of Bethesda, as we see Him in this chapter, is a sight which, in the spirit of Moses at the bush, we may well turn

aside to see. If, of old, He had been reflected in that water, now He stands there to dry it up. He stands there as a new thing, in strong contrast with the pool. "Wilt thou be made whole?" was the word He addressed to the poor cripple that was lying there. Was he ready to put himself, just as he was, into His hand? Was he willing to be His debtor? Could he trust himself, in all his need and impotency, alone with Jesus? This was all. And surely this was in contrast with the weighty, cumbrous machinery of Bethesda. No rivalry need be feared, no help need be looked for, no delay need be endured, nor uncertainty felt. Those who might have struggled with this cripple to get down into the pool before him, or those who might, in pity, have been drawn to help him down before others, he may now alike overlook; and delay and hope may now be exchanged for a present and a full deliverance. Angels and the pool, helpers and rivals, delay and uncertainty, were now all blessedly and gloriously disposed of by Jesus in his behalf. When Jesus appeared, when the Son of God stood beside this pool, the only question was, Would the poor cripple be His debtor — stand by and see His salvation?

The poverty of the pool is exposed. It is seen to be nothing but a "beggary element." It has no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. And after this same manner the Spirit, by the apostle, exposes "the worldly sanctuary," and all its provisions and services, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. As I may say, Jesus is there standing again beside Bethesda. He is brought forth by the Holy Ghost in contrast with all that system of ordinances and observances which had gone before, and He exposes them all in their impotency and poverty. There had been, indeed, a reflection of Christ in those ceremonies of the old tabernacle, as there had been in this water by the sheep-market; but it disappears now, when the Light itself fills the place.

But, as we tarry a little longer at this pool, what are we to say, when we see, not only this cripple, but "a great multitude of impotent folk" lingering round that uncertain, disappointing water, though the Son of God was abroad in the land, carrying in Him and with Him

healing and deliverance without doubt or delay, and in defiance of all rivalry, and independent of all help! Surely this reads us a lesson. The pool thickly frequented, Jesus passing by unheeded! The pool sought unto, while Jesus has to seek, and to propose Himself! What a witness of man's religion! Ordinances, with all their cumbrous machinery, still waited on; the grace of God that brings salvation slighted!

We might marvel, did we not know, as from ourselves, some of the workings of this ruined nature of ours.

But further still. In the other Gospels, when the Lord is challenged for doing His works on the Sabbath-day, He answers as from the case of David eating the showbread, from the priests doing work in the temple, or from the fact that they themselves, His accusers, would lead out their ass to the watering on the Sabbath-day. But here, in John's Gospel, it is not what David, or the priests, or His accusers themselves would do, or had done, that He pleads, but what the heavenly Father had ever been doing in this needy, ruined world. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," the Lord here says to those who were challenging this act of His at Bethesda, because it was the Sabbath.

Wondrous sentence! and how fully in character with His way all through John. He does not here, as in the other Gospels on the like occasion, put Himself in company with David, with the priests, or with His neighbours, but with God! "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

This is full of consistent character with all that we get in this Gospel. And surely it is full, also, of that which may draw forth the joyful praise of those who know Him. With the Jews, however, it was otherwise. These words again told them of their loss of the Sabbath in which they boasted; yea, that they had long lost it, lost it from the beginning; for, in every stage of their history, God had been working *in grace* among them, working as His Father, of which this Bethesda was the sign; and that He Himself had now come, just in the same

way, to work in *grace* among them, of which this poor restored cripple was the sign. This was the voice of these words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" referring to the act of grace all through Israel's history, which I have noticed. but on this the Jews resent Him the more; and, not being in the secret of His glory, they charge Him with blasphemy, for calling God His Father.

To this He again; answers (still, as before, speaking of Himself as Son, but taking a place of subjection also), "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself."*

*Without the knowledge of the divine dignity of His person we cannot discover the place which the Lord here takes to be the place of *willing subjection*, as it was. For it would not have been such in any mere creature, however exalted, to have said, "I can of mine own self do nothing." But this in the Son was subjection.

But all this is most blessed. One who came into this world on behalf of God and His honour, could take no other place. It was the only place of righteousness here. "He that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Man had, through pride, dishonoured God. Man did an affront to the majesty of God when he listened to the words, "Ye shall be as God." And the Son, who came to honour God, must humble Himself. Though in the form of God, He must empty Himself here. God's praise, in a world that had departed from Him in pride, must have this sacrifice. And this sacrifice the Son offered. But this did not suit man; this was not according to man; and man could not receive or sanction such a one. "I am come in *My Father's name*, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in *his own name*, him ye will receive."

This is a deep and holy matter, beloved. By His humiliation and subjection the Son was at once honouring God, and testing man; giving the "only Potentate" His rights in this world, but thus becoming Himself a sign for the making manifest of the thoughts of the heart. And the Jew, the favoured Jew, was found in the common atheism of man; for to disclose this hidden spring of unbelief *in*

Israel our Lord's discourse in this chapter was tending It was not for want of light and testimony. They had the works of Christ, the Father's voice, their own Scriptures, and the testimony of John. But withal, they had the love of the world in them, and not the love of God; and were thus unprepared for the Son of God. v. 42.

"How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" v. 44. Surely this has a voice for our ears, beloved! Does it not tell us that the heart and its hidden motions have to be watched? "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of *it* are the issues of life." There may be strong and dangerous currents running under the surface. Job was a godly man. There were none like him in his generation. But in his soul there was flowing a rapid current. He valued his character and his circumstances. Not that he was, in the common way, either self-righteous or worldly. He was truly a believer, and a generous friend and benefactor. But he valued his circumstances in life, and his estimation among men. In the hidden exercises of his heart, he was wont to survey his goodly condition with complacency. Job 29. That was a strong undercurrent. His neighbours had not traced the course of that stream; but his heavenly Father had; and because He loved him, and would have him partaker of His holiness, with which all this was inconsistent, He put him into His own school to exercise him.

What a gracious warning does this afford us, to keep the ebbings and flowings of the heart under watch. "What are we thinking of?" we may ask ourselves again and again through the day. Whereon are we spending our diligence? What are the secret calculations of our minds in moments of relaxation? Is it the spirit or the flesh that is providing food for us? Do our affections which stir within savour of heaven. or of hell?

These are healthful inquiries for us, and are suggested by the strong moral thought of the Lord here, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another?"

How could man, apostate in pride, brook the lowly, Son of man, the emptied Son of God? This was the source where their unbelief took its rise. There was no association between them and the One who stood for God's honour before men. His form of humiliation was now disallowed, as His work and grace at Bethesda had before been refused. His brethren should have understood how that God by His hand would deliver them; but they understood not; they believed not Moses, and were thus, in principle, still in Egypt, still in the flesh, still unredeemed. Had they believed Moses they would have believed Christ, and been led out by Him, as at this time, from under the hand of Pharaoh, the power of the flesh and the world. But under all that, through unbelief, this chapter finds them. and leaves them.

John 6. — A new scene opens here. It was the passover: but God's mercy, which that season celebrated, Israel had slighted. They had still to learn the lesson of Egypt and the wilderness; and in patient love, after so many provocations, the Lord would even now teach them.

Accordingly, He feeds the multitude in a desert place; thus showing the grace and power of Him who, for forty years, had fed their fathers in another desert. The disciples, like Moses, wonder through unbelief, and say, as it were, "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them?" But His hand is not shortened. He feeds them; and this awakens zeal in the multitude, and they would fain come, and by force make Him a king. But the Lord would not take the kingdom from zeal like this. This could not be the source of the kingdom of the Son of man. The beasts may take their kingdoms from the winds striving upon the great sea, but Jesus cannot. Dan. 7. This was not His mother crowning Him in the day of His espousals. Cant. 3. This was not, in His ear, the shouting of the people bringing in the head-stone of the corner; nor the symptom of His people made willing in the day of His power. This would have been an appointment to the throne of Israel on scarcely better principles than those on which Saul had been appointed of old. His kingdom would have been the fruit of a heated desire of the people, as Saul's had

been the fruit of their revolted heart. But this could not be. And beside this, ere the Lord could take His seat on Mount Zion, He must ascend the solitary mount; and ere the people could enter the kingdom, they must go down to the stormy sea. And these things we see reflected here, as in a glass. The Lord is seen on high for awhile, and they are enduring the buffets of the winds and the waves; but in due season He descends from His elevation, makes the storm a calm, and brings them to their desired haven. And so it will be by-and-by. He will come down in the power of the heaven to which He has now ascended, for the deliverance of His afflicted ones; then shall they see His wonders, as in the deep, and praise Him for His goodness, for the works that He doeth for the children of men. Ps. 107: 23-32.*

*In the corresponding places in Matthew and Mark we read that the Lord goes to the mountain to pray. But that is not noticed here. Indeed, the Lord is not shown by John in prayer (save in John 17; and that is rather intercession); and all this is still in the full character of our Gospel.

The Lord, therefore, has only to retire from all this popular awakening in His favour. How must the mind of the heavenly Stranger have felt entire dissociation from it all! He retires from it; and, on the following day, enters on other work altogether. He opens the mystery of the true Passover, and the manna of the wilderness, which they had still to learn. They had still to learn the virtue of the Cross, the true Passover which delivers from Egypt, from the bondage of the flesh, from the judgment of the law; enabling the sinner to say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." The wages of sin is death; and sin in the Cross had its wages. Death had its sway; and the law can return to the throne of God with its own vindication; for it has executed its commission: Christ has died, and died for us. This is the true Passover — the power of redemption; in the grace of which we leave Egypt, or the place of bondage, and come forth with the Son of God into the wilderness, there to feed on manna, there to live by every word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God.

And though thus in some sense distinct, the Lord in this discourse seems to combine the mysteries of the passover and the manna. It was in the time of the passover that He thus preached to them on the manna. For both pertained to the same Israel, the same life. The blood of the paschal lamb was upon the lintel for redemption, while the lamb was fed upon within the house. The Israelite was in *living* communion with that which gave him *security*. And this was the beginning of life to him; in the strength of which he came forth to feed on the manna in the wilderness.

But Israel, as we here find, had not as yet so come forth out of the bondage of Egypt into God's pastures in the wilderness. They prove that as yet they knew not this life; that as yet they had never really kept the passover, nor fed on the manna. They murmured at Him. Their thoughts were too full of Moses. "He gave them bread from heaven to eat," said they. But, ere they could indeed eat of the manna, they must fall into the paths of love, into thoughts of the Father, and not of Moses. For it is love that leads us to the Cross. Moses never gave that bread. The law never spread the feast. It is love that does that; and love must be apprehended, as we sit at it. And this is the reason why so few guests are there; for man has hard thoughts of God, and proud thoughts of himself. But, to keep the feast, we must have happy thoughts of God, and humble, self-renouncing thoughts of ourselves. Communion with the Father and with the Son, on the ground of salvation, communion with God in love, is life.

But Israel was not in this communion. They *go back*, they thrust Him from them, and in their hearts turn back again into Egypt: their carcasses fall in the wilderness, and a remnant only feed on "the words of eternal life," and live — a remnant who look round on all as a barren waste yielding no bread without Him, as "a dry and thirsty land" from one end to the other, save for the Rock that follows them; and they say, "To whom shall we go?"

And whence this remnant? "According to the election of grace," as the Lord here further teaches, showing us the acts of *the Father* in the mystery of our life, that it is He Who gives to the Son, and draws to the Son, all who come to Him; that His teachings and drawings are the hidden channels through which this life is reaching us. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the faith and utterance of that elect remnant, who, coming out of Egypt, live by faith on the Son of God; but only in the Son of God as *crucified*. For our life lies in His death, and through the faith which feeds on that death. No acceptance of Christ but as *crucified* avails for life. It is not His virtues, His instructions, His example, or the like, but His death (His flesh and blood), that must be fed upon. His death accomplished, singly and alone, what all together and beside never did and never could. The blessed Lord died; gave up the ghost, or surrendered the life which He had, and which none had title to take from Him. But, the moment that was done, results broke forth which all His previous life had never produced. It was then, but not till then, that the veil of the temple was rent, the rocks were riven, the graves opened. Heaven, earth, and hell felt a power they had never owned before. The life of Jesus, His charities to man, His subjection to God, the savour of His spotless human nature, the holiness of that which had been born of the Virgin, none of these, nor all of them together, nor every thing in Him and about Him, by Him or through Him, short of the surrender of life, would ever have rent the veil or broken up the graves. God would still have been at a distance, hell been still unconquered, and he that has the power of death still undestroyed. The blood of Christ has done what all beside never did, and never could do. And over Him thus preached and set forth it is still to be said, "He that hath the Son hath life."

This leads me to pause for a little over a subject connected with our life of which this chapter speaks. Under the law all slain beasts were to be brought to the door of the tabernacle, and their blood offered upon the altar, and by no means to be eaten. Lev. 17. This was a

confession that the life had reverted to God, and was not in man's power. To eat blood under the law would have been an attempt to regain life in our own strength — an attempt by man to reach that which he had forfeited. But now, under the Gospel, the ordinance is changed. Blood must be eaten — "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." For the life that had reverted to God, God has given to make atonement. The blood of the New Testament has been shed for the remission of sins, and life, through that blood, is now given to sinners in the Son of God. "In Him was life." He came from God with the life for us. "He that hath the Son hath life." And we are commanded, as well as besought, to take life from Him. And, truly we may say, our God has thus perfected our comfort and our assurance before Him, making it to be as simple disobedience in us not to take life from Him as His gift, as it would be simple pride and arrogance of heart to assume to take it by our own works. What a pleading of love is this with our souls! We are disobedient if we are not saved! Death is God's enemy as well as and if we do not take life from the Son we join the enemy of God. "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life," says the aggrieved Son of God. And when asked by certain persons in this very chapter, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" He has but to reply, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." To believe, and take life as the gift of God through His Son, is the only act of obedience that the blessed God claims from a sinner — the only thing that a sinner, till he is reconciled, can do to please Him.

This is grace wondrously and blessedly revealed. This ordinance, that forbade the eating of blood, was as the flaming sword of the cherubim in the garden. Both that sword and this ordinance told the sinner that there was no recovery of forfeited life by any effort of his own. And Adam's faith most sweetly displays itself here. He did not seek to put back that sword, as though he could regain the tree of life himself. But what did he? He took life from God, through grace, and the gift by grace. He believed the promise about the woman's Seed; and in that faith, called the woman "the mother of all *living*." He

took life as the gift of God through Christ, and sought it not by works of the law, or in the face of the flaming sword.

All this mystery in the sinner's life was thus illustrated from the very beginning, even in the faith of Adam; and is blessedly unfolded in our Lord's discourse to the people in this chapter. That life begins in the power of redemption by the paschal lamb slain in Egypt, and by the manna of the wilderness. But our chapter shows us that Israel was still a stranger to it; that they had not learnt the lesson of Egypt and the wilderness, in the knowledge of the redemption and life that are in Christ Jesus.

John 7. — A new scene again opens here, It was the time of the feast of tabernacles; as the preceding scene had been laid in the time of the passover.

This was the most joyous season in the Jewish year. It was the great annual festival at Jerusalem; the grand commemoration of Israel's past sojourn in the wilderness, and of their present rest in Canaan; the type also of Messiah's coming glory and joy as King of Israel. His brethren urge the Lord to take advantage of this season; to leave Galilee and go up to Jerusalem, there to exhibit His power, and get Himself a name in the world. But they did not understand Him. They were of the world; He was not of the world. The Son of God was a Stranger here; but they were at home. *They* might go up and meet the world at the feast, but *He* witnessed for God against the world. He, to Whom the feast bore witness, could not go up and claim His own there, because the world was there, because the god of this world had usurped and was corrupting the scene of His glory and joy.

But how fallen was Israel when this was so! And what was their boasted festival, when the Spring of its joy and the Heir of its glory must thus stand estranged from it!

The gold had become dim. The ways to Zion were still solitary; none were *really* coming to the solemn feasts. In spirit the prophet

was still weeping. Lam. 1: 4. The Lord goes up, it is true, but not in His glory. He does not go as His brethren would have had Him; but in obedience merely, to take the place of the *humbled* and not of the *great* one of the earth. And, when arrived at the city of solemnities, we see Him only in the same character, for He goes to the temple and teaches; but when this attracts notice, He hides Himself, saying, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." He hides Himself, that not He, but the Father Who had sent Him, might be seen. As the One Who had emptied Himself, and taken the form of a servant, He is willing to be nothing. Those who were at the feast manifested their utter apostasy from the principle of the feast, saying, "How knoweth this man letters, *having never learned?*" In their pride they acknowledged no source of knowledge or wisdom above man. They would have the creature in honour; but the feast celebrated Jehovah, and was for the setting forth of the honours of Him Who now in righteousness had to hide His glory, and separate Himself from it all. Israel and the feast, Israel and the Son of God, were utterly dissociated. They had nothing in each other. And thus, whether we listen to the Jews, or to the men of Jerusalem, or to the Pharisees, in this chapter, all tell us of their rejection of Him; and He has in the end to say to them, "Where I am, thither ye cannot come."

Jesus thus refuses to sanction the feast. He tells Israel that they had now no title to the rest and glory which it pledged to them — that they were not really in Canaan, and had never yet drawn water out of the wells of salvation; that their land, instead of being watered by the river of God, was but a barren and thirsty portion of the accursed earth; that they had forsaken the fountain of living waters, and all their own cisterns were but broken. And, accordingly, as the feast was closing, Jesus puts the living water into other vessels, and dries up the wells which were in Jerusalem. He turns the fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, and opens the river of God in other places. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

And in connection with this, I would shortly trace the river of God" through Scripture; and we shall see it flowing in different channels according to different dispensations.

In Eden it took its rise in the earth to water the garden, and from thence to wander in divers streams over the earth. For the dispensation was one of earthly good. Man knew no sources of blessing, or streams of joy, other than such as were connected with creation. In the wilderness the smitten rock was its source, and every path of the camp of God its channel. It followed them; for at that time they only were the redeemed of the Lord, whom His eye rested on in the world. In Canaan, afterwards, the waters of Shiloah flowed softly; Jehovah watered the land from His own fountains, and made it to drink of the rain of heaven; and for the souls of the people, every feast and every sacrifice was as a well of this water; and the current of the yearly service of the sanctuary was its constant channel. The river will also rise under the sanctuary for the watering of Jerusalem and the whole land. Ezek. 47; Joel 3; Zech. 14; Ps. 46: 4; Ps. 65: 9. For then will be the time of the twofold blessing, the time of the heavenly and earthly glory. All things will have the grace and power of God dispensed among them, all will then be visited by "the river of God, which is full of water." The feast of tabernacles will then be duly kept in Jerusalem, and that nation of the earth which will not go up to keep it there shall have no gracious visitation of rain.

Upon all this I would only further notice the connection that there is between *our thirst* and *the outflow of this living water*. John 7: 37, 38. The saint thirsts, then goes to Jesus for the water that He has to give, and afterwards comes with the water of life, the flowing of the Spirit, in him, for his own refreshing and that of the weary. His thirst receives the abounding presence of the Holy Ghost, opening in him a channel for the river of life, which now rises in the ascended Head of the Church, to flow through him to others. Oh that we panted more after God, as the hart pants after the water-brooks! that we longed more for the courts of the Lord! Then would the Spirit fill

our souls, and we should comfort and refresh one another. And this is indeed the power of all ministry. Ministry is but the outflowing of this living water, the expression of this hidden, abounding presence of the Spirit within us. The Head has received the gifts for us; and, from the Head, all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. And this is our only feast of tabernacles, till we celebrate a still happier one round the throne. For this feast cannot now be kept in Jerusalem; the saints must have it in its own present form, by walking together in the liberty and refreshing of the Holy Ghost.

This feast, this "joy in the Holy Ghost," is something more than either the passover of Egypt, or the manna of the wilderness. Those were for redemption and life; but this is for joy and the foretaste of glory. Those were of the flesh and blood of the Son of man, broken and shed here; but this of the Son of man glorified in heaven. It savours of Canaan, though for comfort in the wilderness; as the feast of tabernacles was a feast in Canaan, the land of rest and glory after the wilderness.

But Israel, as yet, knew nothing of these things, as is here shown to us. In the fifth chapter, the Lord had met them, *as in Egypt*, with redeeming grace and power: witness the restored cripple; which was like Moses casting down his rod in the sight of Israel in proof of his embassy. But it only ended in proving that they would remain in Egypt - for they refuse to believe Moses, believing not Him of whom Moses wrote; and what redemption from Egypt, was there for Israel, if Moses were refused? In the sixth He had met them, *as in the wilderness*, with the manna; but only, in like manner, to prove that they were not feeding there, as the camp of God, upon the bread of God. In this chapter He had met them *as in Canaan*; but all had shown that Canaan was still the land of the uncircumcised, the land of drought, and not of the river of God. He, therefore, now stands outside of the city of solemnities, and in spirit ascends to heaven, as Head of His body the Church, to feed the thirsty from thence. He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." The Jews

may reason about Him among themselves, and then go every man "to his own house;" but He, owning His present estrangement from Israel, and consequent homeless condition on the earth, goes to the Mount of Olives.

John 8. — Thus was it with Israel now. They knew not that they were still in bonds, and needing His hand to lead them out, and feed them again. They knew not that they had still to reach the true Canaan, Immanuel's land. They had been rejecting *the grace* of the Son of God, and were making their boast of *the law*; and now, in the confidence that it was theirs, and that they could use it, and by it entangle the Lord, they bring forward the adulteress.

They had, to be sure, noticed His grace to sinners. All His ways must have told them that. And they judge it, of course, an easy matter to show Him to be the enemy of Moses and the law. But He gains a holy and glorious victory. Grace is made to shout a triumph over sin, and the sinner over every accuser. The Lord does not impugn the law. He could not; for it was holy; and He had come not to destroy, but to fulfil it. He does not acquit the guilty. He could not; for He had come into the world with full certainty as to the sinner's guilt. It was that which had brought Him among us. And, therefore, in the present case, He does not pretend to raise such questions. The sinner is convicted, and the law righteously lies against her. But who can execute it? Who can cast the stone? That question He may and does raise. Satan may accuse, the sinner may be guilty, and the law may condemn; but where is the executioner? Who can handle the fiery power of the law? None but Himself. None can avenge the quarrel of divine righteousness upon the sinner; none have bands clean enough to take up the stone and cast it but Jesus Himself; and He refuses. He refuses to act. He refuses to entertain the case. He stooped down and wrote on the ground as though He heard them not. He was not presiding in any court for the trying of such matters. He came not to judge. But they persist. And then the Lord, in effect, replies, that if they will have Mount Sinai, they shall — if, like Israel of old, they will challenge the law, and

undertake the terms of the fiery hill, why, they shall have the law, and again; hear the voice of that hill. And, accordingly, He lets out something of the genuine heat of that place; and they soon find that it reaches them, as well as the poor convicted one; and the place becomes too hot for them.

They had not reckoned on this. They had not thought that the thunders of that hill would have made them to quake, or its horrible darkness have inwrapped them as completely as the open and shamed sinner whom their own hand had dragged there. But as they had chosen the fiery hill, they must take it for better or worse, and just as they find it.

The Lord, however, in giving the law this character, in causing it to reach the judges as well as their prisoner, proved that He was the Lord of that hill. He let, as I said, some of its' genuine heat out. He marshalled its thunder and directed its lightning, and spread out its horrible darkness, as the Lord of it. He made the hosts of that hill take their march, and address themselves to their proper work. And then, on this being done, exactly as of old at the same place, this is found to be intolerable. "Let not God speak with us," said Israel then (Ex. 20); as now these scribes and Pharisees, "being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one." They can no more stand under that place, which they themselves had challenged, than Israel of old, when that mount let them know what it really was.

All this has a very great character in it. The Lord is greatly glorified. They designed to expose Him as Moses' enemy, but He displays Himself as Moses' Lord, or the Conductor of that lightning which had once made the heart of that stoutest Israelite exceedingly to fear and quake.

I read all this as something very excellent indeed.

But further. If this be His glory, it is equally our blessing. If the Lord Jesus be honoured as the Conductor of, the fiery power of the law, we find that He does this for us. He lets this poor sinner know this.

While the scribes and Pharisees accuse her He is deaf to all they were saying; and when they still urge Him, He gives her to see Him turning the hot thunderbolt on the head of her accusers, so that they are forced to leave her alone with Him Who had proved Himself *the Lord of Sinai, and her Deliverer.*

Could she desire more? Could she leave the place where she now found herself? Impossible. She was as able to stand it as the very Lord of the hill Himself. Sinai had no more terror for her than for Him. Need she leave that place? She was free to do so, if she pleased. Those who had forced her there were gone. The passage was open. She had nothing to do but to go out after the rest, if she desired it. If she would fain hide her shame, and make the best of her case, she may. Now is the time. Let her go out. The Lord knows her sin in all its magnitude, and she need not think of remaining where she is and be accounted guiltless. If this be her hope, let her follow her convicted accusers, and hide her shame outside. But no. She had learnt the tale of delivering grace from the words and the acts of Jesus, and she need not go out. Nature would have retired. Flesh and blood, or the mere moral principles of man, would have sent her after the rest. But the faith which had read the story of redemption acts above nature, or the judgment of the moral man. She remains where she is. This Mount Sinai (as her accusers had made that place) was not too much for her. The still small voice of mercy, which once answered Moses and again answered Elijah there, had now answered her. The pledges of salvation were there exposed to her as of old time to the fathers, and the spot was green and fresh and sunny to her spirit. It had become "the gate of heaven" to her. The shadow of death had been turned into "the light of life." She need not go — she would not go — she could not go. She will not leave the presence of Jesus, Who had so gloriously approved Himself the Lord of Sinai, and yet her Deliverer. She was a sinner. Yes — and she knew it, and He knew it, before Whom in solitude she now stood. And so was Adam, as he came forth naked from the trees of the garden. But she is willing and able to stand detected before Him. She could no more retire to a thicket than Adam could

continue in a thicket, or wear his apron of fig-leaves, after such a voice. Jesus had confounded all her accusers. They had roared of the evil she had done, but He had utterly and for ever silenced them. In the light of life she now walked. Her conscience, in a little moment, had taken a long and eventful journey. She had passed from the region of darkness and death into the realms of liberty, safety, and joy, led by the light of the Lord of life.

This is the triumph of grace; and this is the joy of the sinner. This is the song of victory on the banks of the Red Sea, the enemy lying dead on its shores. She has but to call Him "Lord," and He has but to say, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

This was full deliverance. And the same deliverance awaits every sinner who, like the poor adulteress here, will come and be *alone* with Jesus. As *sinner*s (as I have observed before), *we have to do only with God*. We may do offence or wrong to others, and they may complain and challenge us. But, as sinners, God must deal with us alone; and the discovery of this is the way of blessing. David discovered it, and got blessing at once. His act, it is true, had been a wrong to another. He had taken the poor man's one little ewe lamb. But he had in all this sinned against God also. And in the discovery and sense of this he says, "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" But the effect of this was to leave him *alone* with God. As a *wrongdoer*, Uriah might have to do with him; but as a *sinner*, he had not. God must deal with him; and the moment his sin thus casts him alone with God, he, like the poor adulteress here, listens to the voice of mercy: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." He suffers chastening for the *wrong* he had done, but *the wages of sin* are remitted.

It is ever the sinner's victory when he can thus by faith claim to be alone with Jesus. The priest and the Levite have then passed by; for what could *they* do? What art or ability had the law to meet the sinner's case? It is grace — the Stranger from heaven — that must help. The needy, wounded sinner is lying in the way, and the good

Samaritan must meet him. And truly blessed is it, when all through its further way, the soul still remembers how it thus began in solitude with Jesus the Saviour.

And He is glorified in all this as surely as we are comforted; glorified with His brightest glory, His glory as the Saviour of the guilty. A vial is prepared for redeemed sinners, which is to bear an incense the like to which can be found nowhere else. Ex. 30: 37. Even the vials of angels do not carry such perfume. They praise the Lamb, it is true; but not in such lofty strains as the Church of redeemed sinners. They *ascribe* to Him "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" but the Church has *a song* before the throne, and sings, Thou art worthy. . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

All this blessing for the sinner, and this glory for the Saviour, we see here. The sinner is hid from her accuser, and the Saviour silences him. The officers had been lately disarmed by the holy attraction of His words, and now the scribes and Pharisees are rebuked by the convicting light of His words. John 7: 46; John 8: 9. Those were not carnal weapons, but weapons of heavenly temper. Their enmity had exhausted all its resources. They had essayed the force of the lion and the guile of the serpent; and, all having passed, the Son of God at once takes His elevation, and shows Himself in His place of entire separation and distance from them; He raises the pillar of light and darkness in the present wilderness of Canaan, and puts Israel, like the Egyptians of old, on the dark side of it. "I am the Light of the world," says Jesus: "he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness."

Such was Israel now, spiritually called Egypt. They had no association with Abraham, or with God, though they boasted in them; for they had no faculty to discern Abraham's joy, or the Sent of God. They must take their place of atheistic darkness and alienation. The Lord gives them the place of Ishmael, the very place

which Paul afterwards puts them in. See v. 35; Gal. 4. As the child of the bondwoman Israel still is, and will be, till "they turn to the Lord," till they know the truth, and the truth make them "free," — make them as Isaac. The Jews assert that they had never been in bondage. v. 33. Jesus might have called for a penny, and by its image and superscription have proved their falsehood. But, according to the high and divine thoughts of this Gospel, He takes other ground with them, and convicts them of deadlier bondage than that to Rome, a bondage to flesh and to sin.

Mark also their low and mistaken thoughts about Him and His plainest words. He had said, "*Abraham rejoiced to see My day;*" but they reply as though He had said *He had seen Abraham*. The difference, however, was infinite, though they perceived it not. By the words He had used, the Lord was challenging the highest glories for Himself. He was making Himself the great Object from the beginning, the One Who had been filling the thoughts, the hopes, and answering the need, of all the elect of God in all ages. It was not He that had seen Abraham, but it was Abraham that had seen Him; and, without contradiction, I may say, the better is seen of the less. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." That is Christ's place. He was Adam's Object, as he went forth from the garden. He was the confidence of Abel and of Noah. He was seen and rejoiced in by Abraham and the patriarchs. He was the Substance of the shadows, and the End of the law. He was the Lamb and the Light under the eye of the Baptist. He is now the confidence of every saved sinner; and He will be, through eternity, the praise and the Centre of the creation of God.

All this is a strong discovery of the state of Israel through this chapter. And this was a solemn moment for them. In Matthew the Lord tested the Jews by His Messiahship, and in the end convicted them of rejecting Him in that character. But in this Gospel He tests them by other and higher proposals of Himself: as the Light, the Truth, the Doer of the works and the Speaker of the words of God, as the Son of the Father; and thus convicts them, not of mere

unbelief in Messiah, but of the common atheism of man. In this character Israel is here made to stand, Cain-like, in the land of Nod, in the place of the common departure of man from God. He had spoken the words of the Father, but they understood not, they believed not. As the Sent of *the Father*, He had come (as such a one must have come) *in grace* to them; but they refused Him. And so is it among men of this day. The Gospel is a message of goodness; but man receives it not. *Man will not think well of God*. This is the secret of unbelief. The Gospel is "goodness" (Rom. 11: 22); and man still asks, *Is it from God?* for man has hard thoughts of God, and Satan is persuading him still to have them He does what he can to obscure the sinner's title to God, that the sinner may look for some inheritance elsewhere.

So here with Israel. Jesus *judged* no man, but spake the word of *the Father*, which was freedom and life to them. But they understood not His speech, as He says to them. Their minds were formed by their father, who was a liar and a murderer; and "grace and truth," which came to them by Jesus Christ, they had no ears to hear. And now, as the disallowed Witness of the Father, as the hated Light of the world, He has no place in the land, no certain paths of this earth to go forth into. He *passes by* as knowing no spot or person here, but still, as the Light of the world, shining, wherever His beams may reach, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

John 9, 10. — Accordingly, in this character, He is separated from Israel. Israel is left in darkness, and the pillar of God moves onward. Jesus, the "Light of the world," goes forth and meets one who had been blind from his birth; and in such a one His works could well be manifested.

The Lord God, it is most true, is a great King, and acts as a Sovereign. He is the Potter that has power over the clay. But the Son came not as from the throne of the King, but from the Father. He came to manifest *the Father*. The blind may be in the world, but the

Son came as the light of the world: and accordingly, as such, He applies Himself to His blessed labour of grace and power, and opens the eyes of this blind beggar.

But what was this to Jerusalem? There was darkness there; and the light may shine, but it will not be comprehended. Instead of that, as we read here, "they brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind." There was a high court of inquisition at Jerusalem, and it must try the ways of the Son of God. Instead of welcoming Him as of old, when the pillar of God was raised, and saying, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered," they love their own darkness, and will walk in it.

At first they question the man himself. But not finding him quite to their purpose, they commit the case to witnesses, who, they judge, were in their own power. They call his parents. But again; they fail. The fact that the light had shone among them cannot be gainsaid. They then seek to divert the whole matter into such a channel as would leave untouched their own pride and worldliness. and they say, "Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner." But this will not do either. The poor soul maintains his integrity; and then they alarm him by separating him from all acknowledged ground of safety. "Thou art His disciple," say they, "but we are Moses' disciples." But he is kept still; and not only kept, but led on from strength to strength. He hath, and more is given him. He follows as the light leads, till at length it so shines as to reprove the darkness of the Pharisees; and they cast him forth without the camp.

But where do they cast him? Just where every lonely, outcast sinner may find himself — where the unclean Samaritan and the convicted adulteress had before found themselves — into the presence, and across the solitude, of the Son of God; and that is the very gate of heaven. For the Lord had gone without the camp before him. This sheep of the flock was now *put forth*; but it was only to meet the Shepherd, Who had *gone before*. In that place of shame and exposure they meet each other. There was he found by One who had

Himself been shot by the archers. The meeting there was a meeting indeed. This poor Israelite, while he was within the camp, had met Jesus as his Healer; but now that he is put without, he meets Him as the Son of God. He meets Him to know Him as the One Who, when he was blind, had opened his eyes, and, now that he is cast out, talks with him. And, beloved, this is ever the way of our meeting Jesus, as sinners and as outcasts, in the unclean place. If He take us up there, it must be in the full *grace* of the Son of God, the Saviour. And thus our character as sinners leads us into the sweetest and dearest intimacies of the Lord of life and glory. As creatures we know the strength of His hand, His Godhead, and wisdom, and goodness; but as sinners we know the love of His heart, and all the treasures of His grace and glory.

And I notice the changed tone of this poor beggar. In the presence of the Pharisees he was firm and unbending. He does not abate the tone of conscious righteousness and truth all through. He set his face as a flint, and endured hardness. But the moment he comes into the presence of the Lord he is all humility and gentleness. He melts, as it were, at the feet of Jesus. Oh, what a sweet sample is this of the workmanship of the Spirit of God! Courage before man, but the meltings of love and the bowings of worship before the Lord Who has loved and redeemed us.

But this unclean place without the camp, where the Lord of heaven and earth now stood with this favoured sinner, was not only the place of liberty and joy to the sinner, but the wide field of observation to the Lord. From this place He surveys Himself, the beggar, and the whole camp of Israel, outside of which He had gone with His elect one; and in the parable of the Good Shepherd, He draws the moral of it all. In the scene of the ninth chapter He had shown that He had entered by the door into the sheep-fold; for He had come working the works of the Father, and had, in that way, approved Himself to be in the confidence of the Owner of the fold, the sanctioned Shepherd of His flock. He was estranged from Israel; but, like Moses in such a case, He was to keep the flock of His

Father in other pastures, near the mount of God. The Pharisees, because they were resisting Him, must therefore needs be "thieves and robbers," climbing into the fold some other way. And the poor blind beggar was a sample of the flock, who, while they refuse the voice of strangers, hear and know the voice of Him that had entered by the door; and, entering by Him, "the Door of the sheep," find safety, rest, and pasture.

All this had been set out in the scene before us, and is expressed in the parable. The parable thus passes a blessed commentary on the present condition of this poor outcast. The Jews, no doubt, judged, (and would have had him judge so likewise) that he had now been cut off from safety, being cut off from themselves. But Jesus shows that not until now was he in safety; that had he been left where he was, he would have become a prey to those who were stealing, and killing, and destroying; but that now he was found and taken up of One Who, to give him life, would lay down His own.*

*I may just notice how it was that this poor weak one of God broke the snare of the fowler. We see in his ways two things: first, his honest, faithful following of the light, as it was given to him, and as it shone in him more and more brightly; secondly, his simple pleading of the works and ways of Jesus, his Deliverer and Friend, in answer to all the suggestions of the enemy. This was his security; and this is ours too, whether we be *pressed* or *entangled* by Satan.

All this we have, both in the narrative and in the parable. And it is at this point in our Gospel that the Lord and the remnant meet together; "the poor of the flock" are here manifested, their own shepherds pitying them not; and the Shepherd from heaven takes them up as all His care, to guard and to feed them. Zech. 11

But the love and care of Him Who said to Him, "Feed the flock of slaughter" (Zech. 11: 4), is also seen here most blessedly. It is, perhaps, the sweetest thing in the parable. We learn the mind of *the Father* towards the flock. For the Lord says, "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the

sheep;" letting us know that one of the deepest secrets of the Father's heart was His love and care for the sheep. The flock, indeed, was the Father's before it was committed to Christ, the Shepherd. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." They lay in the Father's hand before they were put into Christ's hand. They were the Father's by *election* before the world was, and became Christ's by the gift of the Father, and by purchase of blood. And all the tenderness and diligent care of *the Shepherd* do but express the mind of *the Owner* towards His flock. The Shepherd and the Owner of the flock are one. As the Lord says, "I and My Father are one." One, it is true, in glory, but one also in their love to and carefulness about their poor flock of redeemed sinners. Christ met the Father's mind when He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; and they rest for ever one in that love, as surely as they rest one in their own glory. This is truth of precious comfort to us. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." We learn, indeed, that God is love; and the moment we discover this we get our rest in God; for the wearied, broken heart of the sinner may rest in love, though nowhere else. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Here, then, "the poor of the flock" feed and lie down. But Beauty and Bands are to be broken. The Shepherd's staves that would have led and kept Israel must now be cast away. It was only a remnant that knew His voice. Who can hear the voice of a Saviour but a sinner? The whole need not the physician. And thus, in this place, our Lord's dealings with Israel close. He refuses to feed them any more: "That that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off." Zech. 11: 9.

And I may notice that His dealing with Israel closes here in a way fully characteristic of this Gospel by John. They seek to stone Him, as we read, because that He, being a Man, had made Himself God. In the other Gospels the soul of Israel loathes Him (as Zechariah speaks) for other reasons; because, for instance, He received sinners, or impugned their traditions, or touched their Sabbath. But in this

Gospel it is His assertion of Sonship of the Father, the assertion of the divine honours of His person, which chiefly raises the conflict. See John 5, 8, 10. In this place we observe that the Lord, in answer to the Jews, pleads the manifestation which He had now given of Himself, as others had done in Israel before Him. Others, set in authority, had been called "gods," because they had manifested *God* in His place of *authority and judgment*, and were the powers whom *God* had ordained. And He, in like manner, had now manifested the *Father*. The judges and kings could have shown that the word of *God* had come to them, committing to them the sword of *God*. And Jesus had shown Himself the Sent of *the Father*, full of *grace and truth*, working among them now as *the Father* had hitherto worked, in the exercise of grace; restoring, and healing, and blessing sinners. Thus had He shown that the Father was in Him, and He in the Father. But their hearts were hardened. The darkness could not comprehend the Light and He has to escape out of their hands, and take up again a position in the earth apart from the revolted nation.*

*See John 2: 13; John 6: 4; John 7: 2; John 11: 55. In this Gospel I observe that the feasts are called "feasts of the Jews," as though the Spirit of God looked at them as something now estranged from His mind. This is highly characteristic of this Gospel, in which, as I have noticed, the Spirit is separated from Jewish recollections, because He is tracing the way of the Son of God, the Son of the Father, Who stands above Jewish connection. Similarly to this, in the Old Testament, Horeb, or Sinai, is called "the Mount of God;" but in the New, under Paul's hand, it is called "Mount Sinai in Arabia;" the Spirit of God no longer owning it, but leaving it simply to its earthly description.

Here the second section of our Gospel ends. It has presented to us our Lord's controversies with the Jews, in the course of which He set aside one Jewish thing after another, and brought in Himself in the place of it. In the fifth chapter He set aside Bethesda, the last witness of the Father's working in Israel, and took its place, as Minister of grace. In the sixth and seventh chapters He set aside the feasts; the

passover and the tabernacles (the first of which opened the Jewish year with the *life* of the nation, while the second closed it with their *glory*) taking the place of these ordinances Himself, showing that *He* was the only Source of *life* and *glory*. In the eighth, after exposing the utter unsuitableness of the law to man, because of the evil and weakness of man, He takes His place as "the light of the world," as the One by Whom alone, and not by the law, sinners were to find their way into truth, and liberty, and home to God. And then, in the ninth chapter, in this character of the Light of the world, He goes out from Israel. He had been casting His beams on that people, but they comprehended Him not. He goes forth, therefore, and draws the poor of the flock after Him; and in the tenth exhibits Himself and them outside the camp, leaving the land of Israel, as the prophet had spoken, a chaos without form and void. The Word of the Lord, that would have called it into beauty and order, was refused; and, now, the place of Jehovah's ancient husbandry, on which His eyes rested from one end of the year to the other, and which He watered with the rain of His own heavens, is given over to become the wilderness and the shadow of death.

John 11, 12. — Thus was it with Israel. They were left in unbelief and darkness, having refused the proposals of the Son of God. But these chapters show that though Israel may delay their mercy, they shall not disappoint it. God's purpose is to bless, and He will bless. In the way of His own covenant, that is, in resurrection power and grace, He will bring the blessing to Israel. It was as the Quickener of the dead He had of old entered into covenant with their father Abraham. It was thus that He appeared to Moses, as the Hope of the nation at Horeb. Ex. 3; Luke 20: 37. It was by resurrection that He was to give to Israel the promised Prophet, like unto Moses. Deut. 18; Acts 3. It is in this character that all the prophets speak of Him as acting for the seed of Abraham in the latter day. And our own apostle tells us that the resurrection of Jesus is the pledge of all the blessing promised to the fathers. Acts 13: 33. Jehovah will restore life and glory to Israel, in resurrection power and grace. When all their own strength is crone He will Himself arise for their help. He

will plant glory in the land of the living. The barren woman shall keep house. The Lord will call them from their graves, and make the dry bones live. And that He will accomplish all this for Israel is here, in these two chapters, pledged and foreshown. The previous chapters had shown Israel to be in ruins, and at a distance from God; but here, ere the Lord entirely hides Himself from them, He gives them, in the raising of Lazarus, and its results, full pledges of final life and glory.

This, I doubt not, is the general bearing of these two chapters; and thus they form a kind of appendix to the previous section, rather than a distinct portion of the Gospel.

The Lord had left Judea, and was in retirement beyond Jordan, when a message came to Him that one (*in Judea*) whom He loved was sick. He abides in the place where He was till this sickness had taken its course, and ended in death. Then He addresses Himself to His journey, for He could then take it as the Son of God, the Quickener of the dead; and in the full consciousness that He was about to act as such, He sets forward, saying, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." v. 11.

But here let me turn aside for a little.

The words of the two sisters in the progress of this chapter are, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But they were not in the divine secret the secret of the Son of God. He had come into this world now, as of old He had gone to the house of Abraham, as a Quickener of the dead. He was bringing victorious life with Him. He must be displayed in *that* glory. This had been done, since sin had entered and brought in death. But nature is not equal to this great mystery. Faith receives it, and talks of it; but faith is of the operation of God. And so, when Peter owned this life in Jesus, confessing Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, it was told him that the Father had revealed that to him. Matt. 16. None in this chapter were equal to it. They all talk of death, and not of life, even Martha and Mary themselves. But Jesus has life in Him

and before Him. "I am the Resurrection, and the Life," He says: "he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

It is life, thus qualified, that the Son imparts to us - life eternal, infallible, victorious — and faith apprehends, receives, and enjoys it. "He that hath the Son hath life." Peter, as we said, had it revealed to him by the Father (Matt. 16); Jesus took knowledge of it as in Himself (John 2: 19; John 8: 51; John 11: 25); the empty sepulchre displayed and celebrated it; the risen Christ imparted it. John 20. It is undefilable, as it is eternal or victorious. Death cannot reach it, the gates of hell prevail not against it.

What a story of life in a world where sin has reigned unto death! What glory to God! What effectual relief and consolation to us! It is life won from death, life brought in by the putting away of sin through the inestimably precious sacrifice of the Lamb, the Son of God. of Him "Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" 1 What a mystery! "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from *the living God.*" Heb. 3: 12.*

*Let me just notice the tears of Jesus here. The consciousness that He carried resurrection-virtue in Him, and was about to fill the house at Bethany with the joy of restored life, did not stay the current of natural affection. "Jesus wept." His heart was still alive to the sorrow, as to the degradation, of death. His calmness throughout this exquisite scene was not *indifference*, but *elevation*. His soul was in the sunshine of those deathless regions which lay far away and beyond the tomb of Lazarus, but He could visit that valley of tears, and weep there with them that wept.

But we must leave this precious, wondrous theme. The Lord, here in our chapter, also consciously bore the day as well as the *life* with Him; for "the life was the light of men;" — and thus He says also, in answer to the fears of His disciples, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not because he

seeth the light of this world." v. 9. He not only *saw* the light, but He has the Light, of the world — not merely a child of light, but the Fountain of light. His disciples, however, are dull of hearing. They neither discern the voice of the Son of God, nor see the path of the light of life. They judge that, death to Himself, rather than life to others, was before Him; and one says, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." v. 16. There might have been human affection in this, but there was sad ignorance of His glory. The disciples now, like the women afterwards, would fain take their spices to the Saviour's tomb; but both should have known that He was not there.

Onward He goes, the Son of God, the Quickener of the dead; and His path lies to the grave of Lazarus, His friend, in Judea. There He stands, in the full vision of the triumphs of sin; for "sin hath reigned unto death;" and, had all ended here, Satan had prevailed. "Jesus wept." In another Gospel He had wept, as the Son of David, over the city which He had chosen to put His name there, because she had refused Him. But here the Son of God, Who had life in Himself, weeps over the vision of death. But He groaned in Himself also; and He that searcheth the hearts knew that groan; and Jesus, in full assurance that it was heard, had only to acknowledge the answer with thanksgiving, and, in the power of that answer, to say, "Lazarus, come forth;" — and he that was dead did come forth, the witness that, "as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."

Here did the path of *the Son of God* end. He had met the power of sin at its height, and had shown that He was above it - the Resurrection and the Life. But this was not the destruction of him that had the power of death; for it was not the death and resurrection of the Captain of salvation Himself. Nor was it properly a pledge to the saints of their resurrection in *glorious bodies*; for Lazarus came forth bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, to walk again in flesh and blood. It was rather a pledge *to Israel* of the quickening power of the Son of God on their behalf; showing them that the promised

resurrection or revival of the nation rested on Him, and that He would in due time accomplish it.*

*I would notice the paths of Martha and Mary in this scene. Martha goes out to meet the Lord, on hearing that He was coming. But she does not really meet Him. He was above her. He was standing in the consciousness of a glory that she as yet could not apprehend, and He speaks from His elevation, "I am the Resurrection and the Life;" while she answers from hers, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Thus there was a distance between them, the sense of which becomes painful to her, and she goes her way. There was then, I judge, a whisper in her soul that her more heavenly-minded and better-instructed sister would understand the Lord better than she did; and under this suggestion she went and told Mary that the Master had come, and called for her. This, I believe, was the secret of Martha's word to her sister. It was not that the Lord had really called for Mary, and much less was Martha the bearer wrongfully of a false report. But Martha's heart suggested that there was a sympathy between the Lord and Mary; and this suggestion, without wrong, expressed itself thus: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." And so it proved. Mary goes forth to meet her Lord, and really meets Him. There is not the same distance between them as there had been between the Lord and Martha. Mary, on meeting Him, falls at His feet; and He, on seeing her, groans in spirit. This was a meeting indeed, a meeting between the Lord of life and His worshipper. Mary does not, like Martha, multiply words without knowledge; nor has the Lord to rebuke any slowness of heart in her, as He had in Martha. But we know He loved them both; and blessed is it to have any living fellowship with Him. Some may have more burning thoughts and brighter views of Him than others; but though our measure be but the Martha measure, yet there is heaven in the fellowship, wherever it is true and living.

But Israel had no eyes to read this sign of their mercy, nor heart to understand it. Instead of its becoming the ground of their faith, it is made the occasion of the working of full enmity. "From that day

forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death." v. 53. The husbandmen set themselves to cast out the heir of the vineyard. And their entire departure from their father Abraham, their complete apostasy from God, is manifested. Israel had been separated out of the nations unto God; but they now deliberate, and take their place among the nations again." Unlike Abraham, they take riches from the king of Sodom, instead of blessing from the hand of Melchizedek. They choose the patronage of Rome rather than know the resurrection-power of the Son of God. "If we let Him thus alone," say they, "all will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." And the judgment then comes upon them, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." Isa. 6: 9. For now, having the voice of the Spirit in their high priest, there is no ear to hear it aright; and having the doings of the Son of God among them, there is no eye to perceive Him aright.

But still He was the Quickener of Israel; and in the latter day the dry bones shall hear the word of the Lord, and live; of which, as I have observed, Lazarus is the pledge. And the remnant in Israel in that day is also illustrated in the family at Bethany.* Into the midst of this well-loved family the Lord comes, and finds refreshment, and fellowship, and the acknowledgement of His glory; as He will find these things in His remnant in the latter day. There He sits as the Lord of life, the witness of His quickening power being seated beside Him; and there too He sits as "the King of glory," the homage of His willing people being laid at His feet. In these two holy dignities is He now received by this faithful household. "While the King sitteth at His table" (says Mary), "my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." Cant. 1: 12.

*But in this house at Bethany we see also the Church, there being so much of moral kindredness between the two. For the Church is the witness of Christ's resurrection-power during the long age of Israel's unbelief, and before the remnant is manifested. And in the Church also, during that age, the Lord finds His only refreshment and

fellowship. In Martha *servicing*, Lazarus *sitting*, and Mary *anointing the feet*, we see the saints in their various grace and characters of communion with the Lord: some waiting on Him in the activities of love; some resting beside Him in the calm certainty of His favour, hearing His voice and learning His ways; some pouring forth the fulness of their loving and worshipping hearts.

It is thus He here sits; one family in the apostate land owning Him Lord of life and King of glory. But the city itself, and the strangers there, were soon to see Him, as well as this house at Bethany; as, by-and-by, the nation and the whole earth will own Him after He is owned by the Remnant.

Accordingly, "on the next day," as we read, much people, moved by the report of His having raised Lazarus from the dead, meet Him on His coming to Jerusalem, and lead Him into the royal city, as the Son of David, the King of Israel.* The time was the time of the passover; but the people are moved as with the joy of the feast of tabernacles, and take branches of palm-trees to gladden their King. And the nations, as it were, come up to keep the feast also; for certain Greeks come to Philip, and say, "Sir, we would see Jesus." *Glory shines for a moment in the land of the living.* Here was Lazarus raised from the dead, the city receiving her King, and the nations worshipping there. The great materials of the kingdom in which He is to be glorified had now passed before the Lord. The joy of Jerusalem and the gathering of the nations He had now witnessed; but His soul was full of the holy certainty that death awaits all here, however promising or pleasurable; and that enduring honour and prosperity must be hoped for only in other and brighter regions. In the midst of all this festive scene Jesus Himself sits solitary. His spirit muses on death, while the thoughts of all around Him are full of a kingdom, with its attendant honours and joys. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is His word now, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." *Resurrection was every thing to Him.* It was His relief amid the sorrows of life, as we saw in John 11; it is His object amid the prospects and promises of the world, as

we now see in John 12. It gave His soul a calm sunshine, when dark and heavy clouds had gathered over Bethany; it moderates and separates His affections, when the brilliant glare of a festive day was lighting up the way from thence to Jerusalem. The thought of resurrection thus stayed His mind amid griefs and enjoyments around Him. It made Him a perfect Exemplar of that fine principle, Let him that weepeth be as if he wept not, and he that rejoiceth as though he rejoiced not. See 1 Cor. 7: 29-31.

*The Lord does not send for the ass's colt here, as He is shown to do in the other Gospels. Here the scene of the entry into the city is produced by the zeal of the people. This distinction is still characteristic for this Gospel does not give the Lord in Jewish connection, as I have observed.

How little of this elevation above the conditions and circumstances of life the hearts of some of us are acquainted with!

This season was really to be *the passover*, and not *the feast of tabernacles* to Jesus; and His soul passes, for another moment, through His paschal trouble. but the Father again acknowledges Him. He had glorified Him as Son of God, Quickener of the dead, at the grave of Lazarus; and now He glorifies Him as Son of man, Judge of the world and of the prince of the world, by the voice from heaven.

And here did His path as *the Son of man* end, as His path as the Son of God had before ended at the grave of Lazarus. The Son of God and Son of man had now been fully displayed before His unbelieving Israel. He was glorified among them as the Prince of life, and the Holder of all authority and power. The things now accomplished and displayed in these two chapters, were the fulfilling of His words to them at the beginning: these were the "greater works" at which they should "marvel." John 5: 20-22. They had now witnessed His quickening power as Son of God, and had His judicial glory as Son of man pledged to them by the voice from heaven. They should have honoured Him as they honoured the

Father. But instead of this they would soon kill Him. They would soon disown the Lord of life and the King of glory, on Whom all their hopes of life and the kingdom hung. He had tested them by the promised "greater works;" but there was no response from Israel. The harvest was past, the summer ended, and they were not saved. The lamentation of the prophet was now to be uttered, "Who hath believed our report?" It was not that His works had not manifested Him as the Hope of Israel. Many even of the chief rulers felt and owned them in their consciences, as we here read. But they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, as He had said unto them. Chapter 5: 44; 12: 43. All that remained was judgment on Israel and the heavenly glory of this earth-rejected Jesus. vv. 40, 41. So does our evangelist himself tell us, drawing the awful moral of the whole scene — "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him." All closed in judgment upon Israel, and in glory, heavenly glory, glory within the veil, for the blessed Jesus. Isaiah 6: 1, 2.

Thus our Gospel seats the Son of God in heaven again. His way ends there, as it had begun there. The Gospel by Matthew ushers Him forth as the Son of David from Bethlehem, and closes with Him (as far as His ministry is concerned) on the Mount of Olives. Matt. 1; 24. But this Gospel opened with His descent from the Father, and here closes (as far as His ministry was concerned) by His return to heaven. There He still dwells in the high and holy place, and with the humble and broken-hearted. Isaiah 57: 15. He speaks from heaven; and His voice must be in the power of all that finished work which has taken Him there. He is gone into the holiest, through the outer courts, throwing down all enmities, all middle walls and partitions, and has again; come forth from thence, in the virtue of His blood, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, to preach peace to all. Eph. 2: 12-22. He cannot but speak of all that is there, and not of what is here. He cannot but speak, by His Spirit, of the peace and

gladness and glory which are there, and not of the accusings with which our sins still committed here would fill our hearts.

All through His divine ministry in this Gospel, as I have before observed, the Lord had been acting in grace, as "the Son of the Father," and as "the Light of the world." His presence was "day-time" in the land of Israel. He had been shining there, if haply the darkness might comprehend Him. And here, at the close of that ministry (John 12: 35, 36), we see Him still as the Light casting forth His last beams upon the land and people. He can but shine, whether they will comprehend Him or not. While His presence is there, it is still day-time. The night cannot come till He is gone. "As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." But here, "He departs and hides Himself;" and then God; by His prophet, brings the night upon the land. v. 40. It was not that the light had imperfectly shone. Their own consciences told them otherwise. vv. 42, 43. The Light had done its service, and ruled the day, but the darkness had not comprehended it; and then this Ruler of the day sets in Judea, *only to rise in other spheres*. For His cry in these closing verses (44-50) is not addressed to Israel merely, but to the whole earth. It is but the same "Light of the world," which had lately run His race in Judea, coming forth out of His chamber to run a longer race. And this race He is running still. "The *day* of salvation" is still with us. The night of judgment on the Gentiles has not yet come. We may still walk without stumbling; we may still know whither we are going. The Light still says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Such are Thy ways, blessed Saviour, Lamb of God, Son of the Father!

John 13 - 17.

I HAVE followed the Lord through chapters 1 - 12 of this Gospel, noticing His ways as the Son of God, the Stranger from heaven, the Saviour of sinners; and also His intercourses and controversies with Israel. The one was a path of grace, but of loneliness — the other lay much in the track of the prophet Jeremiah. Like Jeremiah, the Lord had witnessed the backslidings of the daughter of Zion. Like him, He had warned her, and taught her, and would fain have healed her. But, like him, He had seen the stubbornness of her heart, had suffered rebuke and rejection from her, and had now only to weep for her. He had, as in the words of Jeremiah, said to her, even to the end of His ministry (see John 12: 35), "Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride." Jer. 13: 16, 17.

Jesus had thus wept over Jerusalem, for she had not repented. The boar had now again left his woods to devour her; the "destroyer of the Gentiles" was again on his way, as in the prophet's day. The captivity in Babylon had no more purged away the dross of Zion, than the waters of Noah had sanctified the earth; and all was again ripe for another judgment. But, as in the midst of all this, Jeremiah of old had his Baruch, the companion of his temptations (Jer. 36 and Jer. 43), to whom from the Lord he pledges present life (Jer. 45), and with whom he deposits the sure evidence of final inheritance (Jer. 32), so now, Jesus has His saints, the companions of His rejection, to whom He gives the present certainty of life, and the sure promise of future rest and honour.

With these we now get our Lord in secret. We have now done with His public ministry: and we have Him now with His own, telling them, as their Prophet, the secrets of God.

And being about to listen to Him as the Prophet of the Church, I would observe, that what the Lord gives us as our *Prophet*, is our *present* riches. It is not with us, as with Israel of old, blessings of the basket and of the store, nor is it with us now, as it will be by-and-by authority over cities — but "we have the mind of Christ." Treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in Christ are our *present* treasures. Col. 2: 3. And accordingly, having now turned away from Israel towards His elect, and looking at them apart from the world, He makes known to them all things that He had heard of the Father. By-and-by, as the King of glory, He will share His dominion with the saints; but now He has only the tongue of the learned for them, that He may teach them the secrets of God. It is only as their Prophet that He now enriches them. As to other riches they may count themselves poor, as one of them of old said (and said it, beloved, without shame), "Silver and gold have I none."

Our Lord Jesus is the Prophet like unto Moses Who had been promised of old. God saw Moses face to face. He spake with him, as a man speaketh unto his friend, saying of him, "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." In all this high prerogative Moses was the shadow of the Son of God. Moses had access to God. He was on the heights of the hill with Him, beyond the region of thunder and tempest; then within the cloud of glory, as it stood at the door of the temporary tabernacle; and lastly, in the very holy of holies, when the tabernacle itself was reared. Ex. 24; 33; Ex. 25: 22. And he stood in all that nearness to God without blood - though even Aaron, we know, could be there only once a year, and that not without blood — all this telling us, in affecting and intelligible language, of the divine personal worthiness of our Prophet — of the God-head glory of Him Whose shadow Moses was, Who is in the bosom of the Father, and has now spoken to us. Heb. 1: 1, 2.

And what Moses learnt on the top of the hill, or within the cloud of glory, or from off the mercy-seat in the holiest, was the secret which

the Son has now brought from the Father. Moses learnt there the grace of God, and saw the glory of goodness. Ex. 33: 19. Blessed vision! And the only begotten Son was among us, "full of grace and truth."

But the services which the Lord renders us as our Prophet are various; and in this variety we shall find the special character of this Gospel by John fully maintained.

In the opening of Matthew, the Lord, as a Prophet, revealed the mind of God touching the conduct of His people, interpreting the law in its extent and purity, thus determining the divine standard, and applying it to the conscience. He prescribed the order and ways of the saints, so as to make them worthy of the regeneration and the kingdom, calling the soul into exercise towards God, and giving it its due ends and objects. See Matt. 5 - 7. But in our Gospel He is the Prophet in a higher character. He declares "the Father," and reveals the "heavenly things." He speaks as the One Who had "ascended up to heaven," and was "from above." John 3: 13, 31. It is not so much our *conduct* as God's *thoughts* that He tells us of. He tells us of the mysteries of life and judgment; He declares the love of the Father, the works and glories of the Son, and the place and actings of the Holy Ghost, in and for the Church of God. He is, in this Gospel, the Prophet of the secrets of the Father's bosom, disclosing the hidden ways of the sanctuary. He speaks as the Word, Who was with God, and was God, giving us such knowledge as a mere walk on the earth in righteousness and service would not have needed, but such as makes us nothing less than "friends" (John 15: 15), and gives us communion, in knowledge, with the ways of "the Father of glory." Eph. 1: 17.

Such is the variety of the Lord's exercise of His prophetic office; and such, I judge, the peculiar exercise of it in this Gospel, the exercise of it in its *highest* department, again making the Gospel so peculiarly precious to the saint. And when the gathering of the Church in this present "day of salvation" is over, and all have come

in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, we shall not lose our Lord as our Prophet. We shall listen to Him as such, even in the kingdom. His lessons will feed us for ever. Solomon was a *prophet*, as well as a priest and a *king*. His servants stood continually before him, and all kings of the earth sought his presence to hear him. The Queen of Sheba came to prove him with hard questions, and he answered her in all her desire. When she beheld all his ways, the *king's* magnificence, the *priest's* ascent to the house of God, and the *prophet's* wisdom, these were altogether more than a match for her heart — the half had not been told her — "there was no more spirit in her." And so, in the coming kingdom, we shall have that which shall fill the eye with glory, give the heart its satisfied affections, ever feed the still enlarging thoughts of our minds with the treasures of wisdom that are hid in our divine Prophet, and withal give our ears the music of His praise for ever.

But let me say, for my own, as for my brethren's admonition, that we should constantly suspect and dread all mere effort of mind while listening to the words of our Prophet, that is, while reading the Scriptures. The Spirit is a *ready* Teacher, as well as a *ready* Writer; and the light of the Spirit, though it may shine at times, through our darkness, but dimly, yet will it always evidence itself with more or less certainty. And let us remember also, that it is a *temple* light — a light that suits the sanctuary. It was in the holy place that the candlestick stood; and the intelligence that is awakened in the soul by the Holy Ghost is attended by the spirit of devotion and communion. It is a *temple* light still.

I have already noticed the Lord's different exercise of His prophetic office, in Matthew's Gospel and in this. In His discourses with His elect, after His public ministry is over, as given us by these two evangelists, the same characteristic difference is still to be clearly discerned. In Matthew, He talks with them on the *Mount of Olives* about *Jewish* matters (Matt. 24, 25); but here, He leads them, in spirit, into *heaven*, to open to them the sanctuary there, and to tell them of *heavenly* secrets. John 13 - 17. The Lord takes His seat, not

as on the Mount of Olives, to tell His remnant of Israel's sorrows and final rest, but, as in heaven, to disclose to His saints the actings of their High Priest there, and their own peculiar sorrows and blessings as the Church of God, during the age of that heavenly priesthood. The heavenly priesthood is the great subject throughout these chapters, on which I would now somewhat more particularly meditate. They form one section of our Gospel; but I will consider them in distinct portions, as their contents seem to me to suggest.

John 13. - Here, at the opening, the Lord's action, *washing the disciples' feet*, is an exhibition of one great branch of His heavenly service.

The washing of the feet was among the duties of hospitality. The Lord rebukes the neglect of it in His host in Luke 7. See 1 Tim. 5: 10. It conveyed two benefits to the guest, I may say — it cleansed the traveller after the soiling of the journey, and refreshed him after the fatigue of it.

Abraham, Lot, Laban, Joseph, and the old man of Gibeah, are eminent among those who observed this duty. Gen. 18, 19, 24, 43; Judges 19. And the Son of God, as receiving into the heavenly house, would give His elect the full sense of their welcome and their fitness, that they might take their place, with happy confidence, in any department of that royal sanctuary. It was a sanctuary, it is true. But this washing fitted them for such a place. The Son of God was doing for the disciples the duty and service of the brazen laver towards the priests, the sons of Aaron, in the tabernacle. Ex. 30. He was taking on Himself the charge of having them fit for the divine presence. It is the common way of every well-ordered family, that the servants keep themselves clean, or leave the house. But such is the grace of the Son of God, the Master of the heavenly house, that He charges Himself with the duty of keeping the household in even priestly sanctification and honour.

"Unfathomable wonder, and mystery divine!" All we need is the spirit of a simple, unquestioning faith which rests in the reality of such surpassing grace.

But His service for us in the sanctuary, as the High Priest of our profession, His cleansing of our feet as the true Laver of God's house, Jesus did not enter on till He had accomplished His passion on earth, and ascended into the heavens; and, thus, it was not, as we read here, till after the supper was "ended" that He took a towel and girded Himself to wash His disciples' feet. For the "supper" was the exhibition of His passion and death, as He had said, "Take, eat: this is My body." And, accordingly, He seems to go through the whole of this mystic scene in the consciousness that He had now finished His sufferings, had ascended, and was looking back on His saints; for it is introduced in these words, "Having loved His own *which were in the world*" — words that suggest the apprehension He had of His saints being still in the world, while He had left them for higher and holier regions. And in the sense of all this, though glorified again in and with the Father, as the gracious Servant of their need and infirmities, He girds Himself with a towel, and washes their feet; giving them to know, that He was abiding in the heavenly sanctuary, just to impart to them the constant virtue of the "holiness" which, as their High Priest, He ever carried for them on His forehead before the throne of God.* Ex. 28.

*The supper is not noticed in this Gospel, save by allusion. And this is in beautiful keeping with its general character; for it is, as we have already seen, the Gospel of *the Son*, rather than of the *humiliation of Jesus*. And, therefore, we get Him, as in this chapter, in His priesthood, but we do not see Him in His passion, as at the supper.

Thus, there is a difference between the mystic import of *the supper*, and of this subsequent *washing of the feet*; and the difference is the same as between *the day of atonement* and *the ashes of the red heifer*, under the law. The day of atonement, like the supper, set forth the virtue of *the blood* of Christ; the ashes of the heifer, like

this washing, the virtue of His *intercession*. The day of atonement was but one day in the Jewish year, a great annual day of reconciliation, on which the sins of Israel were put away once for all; the ashes of the heifer were provided for every day's transgressions, for all the occasional defilements which any Israelite might contract, while passing through the year. So with the bloodshedding first, and the priestly intercessions of Christ afterwards: as a scripture says, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His *life*."

And we have the same blessings in the same order in another form; viz., *the paschal lamb* once and for ever redeemed Israel out of Egypt, but in the wilderness it was *the intercession of Moses* that turned away wrath from the occasional trespasses of the camp. And so the blood of Jesus our Passover, and the intercession of Jesus our Mediator — the *supper* first, and then the *washing of the feet*; the *death* here, and then the *life* in heaven for us. He that is once washed in the blood, needeth not save to wash his feet; and that washing of his feet, that removal of the soil which the saint gathers in his walk along this earth day by day, the High Priest Who is in heaven for him accomplishes by His presence and intercession there. He is the *Mediator* of the new covenant, and His blood is the *Blood* of that covenant.

Thus, the love of the Son of God for the Church, as it had been from everlasting, so must it be *to* everlasting; as it is here written, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end*." Every age and scene must witness the same love in some of its services, and in its abiding fervour and truth. No change of time could affect it. The dreariness of this world and the glories of heaven found it in His heart the same. Neither sorrow nor joy, suffering nor glory, could touch it for a moment. His death here, and His life in heaven, alike declare it. Nay, much more. He had served her in this love before the world was, when He said, "Lo, I come!" — and in the kingdom after the world, He will serve her still in the

same love, making His saints to sit down to meat, while He waits on their joy. Luke 12: 37.

Such *was* the Lord, such is the Lord, and such *will be* the Lord, in His unceasing service of love towards His saints; and He tells them to be His imitators. "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." He expects to see, among us on earth, the copy of that which He is doing for us in heaven. He is there daily washing our feet, bearing our need and meeting our defilements before the throne; and He would have us daily washing one another's feet, bearing one another's infirmities, and helping one another's joy, here on the footstool.

This action and teaching of the Lord were thus a taking of the Church, like Moses before, up into the mount, to show her the patterns according to which the things on earth were to be made. Moses then stood above the law, beyond the region of fire and tempest; and so the Church here. The disciples are called up in spirit into the heavenly sanctuary, and there shown the ways of the High Priest in His daily love and care for them; and they are told to go down and do likewise. As was said to Moses, "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed to thee in the mount." The time for the taking of Moses into the mount to *abide there* had not then come. He was only to visit it, that he might see the patterns, and receive orders. And so here. The Church was not yet ready for the glory and for the Father's house. "Whither I go," says the Lord to the disciples, "ye cannot come." They shall follow afterwards, as He further promises; but for the present, there was to be only a sight of the patterns on the mount, that they might copy them on the earth. But *love* alone can fashion those copies, for *love is* the artificer of the originals in heaven. As the Lord again says, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have *love* one to another." It is not, as of old, the skill of such as "work in gold, and in silver, and in brass" that will do now, but the skill of such as "walk in love." The fashioning of any kind thought in the heart toward a brother, the arming of the mind with power to bear and forbear in

love, the goings forth of the soul in sympathies, and the moulting off or softening down of any hard or selfish affection; these are the copies of the heavenly patterns. It is only as "dear children" we can be "imitators of God." Eph. 5: 1. And what comfort is this! When the Lord would appoint on earth the witness of His own ways in heaven, He tells us to love one another, to wash one another's feet! What a sight of Him, though within the veil, does this give us! "He shows His thoughts how kind they be." What manner of daily occupation of our Priest in His sanctuary on high is here disclosed to us!

And, beloved, let me admonish myself and you to seek to walk more amid these witnesses of the Lord than we do. For this would be our assurance before Him, and our joy among ourselves. If our ways were steady, unwavering ways of love, we should be ever walking in the midst of the shadows and emblems of Christ; we should have the Lord's thoughts in all their kindness and constancy ever before us; and what joy and assurance would that give us! No suspicions of His love, no cloudings of doubt and fear, could then gather on the soul; but we should hear Him with our ears, and see Him with our eyes, and handle Him with our hands; for all that ear, or eye, or hand met from one another would witness, as well as savour, of His love. This, indeed, would be a sweet dwelling "in the house of the Lord," a blessed beholding of "the beauty of the Lord." But all this display of glorious love the poor heart of man is not prepared for. Peter expresses this common ignorance. He does not yet understand this connection between *glory* and *service*. He follows his human thoughts, and says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." But Peter was to know all this by-and-by, as his Lord promises; for, Peter and his Lord were one. But Judas must be separated. "I speak not of you all," said the Lord. The presence of the traitor in the midst of the saints up to this solemn moment was needed; for the scripture had said, "He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me." Judas must receive the sop from the Lord's own hand. The pledge of love must be given and despised ere Satan could enter; for it is the rejection of love that matures the sin of man, as the

remaining unmoved by this signal mark of kindness from the hand of his Master perfected the sin of Judas; and Satan entered. Satan's indwelling is not noticed till the sop was received — as man, in this dispensation of ours, has despised love, and thus matured his sin — as the Lord afterwards said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin." John 15: 24. But, having now despised the love of the Gospel, man has *gone his way*; as Judas here, having received the sop, *went out to* betray Him Who had given it. And our evangelist adds, "It was night." Solemn words! Night *in* man and night *for* Jesus.

But He at once looks beyond this night; for, dark as it was to be to Him, it was to open into the perfect day. Jesus would be glorified in God *at once*, for God was glorified in Him; the only Son of man in whom He ever was glorified. He had kept the nature without spot, and was now about to present it to God a sheaf of untainted human fruit fitted for God's garner. Man in Jesus had been glorified, for all that had proceeded from Him, all that had been drawn out of Him, was according to God. John 14: 30, 31. Not one speck sullied the moral beauty there. Man in Jesus had not come short of the glory of God. And God, Who had thus been glorified in Him, would therefore glorify Him in Himself. But as to all beside it was altogether otherwise. Jesus could go *at once* to God, by virtue of all this moral glory; but as to all beside it matters not; whether saints or unbelievers, whether Peters or Pharisees, there could not be this. A place with God must be *prepared*, ere even the saints could be gathered into it (John 14: 1); and, therefore, the Lord says to them, "Ye shall seek *Me*, and as I said *unto the Jews*, whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you."

This day of His own glory in God, Jesus here anticipates, saying, as soon as the traitor was gone out, "Now is the Son of man glorified."* And so, by-and-by, there will be room again for the display of the glory, when the Son of man shall have gathered out of His kingdom all things that offend, and all that do iniquity; when the traitor shall again *go out*, then shall the glory be witnessed, and the

righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The floor once purged, the sheaves of glory will be gathered into the garner.

*I would notice the assurance of heart which the consciousness of love at all times gives us. Peter and John are not at all alarmed at the Lord's solemn hints about the traitor; they take counsel together to search and find out the meaning of those hints, and who it was that should do this thing. Could our hearts so stand, beloved, before the searchings and discernings of the Spirit of judgment! Conscious love is bold as a lion.

John 14 - 16. — Having thus passed, in spirit, through the night, and taken His place in the day that lay beyond it, the Lord turns to His disciples, and in these chapters, as the Prophet of the heavenly things, instructs and comforts them, telling them of the mystery of His own heavenly priesthood, and of their calling and duties and blessings as the Church of God still sojourning on earth during the exercise of that priesthood.

The priesthood of the Son of God, or the present dispensation, during which He is on the Father's throne, and we in the kingdom of the Son of God's love, was a secret with God hid from the thoughts of Israel altogether. The "little while" was a stage in the divine procedure of which both the Jews and the disciples were equally ignorant. John 7: 36; John 16: 17. They had all thought that Christ was to abide for ever (John 12: 34); for their prophets had spoken of Him in connection with earthly dominion. There were, however, many intimations, both from prophecy and from history, which might have prepared them for this. Joseph's residence and glory in Egypt, and, during that time, his forgetfulness of his kindred in Canaan till stress of famine brought them to him, had typified this mystery. So had Moses' sojourn in Midian. See Acts 7. We may judge, no doubt, that both Joseph and Moses had constant recollections of their own people, and many a desire toward them, while separated from them — but it was an *untold* desire. So we

know that the Lord is now mindful of Jerusalem, her walls are continually before Him, engraven on the psalms of His hands. But apparently He is to them as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save. Ezekiel 14: 9.

And, beside those typical histories, the prophets had spoken directly of this mystery. They had foretold Jerusalem's *widowhood*, which was to continue for a season. Moses at the beginning had left a standing testimony with Israel, that the Lord for a time would hide His face from them, and provoke them to jealousy by those who were "not a people." Deut. 32. David had said that Messiah, as his Lord, should for a while sit at the right hand of God. Ps. ex. Isaiah had a vision of Christ in the heavenly glory, during a season of judgment on Israel. Is. 6. Ezekiel saw the glory leave the city, and then, *after a season*, return to it. And the Lord had said, by Hosea, "I will go and return unto My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early." In His own ministry the Lord Jesus had already referred to the same mystery. In Matthew He corrects the thought that Christ was to abide for ever, by a recital of those scriptures which spoke of the rejection of the Stone by the builders. In Luke He had shown, by the parable of the nobleman going into a far country, that there was to be an interval between the *first* appearing of Messiah, and His appearing in *His kingdom*. But now, in our Gospel, He treats of this matter more fully, showing the character of this interval, or of His session for a while at the right hand of God in heaven.

Having, therefore, closed His public ministry, and being in retirement with the disciples, He occupies Himself with this subject. In the action of the thirteenth chapter, in the teaching of these fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters, and again in the action of the seventeenth, it is *the heavenly priesthood* that He is variously either exhibiting or teaching; thus showing that, in His present interval of separation from Israel, He is blessedly occupying Himself for the Church. In sympathies and intercessions, in the diligence and wakefulness of One Whose eye is over them, He is all

action towards His saints now. He is separated from His brethren according to the flesh, it is true, but He is, meanwhile, like Moses, tending the flock of His Father at the Mount of God, far away from both Egypt's pollutions and Israel's unbelief, tasting the comforts of a beloved home and family, in holy retirement.

An impression of a very happy character lies on my mind from reading the opening of John 14. It is this. Our Lord *assumes* that His ministry had brought the Father so near to them that His disciples ought to have concluded that His *house was their home*. There is great consolation in this.

The Lord's ministry had been such a revelation of the Father's love to them, that it would have been strange indeed had this not been the case. Such a thing would have been an *exception*, and, therefore, to have been noticed. But that there were mansions for them, as well as for Him, in the Father's house, was so fully in character with all His previous works and words, that such a fact, such a truth, needed no mention at all. It was a *necessary* conclusion. All family privileges were theirs, and of *course* the family mansion was their home.

What a conclusion for faith to be entitled to draw, without direct instruction! Nay, we should be chargeable with spiritual dulness, if we did not draw it! How could such a ministry as that of Jesus, "the Son of the Father," tell of any thing less than this, that the Father's own house was to be our home for ever?

"Unfathomable wonder, and mystery divine," I may again say. All we need is that spirit of childlike faith which rests in the reality of such surpassing grace.

Would that His family were refreshing the solitude of the Son of God better than they do! Would that they were a more "beautiful flock" for His care and tendance at the Mount of God! a more joyous scene to compensate Him for His present loss of Israel! But He has laid down His life for them, He has given Himself for the sheep, and in His love He abideth faithful.

And these chapters, I may further say, show us that the ministry of the Son had done nothing that was effectual upon the hearts of His disciples. For so the divine order ran — the Father had worked hitherto, the Son was now working, but the Holy Ghost had also to work, ere the Church could be set in her place. And thus it is not until now we get the name of God fully revealed. The revelation of it shines gradually more and more brightly as dispensations advance. But this is a great subject.

In Genesis 1 it is simply "God" that we see and hear. It is "God" Who goes through the six days' work, and then rests on the seventh. But in Genesis 2 it is "the Lord God" that we see and hear. And these are two stages in God's revelation of Himself. In the first chapter we see Him coming forth as God simply, for His own *delight* and glory. He takes His full delight in the work, beholding it all to be very good, and He glorifies Himself by the work, setting over it one in His own image, the representative of Himself. But in the second chapter we see "the Lord God," that is, God in a covenanted character, God entered upon purposes and plans for the blessing of His creature. And, therefore, much of the previous detail of the work, as it proceeded under the hand of "God," is omitted, and many things are brought into view which had no place before. Thus we have, in strong relief, and which we had not at all in the first chapter, the Garden and the River, the manner of creating the Man, of investing him with dominion, of forming the Woman, and of instituting their union — and we have also the mystic Trees, and the Commandment with its penalty — for all these concerned the place and blessing of the creature in covenant with "the Lord God."*

*We are conscious, when we utter the word "Lord," that we speak of One nearer to us, more our own, than when we say simply "God."

Thus did He begin to unfold His name to us; and after these first notices of "God" and "the Lord God," we get the name "God Almighty," published to Abram. This was a further revelation of Himself. And this was done when Abram was "Past age," and had

nothing to lean upon but the almightiness, or all-sufficiency, of God. Gen. 17: 1. In this name, which declared this needed sufficiency, God led him; and Isaac and Jacob after him; for they were all strangers and pilgrims on the earth, having nothing but the promise of an Almighty Friend for their stay and staff. Gen. 28, 35, 48. In process of time, however, God was known to His people by another name. Bringing them into the covenant, into the promised inheritance, He calls Himself "Jehovah;" that is, the covenant God of Israel. Ex. 6: 1-6. And under God as Jehovah Israel take their seat in Canaan.

But still, all this did not communicate God in the full glory of His name. There was *grace* in God, and there were gifts by grace, which these ways of His did not fully unfold. But this is done in the name which is now published to us — the name of "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." This is the full name or glory of our God; and grace, and the gifts of grace, are effectually brought to us by that dispensation which publishes it.*

*The believer will ever take his sweetest delight in the last or fullest revelation of God. And by this the believer and the mere man of science are distinguished. The merely philosophic man will allow the divine hand to be displayed in creation; he will own "God" in the plants and the cattle, for instance; but the garden and the river, and the married pair, which "the Lord God" has to do with, have no attraction for him; but these are the objects that chiefly engage the *believer's* thoughts.

Thus it was not until the present age that the full name and glory of our God were published. The Father had been working, it is true (see p. 47), in all ages of the Jewish times; but still, Israel were put nationally under God simply as "Jehovah." The revelation of "the Father" had to wait for the ministry of the Son, and certain dispensations had to finish their course ere the Son could come forth. The Son could not have been the minister of the law — such ministry would not have been worthy of Him Who is in the bosom

of the Father. It was committed to angels. And the Son did not come forth in ministry till the "great salvation" was ready to be published. Heb. 2: 1-3. So the manifestation of the Holy Ghost waited for its due time. The Holy Ghost could not wait on the ministry of the law, any more than could the Son. Smoke and lightning and the voice of thunder were there (Ex. 19); but the Holy Ghost came forth, with His gifts and powers, to wait on the ministry of the Son, on the publication of the great salvation. Heb. 2: 3. The Spirit of God could not be a spirit of bondage gendering fear — the law may do that, but the Holy Ghost must gender confidence. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Till the Son of God had finished His works, the Holy Ghost could not come forth. The heart must first be purged from an evil conscience, so that the temple might be sanctified for the indwelling Spirit, and the holy furniture (that is, the spirit of liberty and adoption, and the knowledge of glory) must be prepared for this temple; and all this could be done only by the *death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son*. The revelation of the Holy Ghost waited for these things. He had been, it is true, the holy power in all, from the beginning. He had spoken by the prophets. He was the strength of judges and kings. He was the power of faith, of service, and of suffering, in all the people of God. But all this was below the place which He now takes in the Church. His indwelling in us, as in His temple, had not been of old; but now He does so dwell, spreading out a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. As the Spirit of wisdom He gives us "the mind of Christ," spiritual senses for the discerning of good and evil. As the Spirit of worship He enables us to call God "Father," and Jesus "Lord." He also makes intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. He sheds abroad in the heart "the love of God," and causes us "to abound in hope." He is *in us* a well of water springing up into everlasting life; and He is the source also of "rivers of living water," flowing forth from us to refresh the weary. And He forms the saints together as "a spiritual house," where "spiritual sacrifices" are offered; no longer admitting "a worldly sanctuary," and "carnal ordinances;" for they are builded

together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; and gifts, causing them all to grow up into Christ in all things, are dispensed among them.

These are some of the ways of the Holy Ghost in His kingdom within the saint: these are His works which shine in the place of His dominion. He is there an Earnest, an Unction, and a Witness. He tells us "plainly of the Father," and takes of the things of Christ, to show them to us. John 16: 14, 15. His presence in us is so pure, that there is no evil that He does not resent and grieve over (Eph. 4: 30); and yet so tender and sympathizing, that there is nothing of godly sorrow that He does not feel and groan over. Rom. 8: 23. He causes hope to abound; He imparts the sense of full divine favour; He reads to our conscience a title to calm and entire assurance. There is nothing of feebleness, or narrowness, or uncertainty in the place of His power. His operations savour of a *kingdom*, and a *kingdom of God* too, full of beauty and strength. We have to own how little we live in the virtue and sunshine of it; but still, this is what it is in itself, though our narrow and hindered hearts so poorly possess themselves of it. And His handiwork is to have its praise from us; and His glory in His temples is to be declared. It is well to be humbled at times by testing ourselves in reference to such an indwelling kingdom; but the kingdom itself is not to be so measured.*

*I must observe here something that again strikes me as being highly characteristic of this Gospel by John. The name of God is published in a formal manner in Matthew; it is published, as I may say, literally, or in the strict terms and syllables of it. See John 28: 19. But in this Gospel, as we have now seen in these chapters, it is published after a moral method; the knowledge of that name, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," being conveyed to the soul through a revelation of their several acts and ways in the economy of our salvation and blessing.

Precious, I need not say, beloved, all this mystery is. The whole order of things to which we are introduced tells us (and this is full of richest comfort) that it is *God* and not *ourselves* we have now *immediately* to do with. In the law it was otherwise. The law dealt with us immediately, saying, "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." But now it is *God* we have first to do with. We are absolutely summoned away from ourselves, and are not to remember whether we were Jews or Greeks. We have *God* to look to, *God* to hear, *God* to do with. And this is the highest possible point of blessing for a sinner to apprehend — so blessed is it that Satan does what he can to keep us short of it, to make the ear heavy to the voice of *God*, the eye dim to the ways and works of *God*, and the heart irresponsive to the love of *God*. He would fain busy us with any thing that the light of the glory of the Gospel of Christ, *Who is the Image of God*, may not shine in. He makes some busy with thoughts of their righteousness, and others busy with thoughts, of their sins, that he may keep them, either through vainglory or fear, apart from God Himself.

Now, to draw the disciples from a mere Jewish place into this elevation, and by this to comfort them under the sense of His absence, is the Lord's great purpose in the discourse which He holds with them in these chapters, the like to which never passed between the sons of men — the heart and mind of God had never before so largely and blessedly communicated their treasures to the desires and thoughts of His people, as now the Lord was doing. Most sacred moments of communion between heaven and earth were these!

At the beginning the Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." This at once gives them notice of another Object of faith than what they as yet had. God, in the sense of these words, had been already known to Israel. The disciples, in their Jewish place, were already believers in *God*. The Lord here allows that, as He had before asserted, speaking to the woman of Samaria: "We [i.e., Jews] know what we worship." The Jews had God; their faith was not wrong, but only defective, and the Lord would now fill it out. He would now have them to know *the*

Father through the Son — and the whole of this discourse with His disciples furthers this design. He speaks particularly of the Father, and promises the Comforter to make these things (the things of the Father and the Son) known to them.

This was the character of grace which this Gospel at the beginning intimated, when John wrote, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become *the sons* of God." And this early notice of the value and power of the Son's ministry is, in these chapters, largely unfolded. But while this is doing, we have several forms of Jewish ignorance brought out — necessarily so, I may say, for Israel did not stand in this knowledge into which the Lord was now leading them. *Thomas* is ignorant of Christ's departure and separation from this earth, and says, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest;" for Israel had been taught that Christ was to abide for ever. *Philip* betrays his unacquaintedness with the Father; for it was not the knowledge of the Father in the Son that Israel had been led into. *Judas* wondered at any glory but the manifested, worldly glory of Messiah; for such was Israel's hope. And they all stand amazed at the mystery of the "little while." But out of these thoughts the heavenly Prophet is leading them. They had been already drawn out from the apostate nation, as God's remnant accepting Jesus as Messiah come from *God*; but they had still to know the Son as come from *the Father*, Who, while He was with them, had been showing them *the Father*, Who was now about to return to *the Father*, and Who would come again to take them home to *the Father*. These were the great things of His love which their divine Prophet here reveals to them; but these were as yet strange things unto them.

But the course of our Lord's own thoughts through this conversation, is only for a while interrupted by these defective Jewish thoughts of His disciples. His purpose was to elevate them to the sense of their calling, as the Church of God, and thus to comfort them; and that purpose He steadily follows, however He may, for a time, have to rebuke their slowness of heart. Thus: in the interruption occasioned by Peter (John 13: 36 - 14: 1), the Lord, in answering Peter, is called

to contemplate and foretell his faithlessness, and denial of Him; but this does not turn out of their course the thoughts, of kindness about him and the rest of them which the Lord was pursuing. "Let not your heart be troubled," says the gracious Master, *immediately* after forewarning Peter of his sin. So, at the close of the conversation, He had to tell them that the hour was then at hand when every one of them would go to his own, and leave Him alone; and yet, without allowing an interruption of His flow of love towards them for a single moment, He *at once* resumes His own thoughts, saying to them, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

And so, beloved, with His saints ever since. We may, through our own folly, have to listen to the "cock crowing" to receive rebuke, go out, and weep; but the heart of Jesus does not repent of His purposed kindness toward us. His purpose is to save, and He will save. His purpose is to bless, and who shall hinder? He has not beheld iniquity in His people. They are to have *peace* accomplished for them by His death, *life* brought to them by His resurrection, and *glory* to be hereafter theirs at His return. These are their blessings and of these He tells them, in spite of all slowness of heart or unworthiness, for their comfort under the sense of His going away.

The works that Jesus did, in Matthew's Gospel, are owned to be those of the Son of David. John 12: 23. They are there the seals of His *Messiahship*. But here the Lord offers them to His disciples as the seals of His *Sonship of the Father*. He would have them looked upon, not merely as tokens that He could *order the kingdom of Israel*, according to the promises of the prophets (Isa. 35: 5, 6), but as witnesses that He was the Dispenser of the *Father's* grace and power; for He says, "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake." And this is in full consistency with our Gospel. And the "greater works," which He immediately afterwards promises that believers in Him should do, were to be, as I judge, works of the same character,

works that were to savour of the *Father's* grace, such as the bringing of condemned sinners into the liberty of the children of God. As Paul says, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." And so is it still. Sinners are still brought into the liberty of dear children. "I will not leave you *orphans*," says the Lord in this place: "I will come to you." "Because I live, ye shall live also." No orphanage for them no lamentation from them as there was from Israel, that they were fatherless. John 14: 18, *margin*; Lam. 5: 3. The *adoption* of the saints during the *orphanage* of Israel is here brought out by the Lord in terms of deep and wondrous meaning. They were to know that He was in the Father, and they in Him, and He in them. THE FATHER is the holy burden here.

And there is a little action of the Lord's that I must notice. At the close of the fourteenth chapter He says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you;" by this telling them, that, ere He left this world, He would leave His peace behind Him — peace for them as sinners accomplished by His death. And after thus telling them of *peace*, He says, "Arise, let us go hence." Upon which we may assume that they all rise from the paschal table, and walk forth toward the Mount of Olives; and then it is, that He at once presents Himself to them as, in resurrection, their Life, the Source of quickening power, saying, "I am the Vine; ye are the branches."

There is a beautiful significancy in the whole of this action. He sits at the paschal table till *peace* had been pronounced, for on that table the pledges of their peace were at that moment spread; but as He rises from it, He tells them of their resurrection-life — life that they were to know as in Him, risen above the power of death — the true Vine. And He tells them that there is no other life but this; saying "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is *withered*." And, having thus disclosed to them the only root of life, He shows them the joys and holy prerogatives of this life, teaching them that they were to have His own joy, the joy of the Son, fulfilled in them, and were also to enter into the dignity and grace of friendship with their Lord, and to assure themselves that His glory and their blessing

were now but one interest; and, moreover, that the Father's great purpose was to glorify the Son as this Vine, or Head of life; that having planted it as the only Witness of life in the earth, which is the scene of death, the Father would watch over it with the care and diligence of a husbandman. This the Lord here shows to be the Father's *present* care, to have the Vine in beauty and fruitfulness, to glorify Jesus as the HEAD OF LIFE, as by-and-by He will glorify Him on the throne of glory as HEIR OF ALL THINGS. In old times the eye of God was upon the land of Israel, as her Husbandman (Deut. 11: 12); but now it is watching over this Vine, which His own hand has planted.

All this told the disciples of exceeding riches of grace. But withal He tells them, that this union with Him was to separate them from the world; this friendship with Him was to expose them to the world's hatred. The world was soon to express its full enmity to God, and then to them. The revelation of God in love, the revelation of the Father in and by the Son, was soon about to be fully refused by the world. This was hatred indeed, hatred "without a cause," hatred for love. The cross of Christ was soon to present man's fullest hatred meeting God's fullest love. Ignorant of *the Father*, it might be still zealous for *God*, and think to do God service by killing the children of the Father. For there may be zeal for the synagogue, yea, and for the God of the synagogue, with entire separation from the spirit of that dispensation which publishes riches of grace, and reveals the Father in the Son.

But this view of the sorrows which His saints might endure from the world, leads the Lord to exhibit the services of the promised Comforter in them and for them still more blessedly. He tells them that the Comforter would stand *for* them *against* the world, convicting it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, but at the same time dwelling in them the Witness of their Father's love, and their Lord's glory. This comfort He provides for them against the day of the world's hatred.

And here let me observe, that the Spirit was now to be received from *the Father*. God had approved Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2: 22); but it was from *the Father* that the Holy Ghost was to be received, and He would approve His presence according to this. Look at the character of His presence in the Church, immediately on His being given. Acts 2. What an oil of gladness, what a Spirit of liberty and largeness of heart, is He in the saints there! Jesus had received Him in the ascended place, where He Himself had been made full of joy with God's countenance, and giving Him forth from such a place, He manifests Himself here accordingly, imparting at once something of that joy of God's countenance into which their Lord had entered. They *gladly* received the word, ate their bread with *gladness*, and *praised* God. And this joy could easily dry up other sources. They parted with what might have secured *human* delights and provided for *natural* desires. The Holy Ghost in them was joy and liberty and largeness of heart. It was the Spirit "of the Father." It was the reflection on the saints here of that light which had fallen on Jesus in the holiest. The oil had run down from the beard to the skirts of the clothing. Psalm 133.

Indeed, we can form but a poor idea of the value of such a dispensation as this which the Comforter was now to bring, to a soul that had been under the spirit of bondage and of fear gendered by the law. What thoughts of judgment to come were now bidden to depart! What fears of death were now to yield to the consciousness of *present* life in the Son of God! And what would all this be but anointing with an oil of gladness? And the disciples, by this discourse, were under training for this joy and liberty. The schoolmaster was soon to give up his charge — his rod and his book of elements were now to be dispensed with — and in this discourse, the Son is leading the children on their way home to their Father from under such tutors and governors, and they are soon to reach the Father, that they might know, through the Holy Ghost, the liberty and joy of adoption. Gal. 3, 4.

Such was this interesting hour to the Church. The Holy Ghost, the Witness of the Father and the Son, and thus the Spirit of adoption, was soon to be imparted, and they were now led forth from the school of the law to wait for it. With thoughts of the Father and of the Son, and of the Church's interests in all their love, the Holy Ghost was now to fill the saints. And this accordingly He does in our dispensation. He tells us, as the Lord here promises He should, of the delight that the Father has in the Son, of His purpose to glorify Him, and of our place in that delight and glory. He takes of these things and the like, and shows them unto us.

Look at Genesis 24, a well-known and much enjoyed scripture. It sets forth the election of a bride for the Son by the Father — but the place which the servant occupies in it, is just the place of the Holy Ghost in the Church, ministering (as in divine grace) to the joys of the Son and the Church, in perfecting the purposes of the Father's love. In that scene, the servant of Abraham tells Rebecca of the way in which God had prospered his master — what a favoured and beloved one Isaac was, how he had been the child of old age, and how Abraham had made him the heir of all his possessions. He discloses to her the counsels which Abraham had taken touching a wife for this much loved son of his, and lets her see clearly her own election of God to fill that holy and honoured place. And at last he puts upon her the pledges of this election and of Isaac's love.

Nothing could be more touching and significant than the whole scene. Would that our hearts knew more of the power of all this, under the Holy Ghost, as Rebecca knew it under the hand of Abraham's servant! It was because he had filled her with thoughts of Abraham and of Isaac, and of her own interest in them, that she was ready to go with this stranger all alone across the desert. Her mind was formed by these thoughts; and she was prepared to say to her country, her kindred, and her father's house, "I will go." And the thoughts of our heavenly Father's love, and our Isaac's delight in us, can still give us holy separation from this defiled place where we dwell. Communion with the Father and the Son through the

Comforter, is the holy way of distinguishing the Church from the world. There may be the fear of a coming judgment working something of actual separation from it, or the pride of the Pharisee working *religious* separation from it, but the present knowledge of the Father's love and the hope of the coming glories of the Son, can alone work a *divine* separation from its course and its spirit.

The Father's love, of which the Comforter testifies, is an *immediate* love. It is the love of *God* that has visited the world in the gift of His Son (John 3: 16); but the moment this love of God is believed, and the message of reconciliation which it has set forth is received, then are believers entitled, through the riches of grace, to know *the Father's* love, a love that is an *immediate* love, as the Lord here tells us. John 16: 26, 27. It is of this love of the Father, as well as of the glory of the Son, that the Comforter tells us on the way homeward. He is our Companion for all the journey, and this is His discourse with us. How did the servant, I doubt not (to return to the same chapter, Gen. 24), as he accompanied Rebecca across the desert, tell her further of his master, adding many things to what he had already told her in Mesopotamia; for he had been the confidant of his master, and had known him from the beginning. He knew his desire for a son, and God's promise and God's faithfulness. He knew of Abraham's victory over the kings, of his rescue of Lot, and meeting with Melchizedek. He knew of the covenant, the pledge of the inheritance. He knew of the dismissal of Ishmael from the house, and of Isaac's walk in it without a rival — of the mystic journey up Mount Moriah, and of Isaac being thus alive from the dead. All this he knew, and all this doubtless he told her of, as they travelled on together, with these recollections and prospects delighting her, though her back was now turned, and turned for ever, upon her country and her father's house. And, beloved, were we more consciously *on the way* with the Comforter, the way would to its in like manner be beguiled by His many tales of love and glory, whispering of the Father and of the Son to our inmost souls. Be it so with us, Thy poor people, blessed Lord, more and more!

John 17. — After thus comforting them with the knowledge of their standing, as the family of the Father, and, as it were, making gracious amends to them for His own absence from them "after the flesh," and the hatred they were to suffer from the world, the Lord again exhibits, in this chapter, one of His priestly services, as He had done in John 13. But the services are different; both, however, together constituting a full presentation of His ways as our Advocate in the heavenly temple. In chapter 13 He had, as it were, laid one hand on the defiled feet of His saints, here He lays the other hand on the throne of the Father — forming, thus, a chain of marvellous workmanship reaching from God to sinners. In chapter 13 His body was girt, and He was stooping down towards our feet — here, His eyes are lifted up, and He is looking in the face of the Father. What that is asked for us, by One Who thus fills up the whole distance between the bright throne of God and our defiled feet, can be denied? All must be granted — such a One is heard always.

Thus we get the sufficiency and acceptance of the Advocate; and we may notice the order in which He makes His requests, and lays His claims, before the Father.

First. — He makes request in behalf of the Father's own glory. "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that *Thy Son also may glorify Thee.*" His first thought was upon the Father's interest; as He had before taught His disciples, ere they presented their own desires and necessities, to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven, *hallowed be Thy name.*"

Life eternal the Lord lays in the Father's hand; saying, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." By this our Mediator bows to the truth of God, which Satan of old had traduced, and which man had questioned. Gen. 3: 4. But He then adds, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou has sent" — owning that life is now to be had only through redemption, that it is not the life of a *creature merely*,

but of a *ransomed creature*, a life rescued for us from the power of death by the grace of the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour.

Secondly. - He claims His own glory. "Glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." And this claim He grounds upon His having finished the work that had been given Him to do; saying, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." For this was a work into which no blot had entered, in which, therefore, God could rest and be refreshed, as in His works of old; a work which the Father might behold, and say of it, "It is all very good;" in which He might again find a Sabbath.

And this is the believer's comfort, that he sees his salvation depending on a finished work, in which God smells "a savour of rest." Gen. 8: 21, *margin*. At the beginning, on finishing the work of creation, God sanctified the seventh day, resting, in full satisfaction, in all that His hand had formed. But that rest man disturbed, so that God repented that He had made man on the earth. Again, in due time, the Lord provided for Himself another rest, erecting a tabernacle in Canaan, and offering to Israel a place in that rest, giving them His Sabbath. (Ex. 31: 13. By the sword of Joshua, this rest in Canaan was first made good to Israel (Joshua 21: 44; Joshua 23: 1); and then under the throne of Solomon. 1 Chr. 22: 9. But Israel, like Adam, disturbed this rest — the land did not keep her Sabbath, for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein. 2 Chr. 36: 21. The blessed God has now found another and a sure rest, a rest that can never be lost or disturbed. In the work finished by the Lord Jesus Christ (and which the Lord here presents to Him) God again rests, as in His works of old, with fullest complacency. This finished work is altogether according to His mind. By the resurrection of Christ, the Father has said of it, "Behold, it is very good." It is His rest for ever; He has an abiding delight in it. His eyes and His heart are upon it continually. *The work of Christ accomplished for sinners has given God a rest.* That is a thought full of blessing to the soul.

And when faith sets a right value, that is, God's value, on the blood of Christ, there is rest, God's own rest, for the soul. But it is then that the saint (or believing sinner) begins his toil. The moment I rest as a sinner, I begin my labour as a *saint*. The rest for the saint is a rest *that remaineth*; and therefore it is written, "Let us *labour* therefore to enter into that *rest*, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." The sinner rests now; the saint labours still, and will till the kingdom come.

Thirdly. — He prays for His people. He asks that they might be kept through the Father's name, and sanctified through the Father's truth, so that they might be one in the communion of the Son's joy *now*; and He asks that they might be with Him where He is, and there behold His glory, and be one with Him in His glory *hereafter*. These are large requests. The divine Advocate would have *all* His saints *one*. See vv. 11, 21. But this oneness is not such, I judge, as it is commonly interpreted to be — a manifested ecclesiastical oneness. It is a oneness in personal knowledge of, and fellowship with, the Father and the Son — oneness in spirit, in the spirit of their minds, each of them having the "Spirit of adoption," which was the peculiar grace and power of that dispensation which He, the Son, was about to introduce. The desire is, that such a spirit might have its course in the hearts of each and all of the elect now to be gathered.

Has this failed? That could not be. And all the epistles witness to us that it has not. For there we find the saints in every place, whether Jew or Gentile, considered as kept by the Father in His own name; kept as sons, as "accepted in the Beloved," as having the "Spirit of adoption," as being brought together into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. All such statements are assertions that this desire of the great Advocate had been answered, each believer having the joy of the Son fulfilled in himself, and thus all of them one in the spirit of their minds. This desire does not, I assuredly judge, respect any *ecclesiastical* condition of things. That thought has led to many a human effort among the saints. They have condemned themselves for not realizing this prayer of the Lord by a

manifestation of unity; and then they have taken means to bring this about. But I ask, Is this prayer of the Lord made contingent on the energies of the saints? Is it not addressed to the Father, for what rested simply in the good pleasure, and power, and gift of the Father? Surely. It appealed to the Father, that He would keep the elect in His name, sanctify them by His truth, and impart to them, the joy of the Son, so that each might have that joy fulfilled in himself.

This desire has been realized. The spirit of the Son is equally for each and all of the saints, and they are one in that spirit and in that joy. When the due season comes, we shall see the other desires of this chapter also made good. All who are to receive the testimony have not yet been called, nor has the glory yet shone out and been imparted to them, so that as yet the world has neither believed nor known that the Father has sent the Son. See vv. 21, 23. The world as yet knows them not. 1 John 3: 1. But in their season these requests will be answered. And so, in like manner, the vision of glory. See v. 24. As far as we have gone in divine dispensation, the desires have been answered; the rest only wait for their season.

To us, however, beloved, it is most comforting to find that all these glorious desires for the saints our Lord grounds simply on this, that they had received the Son's testimony about the Father, and had believed surely in the Father's love. "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me."

But how full of blessing it is, to see that we are presented before God simply as believing that love! How surely does it tell us, that the pleasure of our God is this, that we should know Him in love, know Him as the Father, know Him according to the words of Him Whom He had sent. This is joy and liberty. And it is indeed only as having seen God in love, seen the Father and heard the Father in Jesus, that makes us the family. It is not the graces that adorn us, or

the services that we render, but simply that we know the Father. It is this which distinguishes the saint from the world, and gives him his standing, as here, in the presence of the Father. It is simply *this* (as the Mediator here tells the Father about us), that we have received His word, received the Son's testimony of love brought from the Father.

Thus does the divine Advocate plead before the throne. The Father's glory, His own, and His people's, are all provided for and secured. And, having thus poured forth the desires of His soul, He commits "the world," the great enemy, to the notice of the *righteous* Father. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." For it had now proved itself to be a world that indeed knew not the Father, that hated Him Whom the Father had sent, and out of which the Lord was now drawing His people. He does not, however, call for judgment upon it; but leaves it simply under the notice of the "righteous Father," to Whose judgment it belonged.

And it is merely as *being ignorant of the Father* that the Lord presents the world. He does not arraign its sins before the throne, but simply presents it as ignorant of the Father; as before, when presenting the Church, He did not speak of her graces or services, as we saw, but simply this, *that she knew the Father*. For as the knowledge of the Father makes the Church what she is, so this ignorance of the Father is that which makes the world what it is. The world is that which refuses to know God in love, so as to rejoice in Him. It will make up its own pleasures, and draw from its own resources; it will have any thing but the music, and the ring, and the fatted calf of the Father's house. The world was formed by Satan in the garden of Eden. There the serpent beguiled the woman; and, being listened to and spoken with, he formed the human mind according to his own pattern. We have the history and character of this evil work in Genesis 3. God's love and God's word were traduced by the enemy - man believed the slander, and made God a liar. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, were planted in the soul as master-powers (Gen. 3: 6; 1 John 2: 16);

and then, conscience and fear and avoidance of God became the condition into which man was cast. The man and the woman began to know that they were naked, and they hid themselves among the trees, retreating from the voice of God; and then, from the covert where they lay, they send forth excuses for themselves, and challenges of God. "The serpent *beguiled me*, and I did eat," says Eve — "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" says Adam.

Such was the man then, and such has the world been, ever since. Man's own lusts are ruling him, with dread of God, and desired distance from Him; and the secret whisper of his soul is this, that all this mischief must lie at God's own door.

From such a world the saints are in spirit and in calling delivered, and the world itself is left, as here, for judgment. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The world had no place in Jesus. The prince of it came and only drew from Him the full witness of this, that He loved the Father, and would do as He had commanded. John 14: 30, 31. So the saints have left it. They have come forth from their covert at the voice of the Son; they have heard of the Father's love towards them; they have believed it, and have walked forth in the sunshine of it. The promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head drew Adam forth from behind the trees of the garden; though *dead* in sins, he believed this promise of life, and came forth accordingly, calling his wife "the mother of all *living*." And so, as we have seen in this chapter, it is just the believing of the message of love which the Son has brought to us from the Father - it is just this, that makes the saints what they are — an election out of the dark and distant regions where the world dwells, and where the spirit of the world breathes. And it is, as we have also seen, the refusal to listen to this message of love that keeps the world still the world. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." For men have only to receive God's word of reconciliation, to believe His love in the gift of His Son, and then to

take their happy place in His family as His chosen ones, "accepted in the Beloved."

Here the third section of our Gospel ends. It has shown us Jesus, the Son of the Father, as our Advocate, doing His constant services for us — it has shown us also Jesus, the Son of the Father, revealing the Father to the children. The blessed God had got Himself a name, the name of "Jehovah," by His signs and wonders in Egypt and in Israel (Jer. 32: 20); but now was He getting Himself another name, a name of still richer grace, the name of "Father." This name He gets in the person and by the work of the Son of His love; and the power of it is now made effectual in the hearts of the children by the Holy Ghost.

Lo, these are parts of Thy ways, our God and Father; but how little a portion of Thee do our narrow souls understand and enjoy!

But here, ere we enter on the last portion of our Gospel, I would suggest, that we receive an impression of intense personality, of a divine purpose to individualize us, when we read the writings of John. His Gospel at once gives us this. The world did not know Him Who made it, Israel did not receive Him Who owned them; but "as many" as received Him, He entitled and enabled to become sons of God. This we read at the beginning of the Gospel. We are addressed in our common place of ruin, and in our common character as sinners, victims of the lie of the old serpent. The scenes before us keep us in the sense of our individuality before God. They do not address us as in any relative place, or where previous dispensations may have put us; but rather where the common destruction of the nature has put us, in that "darkness," that alienation from God, which our fall and apostasy at the beginning brought us.

What a direct, emphatic character is thus given to these scriptures! How they tell us, whether indeed it be his Gospel or his epistles that we are reading, that we are to have, and to know that we have, each one of us, our own place and interest before the living God.

And, according to this, we may observe something in the Lord's own way in this Gospel by John that is peculiar to it, and characteristic of this intense personality of which I am speaking.

In the earlier part of it, or during His public ministry, the apostles are kept very much apart from Him; and then, in the following part, or in His interview and discourse with them, they are brought specially near to Him.

In the earlier part, or during His public ministry (John 1 - 10), we see Him very remarkably *alone* in His work, as, indeed, I have before observed. He does not, as in the other Gospels, appoint twelve and seventy to be the companions of His ministry; He is alone with sinners, settling with them the great interests of their souls, in the grace and virtue of the Son of God. And blessed it is to see this. It is one of the dearest thoughts to us sinners, that we may be alone with Jesus, and that apostles and churches, or fellow-saints and ordinances, are not needed for this business which is to determine our own personal, individual eternity. The well of Samaria, where the Son of the Father met the sinner, was to her as solitary a spot as Luz, of old, had been to Jacob. But like Luz to Jacob, it became Bethel to her, the very gate of heaven.

But, let me add, this being apart from His apostles or His disciples, this solitariness of the Son of God with the sinner, during His public ministry, was *for the sinner's sake*, and *not against the disciples*. He loved His servants and companions, and would not refuse them a share in His services and rewards. But He must consult for the sinner, and will not allow him to be deprived of the deep consolation which this thought must carry with it, that in the settling of his interests for eternity, none need be with him but Himself.

This public scene of His service, however, ends with John 10, as we have already said. The fruit of grace being sealed to sinners, in due time, as we have also already said, Jesus, leaving His ministry abroad, deals with His own in secret; and then we find that He

brings Himself nearer than ever, as near, indeed, as He can, as near as affection could desire.

After Judas is gone (John 13) and all is over as between Jesus and the scene around Him, and He can be alone with the disciples, as He had been with sinners, we see Him then in the dearest, closest intimacies. John 14 - 16. He retires to them as into the bosom of a family, letting out the fulness of His heart. Of the Father, and the Father's house, the Father's love, and the Father's secrets, He speaks, promising also the Comforter to make this effectual to their souls, and that He Himself, though in a distant place, would still serve and remember them.*

*Because of the nearness of His heart to them, He feels their carelessness or indifference, and lets them know (as near affection would do) that He had felt this, and had been wounded by it. See John 14: 28; John 16: 5.)

What a sight thus passes before us in the progress of this divine Gospel! If, in the earlier part, the solitude of the Son of God with the sinner made him feel as at the "gate of heaven," what is this latter part to the soul of the saint, this intimacy of the Son of the Father with His elect, but heaven itself!

John's is, indeed, the Gospel of the intimacies of the Son of God, first with the sinner and then with the disciple. And blessed beyond expression is such a thought, had we but hearts open and tender to receive it.

All is grace, and grace delights to display the *variety* of its ways, as well as the riches of its stores. Oh for a simple, believing mind, beloved, that is able to occupy itself with such secrets and such treasures!

John 18 - 21.

I HAVE followed this Gospel in its order, down to the close of John 17, having distributed it so far into three principal sections: *the first*, introducing our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Stranger from heaven, and giving us His action and reception in the world *the second*, exhibiting Him in His intercourses and controversies with Israel; *the third*, giving Him to us in the bosom of His elect, instructing them in the mysteries of the heavenly priesthood, and in their standing as the children of the Father. And now, we have to consider *the fourth* and closing section, which gives us what attended on His death and resurrection. May the entrance of the Lord's words still give light, and bear with them to our souls a savour of that blessed One of Whom they speak!

But while, in labours like these, beloved, we seek to discover the order of the divine Word, and are led to wonder at its depths, or admire its beauty, we should remember that it is its *truth* we must chiefly consider. It is when the Word comes with "much assurance," that it works *effectually* in us. It will not profit if not mixed with *faith*. Its power to gladden and to purify will depend on its being received *as truth*; and as we trace out, and present to one another, the beauties, the depths, and the wonders of the Word, we should oftentimes pause, and say to our souls, as the angel said to the overwhelmed apostle who had seen the lovely visions and heard the marvellous revelations, "These are the *true* sayings of God."

The place in our Gospel to which I have now arrived, presents our Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings. But I may notice that it is not His sufferings that occupy *Him* in this Gospel. Throughout it He appears to stand above the reproaches of the people, and the world's rejection of Him. So that, when the last passover was approaching, though in the other Gospels we see Him with His mind full upon His being the Lamb that was chosen for it, and hear Him saying to His disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified," yet in our Gospel it

is not so. He goes up to Jerusalem at the time; but it is to seat Himself in the midst of an elect household. John 12: 1. And so afterwards. When He is alone with His disciples, He stands above His sorrows and the world still — He does not tell them of the Jews betraying Him to the Gentiles, and of the Gentiles crucifying Him — He does not speak of His being mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, as in the other Gospels. All this is passed by. The many things which the Son of man was to suffer at the hands of sinful men lie untold here. But, on the other hand, He assumes the hour of the power of darkness to be past; and as soon as we find Him alone with His elect, He takes His place beyond that hour. Chapter 13: 1. Gethsemane and Calvary are behind Him, and He apprehends Himself as having reached the hour, not of the garden, or of the cross, but of the Mount of Olives, the hour of His ascension our evangelist saying, "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:*" these words showing us plainly that His mind was not upon His suffering, but on the heaven of the Father that was beyond it. He spreads before them, not the memorials of His death here, but of His life in heaven, as we have seen; for He washes their feet after supper. And all His discourse with His beloved ones afterwards (John 14 - 16) savoured of this. It all assumed that His sorrow was past — that He had finished His course — that He had stood against the prince of this world, and had conquered — that He continued in the Father's love, and that all was ripe for His being glorified. His words to them assumed this; and, on the around of this, He strengthened them to conquer, as He had conquered. Instead of telling them of His sorrows, His object is to comfort them in theirs. He gave them peace and the promise of the Comforter, and of the glory that was to follow. And when, for a moment, as urged by their state of mind, He speaks of their all leaving Him alone in the coming hour, it was not without this assurance — "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." And, in like manner, when He was separating Judas from the rest, we read that "He was troubled in spirit;" but, as soon as the traitor was gone, He rises to His own proper elevation, and says,

"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Thus, if His soul pass through a groan or trouble, it is but for a moment, and just to lead Him into a fuller view of the glory that was beyond it all.

It is just the same as He descends into the deepest shades of His lonely way. Even here it is still strength that accompanies Him throughout, and glory that appears before Him throughout. And thus, whether in labour, in testimony, or in suffering, He is still, in this Gospel, in His elevation as Son of God. He walks on in the consciousness of His dignity; He takes the cup as from the Father's hand, and lays down His life of Himself.

John 18, 19. — We may remember that, in John 17, we saw our Lord as the Advocate in the heavenly temple, making His requests. From that place He now comes down to meet the hour of the power of darkness. In that chapter His heart and His eye had been full of His Father's glory, of His own glory, and that of the Church; and forth from all this, thus in spirit set before Him, He comes out to endure the cross.

In the other Gospels, He meets the cross after the strengthening that He had received from the angel in Gethsemane - but we have nothing of that scene here; for that was the passage of the Son of man through the anticipation of His agony, His soul being exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, with the strength of God by an angel ministered to Him. But here it is the Son of God descending as from heaven to meet the cross; and His passage through the whole of the hour of the power of darkness is taken in the strength of the Son of God. He seeks no companionship. In the other Gospels, we see Him leading aside Peter, James, and John, if haply He might engage their sympathy to watch with Him for an hour. But here there is none of this. He passes all alone through the sorrow. The disciples, it is true, go with Him into the garden, but He knows them there only as needing His protection, and not as yielding Him any desired sympathy. "If . . . ye seek Me, let these go their way." As the angel

does not strengthen Him in the garden, neither do His disciples stand with Him there for any cause of His. He comes down as the Son of God from His own place on high; to walk (as far as man was concerned) *alone* to Calvary. Though His present path lay to the cross, it was still a path of none less than the Son of God. The loneliness of the Stranger from heaven is marked here, as it had been all through this Gospel.

And let me add (a reflection that has occurred to me with much comfort), that there is a greatness in God, in the sense of which we should much exercise our hearts. There is no straitness in Him. The psalmist appears to give himself to this thought in Psalm 36. All that he there sees in God, he sees in its proper divine greatness and excellency. His mercy is *in the heavens*; His faithfulness *unto the clouds*; His righteousness is like *the great mountains*, and His judgments are like *the deep*; His preserving care is so perfect that *the beasts as well as men are the objects of it*; His loving-kindness so excellent, that the children of men hide themselves *as under the shadow of His wings*; His house is so stored with all good, that His people are *abundantly satisfied* with its fatness; and His pleasures for them are so full, that they drink of them *as of a river*. All this is the greatness and magnificence of God, not only in Himself, but in His ways and dealings with us. And, beloved, this is blessed truth to us. For our sins should be judged in the sense of this greatness. It is true, indeed, that sin is exceeding sinful. The least soil or stain upon God's fair workmanship is full of horrid shapes, in the eye of faith that calculates duly on God's glory. A little hole dug in the wall is enough to show a prophet great abominations. But when brought to stand, side by side, with the greatness of the grace that is in God our Saviour, how does it appear? Where was the crimson sin of the adulteress? where the sins that had, as it were, grown old in the Samaritan woman? They may be searched for, but they cannot be found. They disappear in the presence of the grace that was brought to shine beside them. The abounding grace rolled away the reproach for ever. God Who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and

measures the waters in the hollow of His hand, takes away our sins far off "to a land of separation." Lev. 16: 22.

"I hear the accuser roar
Of ills that I have done -
I know them well, and thousands more -
Jehovah findeth none."

With these thoughts we may well encourage our hearts. Our God would have us know Him in His own greatness. Set sin alone, and the least speck of it is a monster. Set it beside His grace, and it vanishes. And all this expression of divine greatness breaks forth in Jesus throughout this Gospel. There is everywhere the tone and bearing of the Son of God in Him and about Him, though we see Him even in toil or in suffering.

But this only by the way. We have now followed our Lord over the brook Cedron; and the spot must have been one of sacred and affecting recollections to Him. For here it was that David had once stopped with Ittai his friend, and with Zadok and the ark, as he went forth from Jerusalem in the fear of Absalom. Over this very brook, and up this very ascent of Mount Olivet, the king of Israel had then gone weeping, his head covered and his feet bare, while Ahithophel, who had once been his counsellor, was betraying him to his enemies. 2 Sam. 15. Jesus, we read, oftentimes resorted thither; no doubt with these recollections. But it is the Son of God we have here at the present time, rather than the Son of David. The brook is passed and the garden is entered, not with tears, and without the ark; but more than the ark in all its glory and strength are to be displayed now. The Lord comes forth to the band of cruel officers and soldiers, as they were, with this word, "Whom seek ye?" — thus addressing them, as in the *repose* of heaven, which was His. And He comes forth in the *power* of heaven, as well as in its *repose* — for on His afterwards saying to them, "I am He," they go backward, and fall to the ground. No man could take His life from Him. He has even to show them their prey; for all their torches and lanterns

would not otherwise have discovered Him to them Every stage in the way was His own. He laid down His life of Himself. They that would eat up His flesh must stumble and fall. They that desired His hurt must be turned back, and put to confusion. The fire was ready to consume this captain and his fifty. See 2 Kings 1. Had the Son of God pleased, there, on the ground, the enemy would still have lain. He had come, however, not to destroy men's lives, but to save; and therefore He would lay down His own. It was just seen that the glory that might have confounded all the power of the adversary lay hid within the pitcher; but He was fain to hide it still.

And now it was that, in spirit, He sang the twenty-seventh Psalm. The Lord was His light and His salvation, whom should He fear? He had just seen God's glory in the sanctuary (as we saw in John 17), and, according to this Psalm, His longing was to dwell in that house of the Lord for ever. It was a time of trouble, it is true; but, in spirit, His head was lifted up above His enemies; and He was soon to offer in the tabernacle sacrifices of joy, and sing His praises unto the Lord. Psalm 27: 1-6.

Thus, as Son of God, He stood in this hour, and could have stood against hosts of them; but He would take the cup from His Father's hand, and give His life for the Church. Those who were with Him become now, in their wilfulness, an offence to Him. His kingdom was not as yet of this world; and therefore His servants might not fight. Peter draws his sword, and would have changed the scene into a mere trial of human strength. But this must not be. It is true, the Son of God could have stood. He might again have been the ark of God, with the power of the enemy falling before it; but how then should the Scripture be fulfilled? He rather leaves Himself in the hands of enemies. "Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him."

Thus was it, so far, with the Lord. And as we still follow Him, we still trace the way of the Son of God, the Lord from heaven. Whether we listen to Him with the officers, or with the high priest,

or before Pilate, it is still in the same tone of holy distance from all that was around Him They may do to Him whatsoever they list — He is as a stranger to it. He is not careful to answer them in their matters. He would pass through all in loneliness. The daughters of Jerusalem do not here either yield Him their sympathy, or receive His; nor does a dying thief share that hour with Him. He is the lonely One all through that dreary way. Peter is found *in the way of the ungodly, warming himself among them*, as one who had only the resources which they had. Another (perhaps John himself) takes his place *as the acquaintance of the high priest*, and gets his advantage as such. But all this was a sinking down into mere nature, and leaving the Son of God alone — as He had said to them "Ye . . . shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

And His path, I need not say, is without a stain. "Let God be true, but every man a liar." So Jesus is without fault, though all beside fail. He was "justified in the Spirit." He has no step to retrace, no word to recall. He could righteously vindicate Himself in every thing, and even reprove His accuser, and say, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?" But even Paul, in such a case, had to recall his word, and to say, "I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest."

From the hand of the high priest the Lord passes into the hand of the Roman governor. And here a scene opens full of solemn warning to us all, beloved, as well as preserving before us still the full character of our Gospel.

It is very evident that, throughout this scene, Pilate was desirous to quiet the people, and deliver Jesus from the malice of the Jews. It appears, from the very first, that he was sensible of something peculiar in this Prisoner of theirs. His silence had such a character in it, that, as we read, "the governor marvelled greatly." And what divine attractions (we may observe) must every little passage of His life, every path that He took among men, have had about it! And

what must the condition of the eye and the ear and the heart of man have been, not to discern and allow all this! The governor's first impression was strengthened by every thing that happened as the scene proceeded; his wife's dream, the evident malice of the Jews, and, above all, this righteous, guiltless Prisoner (though thus in shame and suffering) still persisting that He was the Son of God, all assailed his conscience. But the world in Pilate's heart was too strong for these convictions in his conscience. They made a noise within him, it is true, but the voice of the world prevailed; and he went the way of the world, though thus convicted. Could he, however, have preserved the world for himself, he would willingly have preserved Jesus. He let the Jews fully understand that he was in no fear of Jesus; that He was not such a One as could create with him any alarm about the interests of his master, the emperor. But they still insisted that Jesus had been making Himself a king, and that if Pilate let this Man go, he could not be Caesar's friend. And this prevailed.

How does all this lead us to see, that there is no security for the soul but in the possession of that faith which overcomes the world! Pilate had no desire for the blood of Jesus, as the Jews had; but the friendship of Caesar must not be hazarded. The rulers of Israel had once feared that, if they let this Man alone, the Romans would come and take away both their place and nation (John 11: 48); and Pilate now fears to lose the friendship of the same world in the person of the Roman emperor. And thus did the world bind him and the Jews together in the act of crucifying the Lord of glory! As it is written, "For of a truth, against Thy holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together."

Still, as I have observed, Pilate would have saved Jesus, could he, at the same time, have saved his own reputation as Caesar's friend; and therefore it was that he now entered the judgment-hall, and put this inquiry to Jesus, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" For, as the Jews had committed the Lord to him, upon a charge of having made

Himself a king (Luke 23: 2), if he could but lead the Lord to retract His kingly claims, he might both save Him, and keep himself unharmed. With the design of doing so, he seems at this time to enter the judgment-hall. But the world in Pilate's heart knew not Jesus; as it is written, "The world knew Him not." John 1: 10; 1 John 3: 1. Pilate was now to find that the god of this world had nothing in the Lord. "Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" Our Lord by this would learn from Pilate himself where the source of the accusation against Him lay; whether His claim to be Kin. of the Jews was challenged by Pilate as protector of the emperor's rights in Judea, or merely upon a charge of the Jews.

Upon this, I may say, hung every thing in the present juncture; and the wisdom and purpose of the Lord in giving the inquiry this direction is manifest. Should Pilate say that he had become apprehensive of Roman interests, the Lord could at once have referred him to the whole course of His life and ministry, to prove that, touching the king, innocency had been found in Him. He had taught the rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. He had withdrawn Himself, departing into a mountain alone, when He perceived that the multitude would have taken Him by force to make Him a king. His controversy was not with Rome. When He came, He found Caesar in Judea, and He never questioned his title to be there; He rather, at all times, allowed his title, and took the place of the nation, which, because of disobedience, had the image and the superscription of Caesar engraven, as it were, on their very land. It is true, that it was despite of the majesty of Jehovah that had made way for the Gentiles to enter Jerusalem; but Jerusalem was, for the present, the Gentiles' place, and the Lord had no controversy with them because of this. Nothing but the restored faith and allegiance of Israel to God could rightfully cancel this title of the Gentiles. The Lord's controversy was, therefore, not with Rome; and Pilate would have had his answer according to all this, had the challenge proceeded from himself as representative of the Roman power. But

it did not. Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?"

Now, this answer of Pilate conveyed the full proof of the guilt of Israel. In the mouth of him who represented the power of the world at that time the thing was established, that Israel had disclaimed their King, and sold themselves into the hand of another. This, for the present, was every thing with Jesus. This at once carried Him beyond the earth, and out of the world. Israel had rejected Him; and His kingdom was, therefore, not from hence; for Zion is the appointed place for the King of the whole earth to sit and rule; and the unbelief of the daughter of Zion must keep the King of the earth away.

The Lord, then, as this rejected King, listening to this testimony from the lips of the Roman, could only recognize the present loss of His throne, "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." He had no weapons for war, if Israel refused Him. There was no threshing for His floor now, for Israel is His instrument to thresh the mountains (Isa. 41: 15; Micah 4: 13; Jer. 51: 20), and Israel was refusing Him. The house of Judah, and that only, is Messiah to make "His goodly horse in the battle" (Zech. 10: 3); and, therefore, in this unbelief of Judah, He had nothing wherewith to break the arrows of the bow, the shield, the sword, and the battle. Ps. 76. His kingdom could not be of this world - "it could not be from hence;" He had no servants who could fight, that He should not be delivered to His enemies.

This present loss of His kingdom, however, does not annul His title to it; for the Lord, while allowing His present loss of it, yet allows this in such terms as fully express His title to it, and led Pilate at once to say, "Art Thou a king, then?" And to this His good confession is witnessed. For Pilate would have had no cause to dread either the displeasure of his master or the tumult of the people;

he might have fearlessly followed his will, and delivered his Prisoner, if the blessed Confessor would now alter the word that had gone out of His lips, and withdraw His claim to be a king. But Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king." From this, His claim, there could be no retiring. Here was His good confession before Pontius Pilate. 1 Tim. 6: 13. Though His own received Him not, yet He was theirs; though the world knew Him not, yet it was made by Him. Though the husbandmen were casting Him out, yet He was the Heir of the vineyard. He was anointed to the throne in Zion, though His citizens were saying they would not have Him to reign over them; and He must by His "good confession" fully verify His claim to it, and stand to that claim before all the power of the world. It might arm all that power against Him, but it must be made. Herod, and all Jerusalem, had once been moved at hearing that He was born Who was King of the Jews, and Herod had sought to slay the Child; but let the whole world be now moved, and arm its power against Him, yet He must declare God's decree, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Ps. 2. His right must be witnessed, though in the presence of the usurper, and in the very hour of his power.

But now we are led into other and further revelations. This "good confession" being thus witnessed, the Lord was prepared to unfold other parts of the divine counsels. When He had distinctly verified His title to the kingdom in the face of the world, He was prepared to testify His *present* character and ministry. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." His possession of the kingdom was for a time hindered by the unbelief of His nation; but He shows that there had been no failure of the purpose of God by this, for He had come into the world for other present work than to take His throne in Zion. He had come to bear witness unto the truth; and our Gospel is especially the instrument for presenting the Lord in that ministry. As it is said of Him at the opening of it, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, *He hath declared Him.*" He had come into the world that He

might say, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." He had come that He might give us an understanding to know Him that is true. 1 John 5: 20. He had been manifesting the Father's name to those who had been given Him out of the world, and this was the same as bearing witness to the truth. John 8: 26, 27. Every one that was of the truth, as He here speaks to Pilate, had been hearing His voice. His sheep had heard it, while others had believed not, because they were not His sheep. He that was of God had heard it, while others had heard it not, because they were not of God. John 8: 47.

Such was the Lord's *present* ministry, while Israel was in unbelief. Though King of the Jews, and, as such, King of the whole earth, He could not as yet take His kingdom, for His title had been denied by His nation. He must take up other ministry, and the character of that ministry He here reveals to Pilate, and had been presenting all through our Gospel.

Thus, this good confession before Pontius Pilate, recorded in this Gospel, still leads the Lord's thoughts quite in the current of this Gospel. While standing to it, consenting for a while to answer for Himself, He still knows Himself in highest and holiest ministry; yea, I may say, His *divine* ministry, a ministry which none but the Only Begotten of the Father, none but He Who is in the bosom of the Father, and Who was full of grace and truth, could have fulfilled.

This is still striking; and as we follow Him on to the cross, we have the Son of God still. We see His title to the kingdom verified with all authority. The enemy would have had it blotted out, but he cannot prevail. Pilate, who before had despised the claims of Jesus, saying to the Jews, "Behold your King," will now have them published in the chief languages of the earth, and it is not in the power of the Jews to change his mind now, as before. The cross shall be the Lord's standard, and Jehovah will emblazon it with inscriptions of His royal dignity, be the earth never so angry.

But this is the only Gospel that gives us this conversation between Pilate and the Jews about the inscription on the cross; for it savoured

of the glory of Jesus. And so it is only our evangelist who notices the woven coat, which was something that the soldiers would not rend — a little circumstance in itself, but helping still to keep in view (in full harmony with this Gospel generally) the holy dignity of Him Who was passing through this hour of darkness.

Here it is, also, that our Lord *lays aside His human affections*. He sees His mother and His beloved disciple near the cross; but it is only to commend them the one to the other; and thus to separate Himself from the place which He had once filled among them. Sweet indeed it is to see how faithfully He owned the affection up to the latest moment that He could listen to it. No sorrow of His own (though that was bitter enough, as we know) could make Him forget it, But He was not always to know it. The children of the resurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage. They were not, henceforth, to know Him "after the flesh." He must now form their knowledge of Him by other thoughts, for they are henceforth to be joined to Him as "one spirit;" for such are His blessed ways. If He take His distance from us, as not knowing us in "the flesh," it is only that we may be united to Him in nearer affections and closer interests.

And, to look deeper than the *circumstances* of this hour, if we mark the Lord's *spirit* on the cross, we shall still discern the Son of God. He thirsted — He tasted death, it is true — He knew the drought of that land where the living God was not. But His sense of this is still expressed in His own tone. It does not come forth in the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That is given us in its proper place. But here there is no such cry recorded; there is no amazement of spirit, nor horror of great darkness for three hours; neither is there a commending of Himself to the Father; but it is simply, "I thirst;" and when He had entered and passed through that thirst, He verifies the full accomplishment of all things, saying "It is finished." He does not commend His work to the approval of God, but seals it with His own seal, attesting it as complete, and giving it

the sufficient sanction of His own approval. And when He could thus sanction all as finished, He delivers up His life Himself.

These were strong touches of the mind in which He was passing through these hours; and these hours now end. The Son of God was now made perfect as the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him; and the fountain for sin and for uncleanness is opened. The water and the blood came forth to bear witness that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 1 John 5: 8-12. We have not here the centurion's confession, "Truly this was the Son of God;" we have not Pilate's wife, nor the convicted lips of Judas, bearing Him witness. Jesus does not here receive witness from men, but from God. The water and the blood are *god's* witnesses to His Son, and to the life that sinners may find in Him. It was sin that pierced Him. The action of the soldier was a sample of man's enmity. It was as the sullen shot of the defeated foe after the battle; the more loudly telling out the deep-seated hatred that there is in man's heart to God and His Christ. But it only sets off the riches of that grace that met it, and abounded over it; for it was answered by the love of God. *The point of the soldier's spear was touched by the blood.* The crimson flood came forth to roll away the crimson sin. The blood and the water issue through the wounded side of the Son of God. Now was the day of atonement fully come; and the water of separation, the ashes of the red heifer, were now sprinkled. This was the Lamb which Abel had offered. This was the blood which Noah had shed, and which gave free course to the unmingled grace of God's heart towards sinners. Gen. 8: 21. This was the ram of Mount Moriah. And this was the blood which daily flowed round the brazen altar in the temple. This was the blood which is the only ransom of the unnumbered thousands before the throne of God.

But though pierced, thus to be the fountain of the blood and the water, the Lord's body may not be broken. The paschal Lamb may be killed, but not a bone of it is to be broken. It shall do all the purpose of divine love in sheltering the first-born — but beyond that it is sacred; no rude hand may touch it. Jesus was to say, "All my

bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto Thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him." And the Church is His body. He is the Head, and we are the members; and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, and not a bone of that mystic body is to be wanting: all must come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. For all, from of old, have been written in God's book, and are to be fashioned and curiously wrought together, even every one of them Ps. 139: 16.

Thus was it with our Lord in our Gospel, while He was yet on the cross. In every feature we see the Son of God. And as we follow Him thence to the grave, it is the Son of God still. We do not there see Him numbered with the transgressors, and with the wicked in His death; but we do see His grave with the rich. Two honoured sons of Israel come to own Him, and charge themselves with His body, to spend their perfumes and their labour upon it.

But in all this we have again something to notice.

When the Lord's body was pierced, it not only, as I have observed, allowed God's witnesses — the blood and the water — to be heard, but it gives occasion to that which was written, "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced." And this word, which tells of Israel's repentance in the latter day, introduces the action of Joseph and Nicodemus, and makes them the representatives of repentant Israel. They come *last* in the order of faith. They had been afraid of their unbelieving nation, afraid of the thunder of the synagogue, and had not continued with the Lord in His temptations, but were only secretly His disciples. They were slow of heart; nevertheless, in the end, they do own the Lord, and are brought to look on Him whom they pierced. They take the body from the cross, fresh with the piercing of the soldier's spear; and, as they lowered it from the tree, surely they must have looked, and looked well, upon the hands, and feet, and wounded side. And they must have mourned as they looked, for their hearts had been already softened to take impression

from the crucified One. And so will it be with Israel. They come last in the order of faith, and are slow of heart; but in the end, they will look on Him Whom they have pierced, and mourn as one mourneth for his only son.

It is thus with Joseph and Nicodemus now, and thus will it be, by-and-by, with the inhabitants of Jerusalem. These two Israelites, as true children of Abraham, claim the body of the Lord, and consecrate it, as with the faith of the patriarch (Gen. 1. 2, 26); and, as true subjects of the King of Israel, they also honour it with the honours of a son of David. 2 Chr. 16: 14. They spend large and costly perfumes upon it, and lay it up in the garden, in a new, untainted tomb, on which the smell of death had never yet passed.

Here all closes for the present; here, in the *second* garden, as I may call it, the Second Man is now laid in death. In the *first*, the first man had walked with access to the tree of life; but he had chosen death, in the error of his way. Here, in the second garden, death, the penalty, is met. Jesus, without having touched the tree of knowledge, suffers the death. In the first garden all manner of trees good for food and pleasant to the eyes were seen. But here, nothing appears but the tomb of Jesus. This was what man's sin ended in, as far as man was concerned. But let us wait a little. By all this, the Son of God is soon to become the death of death, and hell's destruction, to bring life and immortality to light, and to plant again in the garden, for man, the tree of life. Let but the third morning arise, and this garden, which now witnesses only Jesus in death, shall see the Son of God in resurrection and victory — in victorious life for sinners.

John 20. — Accordingly, at the opening of this chapter, we so find it. Jesus has risen, the Bruiser of the serpent; becoming through death the Destroyer of him that had the power of death.

Here I may turn aside for a moment to observe with what force the Spirit of God, all through Scripture, unfolds the mysteries of life and death. He would impress our souls with a very deep sense of this,

that we have lost life, and, as far as we can act, have lost it irrecoverably, but that we have regained it in Christ, and regained it in Him infallibly and for ever.

God is "the living God." As such He is acting in this scene of death. He has come into the midst of it as the living God. How could He have come otherwise? Surely we may say, to the glory of His name, He has not been here, if not in that character. And His victory as the living God in this scene of death is resurrection. If resurrection be denied, God is not known, and that the living God has been here, and interfered with the conditions of this ruined, death-stricken world, is denied.

It is blessed to see this; and yet it is a truth very sure and simple. Into Himself as the living God, into Himself, or the resources which His own glory or nature provided, He has retreated, and there acted apart from the world, and above the scene which has involved itself in death. If His creature have been untrue, His creature of highest dignity, set by Him over the works of His hands; if Adam have disappointed Him, so to speak, revolted from Him, and brought in death, God has (blessed to tell it!) looked to Himself, and drawn from Himself; and there, in His own resources, in the provisions which He Himself supplies, He finds the remedy. And this is, in His victory as the living God, which victory is resurrection, His own resource of life in despite of the conquests of sin and death, let these conquests take what form they may. This is what He has been doing in this world. Let death appear, let the judgment of sin be ready to be executed, He is seen providing atonement for sins, and bringing forth a living thing from under the righteous doom and judgment of death. The risen Jesus now seals all this to us.

This was the third, the appointed day — the day on which Abraham of old had received his son as from the dead — the day of promised revival to Israel (Hosea 6: 2) — the day, also, on which Jonah was on dry land again.

But the disciples do not as yet know their Lord in resurrection They know Him only "after the flesh;" and therefore Mary Magdalene is seen early at the sepulchre, seeking His body; and, in the same mind Peter and his companion run to the sepulchre shortly after her, their bodily strength. merely, and not the intelligence of faith, carrying them there. And there they behold, not their Object, but the trophies of His victory over the power of death. There they see the gates of brass and the bars of iron cut in sunder. The linen clothes and the napkin which had been wrapped about the Lord's head as though He were death's prisoner were there seen like the spoils of the vanquished, as under the hand of death's conqueror. The very armour of the strong man was made a show of in his own house; this telling loudly that He Who is the plague of death, and hell's destruction, had been lately in that place, doing His glorious work. But, in spite of all this, the disciples understand not; they as yet know not the scripture, that He must rise from the dead; and they go away again to their own home.

Mary, however, lingers about the sacred spot, refusing to be comforted, because her Lord was not. She would fain have taken sackcloth, and, like another, spread it for her on the rock, could she but find His body to watch and to keep it. She wept, and stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and saw the angels. But what were the angels to her? The sight of them does not terrify her, as it had the other women (Mark 16); she was too much occupied with other thoughts to be moved by them. They were, it is true, very illustrious, sitting there in white, and in heavenly state, too; one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. But what was all splendour to her? The dead body of her Lord was what she sought and desired alone; and she has only to turn from these heavenly glories, in further search of it; and then seeing, as she judged, the gardener, she says to him, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." She simply says, "If thou have borne Him hence," not naming Jesus; for, fond woman as she was, she supposes that every one must be as full of her Lord as she was.

Well, beloved, this may have been but *human* passion and *ignorant* affection; still it was spent on Jesus. And would that something more of the temper of it were shed abroad in our hearts. Her affection sought a right object, though it sought it not wisely; and in the wonted kindness and grace of Him with Whom she had to do, He gives her the fruit of it. To her who had, more was given. She had learnt thoroughly the lesson of knowing Christ "after the flesh." She was the truest of all to that; and her Lord will now lead her to richer knowledge of Himself. He will take her up to higher regions than as yet she thought of, to the "mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." Cant. 4: 6.

To do this in all gentleness, He first answers her human affection, letting her once again hear her own name on His well-known voice. That was just the note which was in full unison with all that was then in her heart. It was the only note to which her soul could have responded. Had He appeared to her in heavenly glory He would still have been a Stranger to her. But this must be the last time she was to apprehend Him "after the flesh." For He is now risen from the dead, and is on His way to the Father in heaven, and earth must no longer be the scene of their communion. "Touch Me not," says He to her, for I am not yet ascended to My Father."

I need not, perhaps, observe how fully characteristic of our Gospel all this is. In Matthew, on the contrary, we see the women, on their return from the sepulchre, meeting the Lord, and the Lord allowing them to hold His feet, and to worship Him; but here, it is to Mary, "Touch Me not." For this Gospel tells us of the Son in the midst of the heavenly family, and not in His royalty in Israel and in His earthly glory. The resurrection, it is most true, pledges all that earthly glory and kingdom to Him (Acts 13: 34); but it was also one stage to the heavenly places; and that is the feature of it which our Gospel gives us.

Mary, as we have seen, is entitled to be the first to learn these greater ways of His grace and love, and also to be the happy bearer

of the same good tidings from this far and unknown country to the brethren. Jesus says to her, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."*

*And here, again, I would notice another characteristic difference in the Gospels. In Matthew the message was, to meet Him in *Galilee*; and, accordingly, the disciples do so — but here He does not name any place on earth; He simply tells them that He was going to *heaven*, there in spirit to meet them, before His Father and their Father, His God and their God.

Thus is she honoured, and she goes to prepare the brethren for their Lord, while He prepares to meet them with a blessing beyond all which they had as yet attained. And her tidings seem to have got them all in readiness for Him; for on His seeing them, the evening of the same day, they are not amazed and in unbelief, as they are in Luke's Gospel, but seem all to be waiting and in expectation. They are no longer scattered as before (v. 10), but folded together as the family of God, and He, as the elder Brother, enters in, laden with the fruit of His holy travail for them.

This was a meeting indeed. It was a visit to the family of the heavenly Father by the First-born. It was in a place that lay beyond death, and outside the world. And such is the appointed place of meeting with our Lord. Those who in spirit stay in the world never meet Him. For He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of strangers and pilgrims. The world is a defiled place, and we must meet Him in resurrection, in the kingdom that is not of the world.

So was it here with the Lord and His brethren. He now, for the first time, *really* meets them, meets them in the appointed place outside the world, and meets them in no less character than that of His own brethren. Now it was that He began to pay His vows. He had made them on the cross. Ps. 22. *First*, that He would declare the Father's name to the brethren; *secondly*, that in the midst of the Church He

would sing His praise. The first of these He was now beginning to pay, and has been paying all through the present dispensation, making known to our souls the name of the Father through the Holy Ghost. And the second He will as certainly pay when the congregation of all the brethren is gathered, and when He leads their songs in resurrection joy for ever.

Now also is the promised life actually imparted. "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also." The Son of God, having life in Himself, now comes with it to His saints. He breathes on them now, as of old He breathed into man's nostrils. Gen. 2. Only this was the breath of the last Adam, the quickening Spirit, Who had a life to impart that was won from the power of death, and which was therefore beyond its utmost reach. The brethren are now given to know the peace of the cross. He shows them His hands and His side. Their sorrow is turned into joy, for they were glad "when they saw the Lord." He was revealing Himself to them as He does not unto the world. The world, in this little interview, was quite shut out; and the disciples, as hated of the world, are shut up within their own enclosure, just in the place to get a special manifestation of Himself to them, as He had said unto them. John 14: 22-24. In the world they were knowing tribulation, but in Him peace.

All this was theirs in this brief but blessed visit of "the Firstborn from the dead" to His brethren, imparting to them the blessing which belonged to them *as children*. And thus this little intercourse was a sample of the communion which we enjoy in this dispensation. Our communion with Christ does not change our condition in the world, or make us happy *in mere circumstances*. It leaves us in a place of trial; but we are happy *in Himself*, in the full sense of His presence and favour. We are taught to know our oneness with Christ; and, through our adoption, and fellowship with the Father, we enjoy settled peace; we are glad because of Him risen from the dead, and have life in the risen Lord imparted to us. As we lately saw the armour of the conquered enemy upon the distant field of battle, so

here do we see the fruit of victory brought home to gladden and assure the kindred of the Conqueror. Poorly indeed some of us know all this.

And these fruits of the victory of the Son of God were now commanded to be carried about in holy triumph all the world over. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," says the Lord to His brethren. With a message, not of judgment, but of grace, had He Himself come forth from the Father. And with a commission of the same grace are the brethren sent forth. They are sent forth from the Lord of life and peace, and with such a ministry they test the condition of every living soul. The message they bear is from the Son of the Father, a message of peace and life secured in and by Himself; and the word then was, and still is, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" — and the Lord adds, making them, in this, the test of the condition of every one, as having the Son or not, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Such was the Lord's first interview with His disciples, after He had risen from the dead. It has set before us the saints, as the children of the Father, and their ministry as such, and given us a sample, or firstfruits, of that harvest in the Holy Ghost which they have been gathering ever since in this dispensation.

And though it may draw me aside for a little space, I cannot refuse noticing, that the ministry committed to the disciples by the Lord, after He rose from the dead, takes a distinct character in each of the Gospels. And as each of the Gospels has a distinct purpose (according to which all the narratives are selected and recorded), so the various language used by the Lord in each of the Gospels, in committing this ministry to His disciples, is to be accounted for, and interpreted by, the specific character of the Gospel itself.

In Matthew this commission runs thus: — *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of*

the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Now, this commission was strictly to the apostles, who had been already ordained by the Lord, and associated with Him as Minister of the circumcision. Rom. 15: 8. It contemplated them as in Jerusalem, and going forth from thence for the discipling of *all nations*, and for the keeping of them in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. For it is the purpose of that Gospel to present the Lord in Jewish connection as the Hope of Israel, to Whom the gathering of the nations was to be. And, accordingly, the conversion of nations, and the settlement of the whole world around Jerusalem as the centre of worship, is assumed. A system of restored and obedient nations rejoicing with Israel will be exhibited by-and-by; and the risen Lord looks to that, when committing ministry to His apostles in the Gospel by Matthew.*

*I may observe, that Israel had not, as yet, fully shut the door of hope against themselves. The testimony of the Holy Ghost to the risen Jesus by the apostles at Jerusalem, had not as yet been rejected. The possibility of that testimony being received might be assumed; and the Lord seems to assume it in Matthew's Gospel.

But in Mark, this prospect of national conversion is a good deal qualified. The terms of the commission are these: "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" It is not the discipling of nations that is contemplated, but universal testimony with partial acceptance. For Mark presents the Lord in service or ministry, and the case of some receiving the Word, and some receiving it not, is anticipated, because such are the results that have attended on all ministry of the Word; as it is said in one place, "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."

In Luke the Lord, after interpreting Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, and opening the understanding of the disciples to understand them, delivers ministry to them in this way: "*Thus it is*

written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." This commission does not appear to have been strictly to *the eleven*, but others were addressed by it. See Luke 24: 33. And their ministry was to begin *with* Jerusalem, and not *from* it. And they are not allowed to go forth in their ministry till they had received new power, thus allowing that what they had received from Jesus, while on earth, was not sufficient. And all this was a breaking away from mere earthly or Jewish order. This was, therefore, the commission with something of an altered character, suitable to this Gospel by Luke, which presents the Lord more abroad, and not strictly in Jewish association.

But now, in our Gospel by John, we do not get this commission at all, nor any mention of "power from on high."* We simply get, as I have been noticing, the life of the risen Man imparted, and then the disciples, with that life in them, sent out to test, by virtue of it, the condition of every living soul. The Lord gives them their ministry as from *heaven*, and not from *the mountain in Galilee*. He sends them forth from *the Father*, and not from *Jerusalem*. For, in our Gospel, the Lord has left all recollections of Jerusalem behind, and has given up, for the present, all hope of restoring Israel and gathering the nations.

*Indeed, the word "apostles" does not once occur in this Gospel; and this is still in character with it.

This variety in the terms of this commission and ministry is very striking; and, considering the different purposes of each Gospel, it is exquisite and perfect. The mere reasoner may stumble at it, and the man who honours the Scripture, and would fain preserve its fair reputation, may attempt many ways to show the literal consistency

of these things. But the Word of God, beloved, does not ask for protection from man. It seeks for no apologies to be made for it, however well-intentioned. In all this there is no incongruity, but only variety; and that variety perfectly answering the divers purposes of the same Spirit. And, though thus various, every thought and every word in each are equally and altogether divine; and we have only to bless our God for the sureness, and comfort, and sufficiency of His own most perfect testimonies.

But this, brethren, by the way, desiring that the Lord may keep our minds in all our meditations, and in all the counsels of our hearts.

We left the Lord in company with His brethren. He was putting them into their condition as children of the Father, and raising them to heavenly places. But He has purposes touching Israel, as well as the Church. In the latter day He will call them to repentance and faith giving them their due standing and ministry also. And these things we shall have now in order unfolded before us.

Thomas, we read, was not with the brethren when the Lord visited them. He did not keep his first estate, but was absent, while the little gathering were holding themselves in readiness for their risen Lord; and now he refuses to believe his brethren, without the further testimony of his own hands and eyes. And the Jews, to this day, like Thomas then, are refusing the gospel or good tidings of the risen Lord.

All, however, was not to end thus. Thomas recovers his place, and "after eight days" is in company with the brethren again; and then Jesus presents Himself to him. For this second visit was for Thomas's *sake*. And the unbelieving disciple is led to own Him as his Lord and his God. As by-and-by, "after eight days," after a full week or dispensation has run its course, it will be said in the land of Israel, "Lo, this is *our God*; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is *the Lord*; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Israel will own Immanuel *then*; and as

the Lord here accepts Thomas, so will He then say to Israel, "Thou art My people."

But here we are to notice something further significant. The Lord accepts Thomas, it is most true, but at the same time says to him, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And so with Israel in the latter day. They shall know the peace of the cross, the full peace of the wounded hand and side of Jesus here shown to Thomas; but they shall take a blessing inferior to that of the Church. They shall get life from the Son of God; but they shall only walk on the footstool, while the Church will be sitting on the throne. Rev. 5.

Here the mystery of life, whether to the Church now, or to Israel by-and-by, closes, and our evangelist, accordingly, for a moment pauses. This was the Gospel of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, whosoever believeth which has life in His name. Many other things might have been added, but these were enough to attest the Son, and thus to be the seed of life. The third witness from God had now been heard. The *water* and the *blood* had come forth from the crucified Son, and now *the Spirit* was given by the risen Son. The three that bear witness on earth had been heard, and the testimony from God, that He "hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son," was therefore complete; and our evangelist just says, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

John 21. — Thus have we seen life actually dispensed by the risen Lord to His brethren, and ministry committed to them as such; and we have seen life pledged to Israel in the person of Thomas. But this restored Thomas, or the Israel of God in the latter day, shall (like the Church now) get *ministry* as well as *life*, be *used* as well as *quicken*ed. And we get the pledge of this also now in due order.

In the opening of this chapter we see the apostles brought back to the condition in which the Lord at first met them. Peter and the sons of Zebedee are again at their fishing. Indeed, their former labour had

come to nothing Their nets had broken. The Lord had proposed to use them, but Israel in His hand had proved but a deceitful bow, a broken net. But now they are in their toil again, and the Lord appears again, and gives them a second draught. And on this, in company with the Lord Himself, they feast; and their nets remain unbroken.

Our evangelist notices that this was "the third time" that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was risen from the dead. At the *first*, as we saw, He met the brethren to give them, as the heavenly family, their fellowship and ministry. At the *second*, He restored Thomas, the representative of Israel's final conversion and life. And now, at the *third*, He gives the pledge of Israel's ministry and fruitfulness unto God.

These three distinct visits give us, after this manner, the full view of the Church and of Israel. But I must particularly notice another acting of the consciousness of love, which is very sweet. Peter knew, in spite of all that had happened, that there was a link between him and the Lord; and Peter therefore is not afraid to be alone with Him. It is true that, when they had been together on a previous occasion Peter had denied Him; and the Lord had turned and looked upon him. But Peter knew that he loved his Lord notwithstanding; and now he is not afraid to cast himself into the sea, and reach Jesus alone, before the rest of them. And there is something truly blessed in this. Law could never have brought this about, nor, indeed, have warranted it. The rod of the law would have beaten him off, and made him keep his distance. Nothing but grace could allow this; nothing but the cords of love could have drawn denying Peter the nearest to his slighted Lord, after this manner. But there is more still.

The dinner, as we read, was now ended — the purpose of this third visit was now answered. But in order to close all in wondrous grace and glory, and in a way also most suitable to, and characteristic of, our Gospel, the Lord turns to Peter, making him again his special

object, and addressing him in such a way as could not, and does not, fail to call his sin to remembrance.

Here, however, again I would pause for a little moment.

The Lord had very much to do with Peter, beyond others of the disciples, while He was in the midst of them; and we find it the same after He had risen. Peter is the one who occupies the greater part of this twenty-first chapter of John.

The Lord here carries on with him the gracious work that He had begun ere He left him, and carries it on exactly from the point where He had left it.

Peter had betrayed self-confidence. Though all should be offended, yet would not he, he said; and though he should die with his Master, he would not deny Him. His Master had told him of the vanity of such boasts, but had told him also of His prayer for him, so that his faith should not fail. And when the boast is found to be indeed a vanity, and Peter denied his Lord even with an oath, his Lord looked on him, and this look had its blessed operation. The prayer and the look had availed. The prayer had kept his faith from failing, but the look had broken his heart. He did not "go away," but he wept, and wept bitterly.

At the opening of this chapter we find Peter in this condition, the condition in which the prayer and look of his divine Master had put him. That his faith had not failed he is enabled to have very sweet proof, for as soon as he hears that it is his Lord Who is standing on the shore, he throws himself into the water to reach Him; not, however, as a penitent, as though he had not already wept, but as one who could trust himself in His presence, the presence of his once denied Master, in full assurance of heart.

The prayer and the look had thus already, as we now see, done their work with Peter, and they are not to be repeated. The Lord simply goes on with His work thus begun, to conduct it to perfection.

Accordingly the prayer and the look are now followed by the word. Restoration now follows conviction and tears. Peter is put into the place of strengthening his brethren, as his Lord had once said to him, and also into the place of glorifying God by his death, a privilege he had forfeited by his unbelief and denial. This was the word of restoration following the prayer which had already sustained Peter's faith, and the look which had already broken his heart.

But further, as to this case, for it is one of deep interest to our souls.

In the day of John 13 the Lord had taught this same loved Peter that a washed man need not to be washed again, but only his feet. And exactly in this way He now deals with him. He does not again put him through the process of Luke 5, when the draught of fishes overwhelmed him, and he found out that he was a sinner; but He restores him, and puts him into his place again. That is, He washes Peter's feet, as one whose body was washed already.

Perfect Master! we may say, as with worshipping admiration — the same to us yesterday, and today, and for ever; the same in gracious skill of love, going on with the work He had afore begun; as the risen Lord resuming the service which He had left unfinished when He was taken from them; and resuming it at the very point, knitting the past and the present service in the fullest grace and skill!

The three denials of his Lord seem to be quite brought to mind, when Jesus, the third time, says to him, "Lovest thou Me?" But the Lord, as we have been observing, was only fully restoring the soul, and leading His saint to richer blessing. He restores him to his ministry, for another was not to take his bishopric; and then pledges him strength to serve his Lord in it, without a second denial or failure. He constitutes him His witness and servant in the full power of a martyr's faith. And having pledged this grace to him, that he should thus witness for Him faithfully even unto death, He says to him, "Follow Me."*

* Jesus knew all things, and that was Peter's comfort. Peter was sure that his Lord knew the *depths* as well as the *surfaces* of things, and thus that He knew what was in His poor servant's *heart*, though his lips had so transgressed.

This was a moment of sweetest interest. We know that if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him; and if we follow Him, where the Lord Himself is, there His servant shall be. Now, this call on Peter was a call to follow His Lord along the path of testimony and suffering, in the power of resurrection, to the rest in which that path ends, and to which that resurrection leads. Jesus had said to Peter before He left him, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now, but thou shalt follow Me afterwards." John 13. And the Lord, as we know, was then going to heaven and the Father through the cross. This present call was, in spirit, making good that promise to Peter. It was a call on him to follow the Lord, through death, up to the Father's house. And, upon saying these words to him, the Lord rises from the place where they had been eating, and Peter, thus bidden, rises to follow Him.

John listens to this call, as though it had been addressed to him also, and, on seeing the Lord rise and Peter rise, he at once rises also. For he ever lay nearest the Lord. He leaned on His breast at supper, and was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He ever stood in the place of closest sympathy with Him - so, by a kind of necessity (blessed necessity!) on the Lord's rising, he rises, though unbidden.

In such an attitude we now see them. The Son of God has risen, and is walking out of our sight, and Peter and John are following Him. All this is lovely and significant beyond expression. We do not see the end of their path, for while thus walking the Gospel closes. The cloud, as it were, receives them out of our sight. We gaze in vain after them, and the path of the disciples is just as far removed from us as that of their Lord. It was, in principle, the path that leads to the Father's house, which we know is prepared for the Lord and His brethren, the presence of God in heaven.

Surely, we may say, the Bridegroom at our feast has kept the best wine until now. If our souls could enter into this, there is nothing like it. Mark, in his Gospel, tells us of the fact of the Lord being received up into heaven (Mark 16: 19); and Luke shows us the ascension itself, while the Lord was lifting up His hands, and blessing His disciples. Luke 24: 51. But all that sweet as it was, is not equal to what we get here. For all that left the disciples apart from their Lord. He was then going to heaven, and they were to return to Jerusalem; but here, they are following Him up to heaven. Their path does not stop short of the full end of His.

This is none other than the "gate of heaven" to which our Gospel conducts us, and whereat it leaves us. The Lord is in this place, in fullest grace to His chosen. The receiving of the brethren into the Father's house is here pledged to us. In this, Peter and John are the representatives of us all, beloved. Some, like Peter, may glorify God by death; and others, as is intimated here to John, will be alive and remain till Jesus come; but all are to follow, whether Peter or John, Moses or Elias, whether dead in Christ or quick at His coming, all shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and be for ever with Him. It will be to them like the ascension of Enoch before the flood. And being received unto Himself, they will go with Him into the prepared place in the Father's house, as He has said unto us.*

*We must not assert that any individual *will* remain till the Lord come. That is condemned by verse 23. But the same verse allows us to assert that the Lord may come before our death, if He please.

And I may observe this is the only view of our Lord's ascension which our Gospel gives us. But it is that view of it which is strictly in character with the whole Gospel, which gives us, as has been observed, our Lord Jesus in connection with the Church as the family of the Father, the heavenly household. For this ascension is not so properly to the right hand of God, or place of power, where He abides alone, but to the Father's house, where the children are to

dwell also. Their path in that direction reaches as far as His, through His boundless grace; as here, as I have already noticed, wherever it was that Jesus went (some spot unknown and untold as to this earth), there did Peter and John follow Him. He is here acting as though He had gone and prepared the promised place in the Father's house, and had come again, and was now receiving them unto Himself, that where He is, there they might be also. And this will be really so at the resurrection of those who are Christ's at His coming, when the brethren meet their Lord in the air. The Son of God was now, at the end, as He had done in the beginning, showing His own *where He dwelt* (see John 1: 39); only, at the beginning, He was a Stranger on earth, and they abode with Him but one day; now He is returning to His proper heaven, and there they are to abide with Him for ever.*

*We have no mention in this Gospel of "the coming of the Son of man." That is spoken of in Matthew and the others, for that expresses the Lord's coming to *the earth* again, for judgment on the nations, and for deliverance to the remnant, and does not imply the rapture of the saints into the air."

Our evangelist then just lets us hear the full response of the believing hearts of all God's elect to those truths and wonders of grace which had now been told out. "We know that his testimony is true." They set to their seal that God is true. And all this is then closed with a simple note of admiration — for such, in principle, I judge the last verse to be. And indeed this is all he could do. Was it not beyond his praise! What heart could conceive the full excellence of His ways Whose name he had now been publishing?

Here the fourth section of our Gospel ends; and here the whole ends. And what a journey through it has that of the Son of God been! Having become flesh at the beginning, He walked on earth as the Stranger from heaven, save as He was occupied in ministering grace and healing to sinners. The prince of this world at length came to Him; but, finding nothing in Him, he cast Him out of the world. But this he could not do until, as the Saviour, the Son of God had

accomplished the peace of all that trust in Him. Then He triumphantly broke the power of death; and, as the risen Lord, imparted the life which He had won for His people. And, finally, by a significant action, pledged to them that where He was going, thither they should follow Him, that they might be with Him where He was; and that, as we know, for ever.

Our Gospel began with the descent of the Son, and closes with the ascent of the saints. And the time of this ascent, or being taken into the air, I judge is altogether uncertain. It may be tomorrow, and will be when the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, when all the saints have been brought, in the unity of the faith, to a perfect man. It does not depend on a certain lapse of time. No prophecy which involves computation of time, I believe, belongs to it. Such belongs to the Lord's return to the earth, and not to the taking of the saints into the air to meet Him. At that return of the Lord to the earth, the saints will be with Him; and this earth will then be prepared to be their common kingdom and inheritance. And that return, I grant, must await its prescribed time, and the full spending out of the days and years announced by the prophets. But no days or years measure out the interval from the ascension of the Lord to that of His saints. The Holy Ghost, it is most true, has given us moral characters of certain times, thus defining "the latter times," and "the last days" (1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3, etc.); but He tells us also that even then, the last time" had already come. 1 John 2: 18. So that faith is entitled to look for her joy in meeting the Lord in the air every hour; with patience, meanwhile, to do the will of God. And the prophecies that compute time (as far as they are still future) will not (I merely give my judgment) begin to be applied, nor will the times they notice begin to run, till this rapture into the air take place. Then, indeed; the suffering remnant in Israel may begin to number out the days for their comfort and for food of hope; and in their deepest sorrow lift up their heads, as knowing that their salvation draweth nigh.

After all this. beloved, our God may well claim our confidence, and be our title to full holy liberty, and our sure and constant source of

gladness. This is to honour Him as *the Father*. And if we have a thought of Him that leaves a sting behind it, it is the thought of foolishness and of unbelief. All is brightness to faith. Such is God our Father. And in *the Son* of His love we are accepted. "He'll not live in glory, and leave us behind" — and the language of our hearts towards Him abidingly should be, "Come, Lord Jesus." And this confidence of present adoption, and this joy of hope, we have through *the Holy Ghost* who dwelleth in us, our Companion by the way, our "other Comforter," till the Bridegroom meet us.

To our gracious God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

[The writings of J. G. Bellett](#): On the Gospel by Luke.

On the Gospel by Luke.

Introduction.

Each of the four Gospels has its own purpose. Accordingly, this evangelist, Luke, though writing as another witness of the same divine truths, gives to his Gospel peculiarity and character. Though concurring with others in general testimony the Spirit of revelation has a special design by him.

But all this different service of the same Spirit by the different evangelists is not incongruity, but fulness and variety. The oil with which Aaron was anointed, and which was mystically the fulness and virtue that rests on our adorable Lord, was made up of different odours — myrrh, calamus, cassia, and cinnamon. Ex. 30. We may say that it is the office of one evangelist after another to produce different parts in this rare and sweet compound of the sanctuary, to tell out different excellencies and perfections in Jesus, the Christ of God. For who could tell out all? It was sufficient joy and honour for one servant, however favoured with such near revelations, to trace even one of them. The saint has the sweet profit of all together; and, in language prepared for him, can turn to the Beloved, and say, "Because of the savour of Thy good ointments Thy name is as ointment poured forth."

Now, in the midst of this various service thus distributed among the evangelists, Luke occupies his peculiar place. In Matthew the Lord meets the Jew as the Messiah; in Mark He meets a needy world as the Servant of that need; in John He meets the Church or heavenly

family as the Son of the Father, to train them for their heavenly home; but here, in Luke, He meets the human family, to speak with them as the one only sanctioned Son of man.

"Son of man" is a title of very extensive meaning. It expresses man in his perfectness, a man according to God. It tells us, as it were, that man stands *a new thing* in Jesus; and that in Him we see all possible human or moral beauty. But not only is all this *moral perfectness* expressed by the title "Son of man" when applied to Jesus, but all His *sufferings* and all His dignities are connected with Him as such. As Son of man He was humbled (Ps. 8); but as such He is also exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Ps. 80. As such He had not where to lay His head (Luke 9: 58); but as such He also comes to the Ancient of days to take the kingdom. Dan. 7: 13. Judgment is committed to Him as such (John 5); He is Prophet, Priest, and King, as such; Heir and Lord of all things; Head and Bridegroom of the Church. As Son of man He has power on earth to forgive sins (Matt. 9: 6); and is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2: 28); though, as the same, He lay three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt. 12: 40. He was the wearied Sower of the seed, and He will be the glorious Reaper of the harvest, as Son of man. He was crucified and raised again as such (Matt. 17: 9, 22, 23); but all the while, as such, had His proper place in heaven. John 3: 13, 14. And, as the Son of man, He is the Centre of all things, heavenly and earthly. John 1: 51. For it was in man that God had, of old, set His image; and when the first man, who was of the earth, had broken that image, the Son of God undertook to restore it, to accomplish in man the divine purpose by man, setting man in that place of honour and trust which God had of old provided for him.

Thus, this title or name of the Lord, "Son of man," is an extensive one, ranging over and linking itself with His person, with all His sorrow, and with all His dignities too, save such, of course, as He owns in Himself, being "over all, God blessed for ever." He is the *anointed* Man, the undefiled human temple raised at the beginning by the Holy Ghost, and then filled by Him. Luke 1: 35; 4: 1. He is

the *humbled* Man, Who travailed in sorrow here, down to the death of the cross. Phil. 2. He is the *exalted* Man, crowned now with glory and honour, and by-and-by to have all dominion. Heb. 2.

And as "Son of man" *He deals with man*; and in that action, I believe, the evangelist, Luke especially presents Him to us. In this Gospel He converses with the human family. He came, as the anointed Man, to exhibit man according to the mind of heaven, standing for the blessed God in the midst of the human family, who had deeply revolted from Him. He was the only fair untainted One; and thus, growing up in the midst, He exposes all beside.

This was His purpose. And that He might do this perfectly, and exhibit, in Himself, man according to God, and, in all beside, man departed into evil, He is eminently the social One in this Gospel, seen in human intercourse, and in places of resort, carrying thus the anointed Man everywhere, to be found and read of all.

After such a pattern we have Him here in Luke.

And I might observe the fitness of the penman to the peculiar task assigned him. For we hear of Luke in the divine history as the companion of the apostle of the Gentiles. Acts 16: 11; Col. 4; 2 Tim. 4; Philem. 24. He became associated in labour with one whose ministry, I may say, respected neither Jew nor Greek, but addressed itself to man as such. And indeed I believe that he himself had been a Gentile. His name is of Gentile character, and he seems to be distinguished in Col. 4: 14 from brethren who were of the circumcision.

And now, having thus gathered the general intent of our Gospel, and considered the person of its penman, I would follow it in its order. But nothing less than the joy of the Lord in ourselves, and His praise in the thoughts of His saints, should lead a step onward even in such holy paths as these. It should be the common delight of all His saints to trace Him in all His doings. For where are we to have our eternal joys but in Him and with Him? What, beloved, is suited to our

delights, if Jesus and His ways be not? What is there in any object to awaken joy, that we do not find in Him? What are those affections and sympathies, which either command or soothe our hearts, that are not known in Him? Is love needed to make us happy? If so, was ever love like His? If beauty can engage the sense, is it not to perfection in Jesus? If the treasures, of the in mind delight us in another, if richness and variety fill and refresh us, have we not all these in their fulness, in the communicated mind of Christ? Indeed, beloved, we should challenge our hearts to find their joys in Him. For we are to know Him so for ever. And learning the perfections and beauties of His blessed Word, is one of the many helps which we have whereby to advance in our souls this joy in the Lord.

It is but little we know of it, if one may speak for others, but may this present meditation serve this end in us, through the Spirit, for the Lord's sake!

On the Gospel by Luke.

It will be found, I believe, very surely, that our evangelist adopts what we may term a moral arrangement of his materials. There is, however, a beautiful historical simplicity also in the order of the events. And the following distribution of the parts of this Gospel, which may be considered as a kind of Table of Contents, will show this.

1. The birth and early life of Christ Luke 1, 2.
2. His baptism, genealogy, and temptation Luke 3, 4.
3. His ministry in Galilee Luke 5 - 9: 50.
4. His journey to Jerusalem Luke 9: 51 - 19: 27.
5. His entrance there, and all that followed down to His crucifixion Luke 19: 28 - 23
6. His resurrection and its results Luke 24.

This shows the general order of the events, and the arrangement of them is simple and beautiful. But still, our Lord being in this Gospel especially the

Teacher, and dealing with men, we shall find great

truths and principles in detached portions. The mere order of. time is made to yield to this moral purpose; and my design in this book is _(together with general meditations), to notice what is characteristic.

Luke 1, 2.

1, 2. — I may consider these chapters together.

And, in the very opening, I observe something which is strikingly characteristic. Luke addresses his friend Theophilus. No doubt he was his friend in a divine sense, his beloved in the Lord, his fellow in the love of God, and he addresses him in the hope that, through this Gospel which he was about to publish, his Christian friend and brother might be established and advanced in all that which had bound him and Luke together. But this was all in a style peculiar to Luke. *It was according to the grace of human affection*; for he would thus draw Theophilus with the bands of a man. And, moreover, he tells him of his own personal acquaintance with the things he was about to write, which none of the other evangelists do, *thus bringing something of the human style into his holy task*. He appears himself before us, as having the faculties and affections of a man exercised about the things which were engaging him, and addressing another upon them in the same strain.

But though his words take this tone, and seem to flow in this channel, as the communications of one friend to another, yet the Holy Ghost is just as simply and fully in every thought and word of our evangelist as though he had been giving out what he had no personal knowledge of whatever. David knew that God had promised to raise up Christ to sit on his throne, yet spake he of the resurrection by inspiration as a prophet. Acts 2. The Lord Himself delivered commandments to His apostles, yet we are told He did so *through the Holy Ghost*. Acts 1: 2. And all this helps to assure us of the equal and full inspiration of the whole Scripture of God. Whether it be the Lord commanding His apostles, or Luke communicating with his friend, the one is not done merely in the personal knowledge of the Lord, nor the other in the personal knowledge of Luke, but doth come to us under the seal of the Holy Ghost.

After this address to his friend, by way of introduction, Luke enters on his subject, great and blessed as it is, with all possible simplicity. Nothing can be more perfect in its season. The elevated tone in which John, begins his holy task of delineating the Son of God, is quite in character with so high a purpose. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It gives notice at once of what manner of revelation was coming. But here we have something different altogether in style, but just as perfect in its place. "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest." It is like a simple tale-telling, a tale of other days, when truth was wont to be plain and unvarnished. The mind is held for the moment, charmed with the artlessness of this, and yet with the skill of the divine hand which thus leads the thoughts, though into the deepest and most wondrous scenes, yet so gently, by those cords the strength of which the human heart knows so well. Little might we judge to what this is to lead, but the Spirit of revelation has us firmly by the hand, to take us where His grace and wisdom may please.

And the immediate scene is much of this character also, being laid in the midst of human sympathies and domestic affections. We are told of the circumstances attendant on the birth of the Baptist and his parentage. But, simple as all this is, there are secrets in it.

Zacharias and Elisabeth appear before us as do the Abraham and Sarah, the Isaac and Rebecca, the Elkanah and Hannah, of other days. They were in the place of righteousness, but they were childless. They were in the very place where the last prophet of Israel had put the righteous remnant, remembering the law of Moses, and walking in the ordinances of the Lord blameless. Mal. 4. But withal, they were childless, and thus witnesses to themselves that all their strength must be found in God, Who, by the same prophet, had promised a Restorer. And all this righteousness in ordinances was as much a preparation for the promised messenger, as the acceptance of the messenger afterwards would have been a preparation for the Lord of the temple. To such, accordingly, is the

Elijah, the promised messenger, now given; and his birth leads, as we find here, to the birth of the promised Lord of the temple (Mal. 3), before Whose face he was to go as the dawn precedes the full light of day.

And we notice, in the manner of these two births, a difference which is according to this. John comes forth, a child of promise, born by a special gift of God renewing in the mother a natural faculty. But Jesus comes forth, Son of God, born, not through any endowment of nature, but by the Holy Ghost, beyond nature altogether. The one is the child of a barren wife, the other of a virgin. But this was a wondrous difference. Elisabeth was the mother of the saved, Mary of the Saviour. Elisabeth's child was the sanctified, Mary's the Sanctifier. This was a mighty distance. A child of a barren wife has always been, a symbol of the saved, or of the family of God; for it tells us of the grace and gift of God to those who had been found impotent and wanting. Isa. 54: 1; John 1: 13; Rom. 9: 8. But He was the first and only Child of a virgin; and this tells us that, though partaking of flesh and blood because of the children, in the fulness of His person He was altogether above nature.

Such is the dawn, and such the full day, here. These are the prophet of the Highest, and the Highest Himself; the messenger, and the God, of Israel. Till now all had been but darkness. The dispensation of the law (as a covenant of works) had but proved man to be darkness, and had left him such; and (as a witness of good things to come) it had but dispensed the shadows of them, which, while they acted as stars in the night, told that night was still overhanging the earth. But another season is now approaching — a season in which God was to appear, and "God is light."

Such a season is here introduced, and introduced too with all due solemnities — solemnities full of gladness and liberty. Such ever wait on the blessed God when He comes forth. The foundations of the first creation were laid with shouts of joy. Job 38: 7. And that was the pledge from heaven that it was God's purpose to make His

creatures happy. And this indeed is His necessary purpose, for "God is love." And so in these chapters. The foundations of another creation are here laid in the Infant of Bethlehem, and again all is gladness, both in heaven and on earth. God is reappearing, and there must be joy, for sorrow cannot stay where He is. "Glory, and honour are in His presence; strength and gladness are in His place." The bread of mourning must not be eaten in His sanctuary; for joy, as well as holiness, dwells there. So here, all is joy. Hosts of angels celebrate praise — the shepherds repeat the glad tidings of good things — the lips of Mary, Zacharias, and Elisabeth are unsealed to tell out wonders of grace — the expectation of old Simeon is answered — the widowhood of Anna is over — and the very babe in the womb leaps for joy. Old men and maidens, young men and children, all have their share in this moment of richer joy than when the morning stars sang together. The joy of creation, it is true, soon ceased, and groans were heard instead; for man quickly defiled God's handiwork. But still, its foundations were laid with singing. So here, this joy may soon be hushed in this evil world, and the daughter of Zion prove herself unready for it; and we may have to learn that the songs of heaven fall on a heavy heart, and get no response from earth; nevertheless, the foundations of this, as of the former work of God, are laid in holy gladness.

How beautifully indeed do these chapters rise upon our view! A long and dreary season from the days of the return from Babylon had now passed; but here the morning breaks, the heavens are opened, and the wastes of Israel are revisited.

Who had counted on this a day before? The priest was at the accustomed altar; the virgin of Nazareth at home in the ordinary circumstances of human life; and the shepherds, as they were wont, were watching their flocks — when the glory of the Lord shines, and one fresh from the presence of God appears. And Gabriel can stand without reserve in the holy place with the priest, and without reluctance in the poor dwelling of the virgin. Such are the ease and grace of these heavenly visits — happy pledges of days still

brighter, still to come! But Gabriel the messenger, though he stand at the altar, will not, like the angel-Jehovah of old (Judges 13: 20), ascend in the flame of the altar; nor will he, though he stands in the temple, like Jesus-Jehovah afterwards, speak of himself as greater than the temple. For he fills his place as a servant, and takes no higher.

This is blessed. It is all blessed. But these days will have a brighter original in the days of the coming kingdom: this ease and graciousness and brilliancy and joy shall all be more than known again. The pledges will be more than made good. For this is the way of our God. He will interpret the doing of His hand, and make all plain; He will exceed the promises of His grace, and make all blessed.

I might observe also the magnificent utterances of the Spirit through His vessels and channels in these chapters. What an overflowing mind and affection bursts from the lips of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon.* And, oh, how, happy, when our hearts can flow on somewhat in company with them, and be filled with even a little of this same spiritual affection! But the soul knows its heaviness too well.

*The Jews, we are told, frequently wrote of their Messiah under the name of "The Menachem," or Comforter, as Simeon here is described to be waiting for the "consolation of Israel;" i.e., for the Messiah. And it has been thought, that this leads the Lord Himself to use the expression (speaking of the Holy Ghost) "another Comforter."

Such then was the birth of these two children, and such the attending joy of heaven and earth, recorded in those strikingly beautiful chapters. In the progress of them we get other notices of these holy children. Their growth in stature and in wisdom, while they were yet young, is mentioned here, but here only. And this is quite according to that purpose of the Spirit in this Gospel which I have already noticed. For the man is thus kept before us. These glances at the

childhood and youth of the Lord are all sweet and touching in themselves, and in character with our Gospel. He is the Child now, as He will be the Man by-and-by. In each season equally and perfectly well-pleasing to God, consecrating every period of human life. Here we see Him in subjection to His parents at Nazareth; in favour, too, with man as well as with God. For all this was fruit in season. He had not yet been called, to witness for God against the world. When the season for that comes, we shall see Him in perfection then also, and getting the due hatred, as He now gets the due favour, of men. John 7: 7. But as yet He is only the perfect Child, at home in subjection to His parents, graced with every goodly ornament that suited such a One, and thus commending Himself to the hearts and consciences of all.

Holy diligence in attaining all godly wisdom also marks this dear and perfect Child. Every year brought duly with it just its proper increase. But God Himself was His study, His only study; for the temple, as we see here, was the scene for the display of what He had been acquiring in this season of holy, diligent pupilage. Many will run to and fro, and increase knowledge of various kinds, getting it in the busy schools of men. But all the knowledge which this holy Child sought or acquired, was knowledge that suited the sanctuary. He did not bring forth the fruit of His diligence in the schools, but in the temple of God.

Man, however, is but little prepared for this, and so we find it here. His kindred in the flesh do not understand this Child. They are pleased, perhaps, that He has attractions as a goodly Child; and they judge that He is in the company, detained there by the desire of others to see and observe Him. A mother's vanity might suggest that.* And when they miss Him, they look for Him where the flesh would have sought Him. But He was not there. And in all this, poor human nature is exposed. In the vanity, the misdirected search, the amazement and the ignorant rebuke of Mary, man is shown out. Jesus the Child can thus begin to expose the corrupted nature. "Wist ye not?" He can say unto them. Surely this Child might say,

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts." And sweet is the comfort of all this to us. Blessed it is to know that our God has had one Object, a Son of man too, on this earth of ours, in which His whole soul delighted. This is blessed. But of Jesus *only* is this so. As one of our own poets has said -

"There has one Object been disclosed on earth

That might commend the place; but now 'tis gone —

Jesus is with the Father."

*See another striking instance of the same mind in Mary, in John 2: 3.

Luke 3, 4.

3 — A long interval has now passed before we reach the time of this chapter. Like that of Moses in his youth, as I may call it, the course of Jesus had been interrupted through the reasonings and darkness of nature. Moses had supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them but they understood not; and their unbelief separated him from them for forty years.

So Jesus, the Greater than Moses, was doing His Father's business in the midst of Israel; but His brethren understood not, — and He had to go down to Nazareth, estranged from Israel for another season. He can but pass it, however, in the same perfectness before God. Man's unbelief may chancre the scene, but nothing touched the heart of this Holy One. He went down to Nazareth to be in subjection there, still as a goodly Child increasing in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man.

But here, in this chapter, we enter on other scenes and times altogether. The children have grown up, and are ripe for their showing unto Israel. And just at this solemn moment our evangelist takes a full survey of the world. It was a task which properly belonged to him under the Spirit, for the Spirit through him, as I have said, looks at man, and deals with man. He here shows us how still and at rest the whole earth was sitting, for the Gentile beast had all in order, according to its mind. Zech. 1: 11. Tiberius the Roman was emperor, his proconsuls were in their several governments, Judea itself being a member of his strength, and part of his honour. The priests, too, were in their temple. All in the earth, both as to its religion and government, was just as man would have it. But under the eye of God, all this was a wilderness; and instead, therefore, of His taking a place in it, and owning it as repose to Him, the voice, of His servant is sent forth to awaken it all, like Elijah in the evil days of Ahab, and to disturb the sleep of carnal contentment in which man and the world were folded.

God's thoughts are indeed not as man's thoughts. Man's sabbath was now a wilderness to Him, and He will act on it as a wilderness. The dispensation of the law had, by this time, tested man, and found him to be hopelessly departed from righteousness; and John is now, according to this, sent forth to call on man to take the place of a convicted sinner. He points to the remedy that was in God for such a one, but he does not reveal it as already accomplished and brought in. He announced the vanity of all flesh, uncovering the very roots of it; but his hand did not carry the seed of a better harvest. He laid the sentence of death in man, but he did not bring life to him. He put him in the dust, but gave him no power to rise. The life and power were to come in by the Son afterwards. "John did no miracle." He challenged the violent to take the kingdom by force, but he did not set before them an open door. "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." He stood between Israel and their God, telling Israel, on the one hand, that they were all flesh, and that flesh was as grass; pointing to Jehovah-Jesus, God of Israel, on the other, as bringing His reward with Him, and doing His work before Him.

There was a mingling of grace and righteousness in his ministry. He came "in the way of righteousness," standing apart from and refusing contact with the world, and thus by his light rebuking the darkness. He mourned to his generation, neither eating nor drinking, because he called on men to know themselves to be sinners, and to take their place as such. But then, he came in the way of grace also, because he was the forerunner of Jesus, and went before the face of the Lord to prepare the way of salvation and the kingdom. Thus there was a mingling of grace and righteousness in his ministry, and it was clearly quite an advance upon both the law and the prophets. The law had sought to order man in the flesh according to righteousness; and the prophets had been sent, in one sense, as in aid of the law, to call the people back to obedience, so that every help and advantage might be rendered to man; and God's abounding patience proved, in the trial of this question, whether or not man were able to restore himself, and stand in righteousness. But John's

ministry assumed the vanity of all expectations of this kind, and took up man as a *convicted sinner*. But then, such is the holy order in divine wisdom, it was not so high a ministry as that which has been now brought in. The apostles, after the resurrection, called on man to take by faith the place of a *pardoned sinner*. And thus over us the light of grace and salvation has reached its noon-day strength, and we are waiting only for the light of glory and the kingdom.

With our God, let me here say, there has been, from the beginning, a work far deeper and more excellent than that of the *old creation*. The old creation was, in some sense, left at man's disposal. His allegiance or his disobedience was to determine its history. But the divine counsel from before the creation had planned and laid a work in and by *the Son*, which could never fail, or be contingent on any strength less than His own. And it is this mystery which the Lord has before Him when He says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Creation was removable; redemption (the work of the Word) is immovable, because the living God has joined Himself with it. And thus the prophet, addressing Jesus the Son, says, "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. *They* shall perish, but *Thou* shalt endure." And so all things that are *made* may be shaken (Heb. 12: 27), for God Himself is not joined to them; He is not their foundation. But the Word was with God, and was God, and became flesh, part and parcel (so to speak of this blessed mystery of everlasting goodness) of the work itself. He is the Vine, the Chief Corner-stone, the Head-stone of the building. This gives redemption an unspeakably more excellent glory than creation ever had. And thus the Baptist, in the ministry which we have in this chapter of our Gospel, says, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." See Isa. 40. All in this work is incorruptible. The seed of the life which it brings is incorruptible - the body with which it will clothe that life is incorruptible — the inheritance to which it introduces is incorruptible. 1 Cor. 15; 1 Peter 1. God has entered through the breach which man's sin produced in the old creation, and has joined Himself with the mighty ruin, in

such a way, and for such an end, as will be to the everlasting praise of His own most blessed name, and also to the sure abiding and imperishableness of His new creation.

Psalm 90 appears to be the utterance of a soul that has learnt something of this mystery. The prophet looks to God Himself as above all created strength; he then traces the vanity which has attended the old creation; and at last finds his relief from such a sight in God's work of mercy, or the work of redemption by the Word. And this is so with us, beloved. The work of the Word, or of God manifest in flesh, is the relief of our hearts from the painful sense of the universal vanity around us. John's ministry might lead the soul into that sense of vanity, but it remained for Another to give us this blessed and sure relief in Himself, and in His work that standeth for ever.

But this only by the way, as we pass on, in connection with the ministry of the Baptist which this chapter gives us. The Lord's genealogy is then traced up to the sources of the *human* family; not to David and to Abraham merely, as in Matthew, but to Adam. And this, I need not say, is quite according to the general mind of the Spirit in Luke, which I have already spoken of. And the absence of all such genealogies in John is, in the same way, entirely consistent. For genealogies recognize human or national relations; and the preserving of them, as is done in the Jewish Scriptures (see 1 Chr., &c., &c.), shows a jealousy for the order and maintenance of the human system. That system will be sustained in the kingdom, when the hearts of the children are turned to the fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children. Zech. 12: 10-14. But *we* are told not to mind genealogies (1 Tim. 1: 4; Titus 3: 9); for the Church is not to be the minister for ordering and maintaining the human system, but is taken into heavenly relations.

Before I enter on the following chapter, I would observe that our Lord's Sonship of God is here owned at the time of His baptism, as had been done at the announcing of His birth before, and was to be

done at His transfiguration afterwards. Luke 1: 35; Luke 9: 35. But there is distinct value in each. The virgin's Child, from the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, was to be called "the Son of God." His *person* was then owned. Now, at His baptism, the same attestation is made a second time, with this addition, "In Thee I am well pleased." His *ministry* is now owned (for His baptism was introducing Him to His ministry), owned to be that which would awaken full divine complacency. And this is blessedly comforting to us sinners. The law was never thus approved, for the law exacted righteousness. John the Baptist was never thus approved, for he convicted man without relieving him. But now that the Son was coming forth with grace and healing for sinners, God's mind could rest, for this was the accomplishing of the purpose of His own love; and thus it could now be said of the Son and His ministry, or of the Son at His baptism, or at His anointing which immediately followed His baptism, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." And by-and-by He will, for the third time, be so attested, when the glory or kingdom shines for a moment on the holy mount. Then this same attestation will come forth with this addition, "Hear Him." But this is equally perfect in its season, for this owned Him in His *kingdom* — every knee must bow to Him, and the soul that will not hear Him will be cut off from among His people.* Acts 3: 22, 23.

*These words, "Hear Him," were a rebuke to Peter for setting Moses and Elias in equal company with Jesus.

Thus on three occasions — at the announcing of His birth, at His baptism, and at His transfiguration, His Sonship of God is divinely attested; in other words, His *person*, His *ministry*, and His *dominion*, are all owned of the Father; the full pleasure of God resting on Him, and the full subjection of the earth demanded for Him. God is well pleased in Him, and the earth is to hear Him. And after these attestations by the voice from heaven, the resurrection in due season comes to verify and close them all by act and deed, and to declare Jesus to be the Son of God "with power." Rom. 1: 4.

Luke 4. — But Satan could not allow all this. Jesus owned as Son of God, and that, too, in connection with the human family, as Adam had been (3: 22, 38), Satan could not allow. He could not let this claim be revived without contesting it; for through his subtlety the first man had lost his dignity. God had created man, and in His likeness made him; but man had begotten children "in his own likeness," defiled as he was, and not as a race worthy of being called "sons of God." But Jesus had now appeared to re-assert in man this lost dignity. The devil must, therefore, try His title to it; and with this purpose he comes now to tempt Him, saying, "If Thou be the Son of God." This was a crisis between the anointed Man and man's great enemy. And surely Jesus stood, stood in the loftiest attitude of a conqueror. Every thine, that had surrounded Adam, the first man, might well have pleaded for God against the enemy. The sweetness of the whole scene, the beauty of that garden of delights, with its rivers which parted hither and thither, the fruits and perfume, with the willing service of ten thousand tributary creatures, all had a voice for God against the accuser. But Jesus was in a wilderness which yielded nothing, but left Him "an hungered," and the wild beasts were with Him, and all might have been pleaded by the accuser against God. All was *against* Jesus, as all had been *for* Adam; but He stood as Adam had fallen. The man of the dust failed, with all to favour him; the Man of God stood, with all against Him. And what a victory was this! What complacency in man must this have restored to the mind of God! To achieve this victory Jesus had been led up of the Spirit into this place of battle, for His commission was to destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3: 8. He stood now as the Champion of God's glory and man's blessing, in this revolted world, to try His strength with the enemy of both, to make proof of His ministry, and to the highest pitch of praise He is more than conqueror.

But He was Conqueror for us, and therefore at once comes forth with the spoils of that day, to lay them as at our feet. He had been alone in the *conflict*, but would not be alone in the *victory*. He that soweth and he that reapeth must rejoice together. It was an ancient

statute of David, that he that tarried by the stuff should share with him that went down to the battle. And it was a decree worthy the grace of "the beloved." But a better even than David, One not only of royal, but of divine, grace is here; and accordingly Jesus, the Son of God, comes forth from the wilderness to publish peace, to heal disease, to meet all the need of those who were the captives of this enemy, and to let them know that He had conquered for them.

This tells us the character of the blessing which we sinners get from the hand of the Son of God. *We get it as spoils of conquest.* By sin we have forfeited all creation blessing. All such was once ours in Eden, but we lost it there; and now all blessing is the fruit of the victory of Jesus. And this gives the heart assurance while enjoying it, for we read our title to it while we take it. The Blessor has entitled Himself to bless, for He has won the blessing before He confers it. We therefore know our right to be blest by Jesus, as surely as Adam knew his to be happy in Eden. And what doubt could he have had? It is not stolen waters that we drink, nor bread eaten in secret that we feed upon, but meat won from the very jaws of the eater, and sweetness gathered from the strong. This is the character of the blessing which the Lord is giving to us sinners. It is His own well-earned spoils. And such do we get here. Full of the Holy Ghost (v. 1), He met the devil in conflict, to withstand and overthrow him; full of the Holy Ghost still (v. 14), He meets sinners with blessing, to heal and to save them. And, since this day in the wilderness, He has been on Calvary with him that had the power of death, and there by death destroyed him; He has come forth in resurrection, again to part His spoils with sinners all the world over; and with certainty of heart we survey and enjoy the glorious blessings.

But where is the sinner to value the blessing and to array himself with the spoils of the conquering Son of God? That is the question, the only question, now. Man has no mind for the blessing, and cares not about a victory and its spoils, in which the god of this world has been judged. The synagogue at Nazareth now shows us what man is, as the wilderness has just shown us what Satan is. The stuff that we

have tarried with is better, in our esteem, than the fruit of victory which our David brings with him. This is now seen at Nazareth. Human desire is stirred for a moment. The people wonder at the gracious words of Jesus, and they fasten their eyes on Him; but this current of human desire is met by a stronger current of human pride which sets in against it, and all this delight in the grace of Jesus goes. They hang on His lips for a moment, but the pride that suggested "Is not this the carpenter's son?" overpowered the attraction after a very short struggle, and their goodness was found to be as the morning cloud, or early dew that passeth away.

And so it is, beloved. Enmity to God and His Anointed must win the day in the heart of man, whenever such a conflict as this is fairly raised. Where it is simply between mere human delight or admiration of Jesus, and the strength; of nature, this scene in the synagogue of Nazareth tells us what the end of the struggle will be. The stuff in the heart, or in the house, is more heeded than the blessing, of God. Before now, man has sold that blessing for thirty pieces of silver, and even for a mess of pottage. And this is a solemn thought. He that trusteth his own heart is a fool (Prov. 28: 26), for God cannot trust it. There is nothing in man that God can trust. Some believed when they saw the miracles that Jesus did, but Jesus would not commit Himself unto them.

Nothing of the natural man will do. "Ye must be born again." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Resolutions will go before temptations, and the bands of man be broken by Satan. Communion with God in the truth, through the Spirit, will alone stand the soul; the native strength of the stoutest will go to pieces.

But this chapter shows us also that the love of the Son of God was not to be wearied or worn out; for, leaving Nazareth, He goes down to Capernaum with the same spoils of war. His love was stronger than all repulse then, as, since then, it has proved itself stronger than death. "Love never faileth." And the Son of God is still going

through this world of sinners with these same spoils, as fresh as though they had been gathered yesterday, to know who will rejoice with Him in them.

Such is this chapter, which opens the ministry of the Son of God, according to Luke; and as in this Gospel He is specially dealing with man, we have here at once strikingly displayed to us what man is. Like the drawing by the preacher. "There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man." The synagogue at Nazareth proves all this against the citizens of this world.

Luke 5 - 9: 50.

Luke 5. — We now enter on the fifth chapter, the materials of which, generally, we find in other Gospels. I would specially notice only what is characteristic.

I may observe again, that our evangelist is not much occupied with mere circumstances (as the order of time and the like), because he deals rather with men and with principles. And so would it be among ourselves. If one were narrating to another some events in order to acquaint him with the events, he would be careful to note accurately the details of time and place; but if he were using the events only for the purpose of illustrating principles or enforcing truths, he would be less careful as to such things. Thus we have, in this chapter, a scene which, in point of time, preceded much that we have already had in the previous chapter. The call of Simon to be a fisher of men, for instance, actually preceded the healing of his wife's mother; but here it follows it. See Matt. 4; 8; Mark 1. But that is nothing to Luke. His purpose is not to determine which came the first, but to give us principles; to give us God and man. And accordingly, while he is indifferent as to circumstances, he discloses, in the call of Simon, great moral principles which the other evangelists have not noticed.

And striking indeed is this disclosure. It gives us a view of man brought really under the power of God. There was nothing in a draught of fishes, let it have been as large and unexpected as it might, that in the way of nature connected itself with conviction of sin. But in the way of God there was. For it is ever the discovery of God that leads to repentance or true conviction of sin. It is only in God's light that we can duly know ourselves. It was the common judgment of all those who, in old time, owned the fear of God, that they could not see Him, and live. They had carried that conscience with them ever since Adam had retreated from the presence of God among the trees of the garden. Manoah judged that he must die because he had seen God. Gideon looked for the same. Ezekiel fell

on his face, and Daniel's comeliness was changed into corruption. when they came in contact with the glory. Isaiah learnt the uncleanness of his lips, when he saw the King, the Lord of hosts. This was rightly learning themselves, not by themselves or among themselves, but by God. They found that they came short of His glory. Rom. 3: 23.

So is it now with Peter. The glory had come very near him. Others might not have perceived it. What was a large draught of fishes to ordinary fishermen but a lucky cast? But a little matter will speak great things in the ear of a soul that God is leading. A hole in the wall is enough to show a prophet great abominations; and to such a one a cloud no bigger than a man's hand is full of God's works and praise. He who could command the fulness of the sea was now before Peter. A draught of fishes is now the glory to a heaven-led sinner; and the glory is no sooner at his side, than, like others of old, Peter learns himself. His eyes see God, and he abhors himself in dust and ashes.

This knowledge of ourselves by the light of God forms the principle of repentance. We may read many a blotted page in our history, and be sorry and ashamed of it; but to read ourselves in the light of the glory and presence of God leads to that repentance which the Spirit works. We learn that we are black, when the sun looks upon us (Cant. 1), when the burning brightness of the glory rises upon us, as here upon Peter.

And let me add that as we learn ourselves in this way, so do we learn God. As my trespasses and follies may tell me much of myself, but I shall not know myself duly and thoroughly till I see myself in the light of God's glory, so God's works may tell me much of Him, His power and Godhead, but I shall not know Him really as He is till I see Him by the darkness of my own iniquity. Then it is I learn God indeed, when I see Him in the face of Jesus Christ, providing for me, a sinner, and rolling my darkness and shame away for ever in the abounding riches of His grace. It was thus Adam learnt God. The six

days' work of God's hand did not give Adam all that God had for him, or tell Adam all that God was to him. It was his transgression that drew out the full treasure. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel," was the word that told what God was. The woman's Seed was a secret which creation had not declared; it was a treasure richer than all the fruit of Eden, and which, grace abounding over sin, and not the labour of creating hands, had made Adam's. Adam then learnt God indeed, and the sinner so learns Him now. And this is the sequel of the mystery of death and life — we learn ourselves, all darkness as we are, in the light of the divine glory; we learn God, all goodness as He is, by the evil of our own sin.

Blessed truths these are which our evangelist here leads us into. The scene is peculiar to him, but quite in the way of the Spirit, Who by him traces our Lord as the Great Teacher, dealing with men's hearts and consciences, and with truths and principles. And upon this scene I would further observe, that the sinking here was no alarm to Peter, as it was afterwards. Matt. 14. Here he does not feel it, or think about it, for his soul was big with other thoughts, and his eye with other objects altogether, so that he had no place for thoughts of himself, or for fear. For this is the true healing of doubt and fear and all confusion. And what a pity it is that this fresh sense of the fulness that is in Jesus should ever cool. It was *after* this that Peter feared the waters, because it was *after* this that his vision was less occupied with Christ. Oh the shame and the sorrow of all this! But have not the brightest in our company failed, dear brethren? Even David, who stands among us (the redeemed of the Lord) in so dear and honourable a place, when a stripling in the fight, could say even to a giant, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand;" but *afterwards* said in his heart, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Well for us, indeed, that One has stood through life and in death to the perfect good pleasure and praise of God. Saul's hand, which David feared, was not so big as Goliath's hand, which David despised; but then, Christ was not so large and full before the eye of David's faith afterwards, as He had been before in the valley of Elah.

But into the further details of this chapter I do not enter. We have them generally in other Gospels. There are, however, at the close of it, a few words which are peculiar to our evangelist, and which I would therefore notice. "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better."

This is still in the character of this Gospel, for it discloses another great secret in human nature, *the power of man's habits and associations*, which, humanly, so hinders the operation of God in his soul. We have been drinking the *old* wine (that which the flesh has been providing for us from our birth), and our appetite for the *new* wine (that which the Son of God has brought with Him *since* nature and the flesh) is spoiled. We are all conscious of this. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" says the prophet. "Then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil." And here the Great Prophet, in like wisdom, warns us, that "no man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new."

And it is, beloved, a solemn warning. All things are possible with God, it is most true, and He giveth more grace. But still we do well to take heed against relishing the old wine. Every thought that we allow, every desire that we indulge, savours of either the old or the new. It is a draught (small it may be), but still it is a draught of one or the other. And this leaves a solemn word behind it on the heart and conscience of each of us. What are you thinking of? what are you tasting now? we may say to our souls through the day. Is it provision for the flesh you are making? or is it a walk in the sanctuary? comes it from heaven or from hell? And oftentimes the saint has to learn, to his sorrow and shame, at the end, the provision he had been making by the way. The patriarch was not drunk at the beginning, but he became a husbandman, planted a vineyard, and then drank of the wine. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this . . . thing?" the soul may indignantly reply; but if the hidden tempers of the dog be allowed, his active fury will break out in time. "Walk in the Spirit," is the divine security, "and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." And surely, beloved, a little of that walking should

enable us to change the speech, and to say, The new is better. That is what our blessed Lord would have. The holy, watchful habit of denying the flesh, its tempers and its lusts, will keep the appetite fresh and ready for this new and better wine; and into all this may the gentle and strong hand of the Spirit lead our souls daily!

Luke 6. — Here we again have what we have in Matthew and Mark. But I observe that the appointment of the apostles is made *after prayer*; and this is not noticed by the other evangelists. As, also, on other occasions, the same notice of the Lord in prayer is peculiar to Luke. But this still shows us that the Lord is before us rather as a *Man*, than either as a Jew, or as the Son of God. For a Jew, considered as under the law, was not properly called to pray, for the law put him on his own strength; but prayer being the expression of dependence, is the first duty of a creature like man, who should learn to wait on God as his all-sufficiency and strength.

This ordination of the Twelve bound them, from henceforth, peculiarly around the person of the Lord. For they were to be with Him. Mark 3: 14. Upon which, however, I would suggest a thought or two, which I believe the soul may use to holy profit.

There is a difference between intimacy and familiarity. I may be familiar with the condition and circumstances in which another commonly walks, but have very little real intimacy with himself — as in the case of servants. And this has its strong illustration in the history of the Lord.

The centurion, the Syrophenician, or Mary the sister of Lazarus, were comparatively but little with Him. They are not seen in company with Him wherever He goes, but cross His path, to say the most, only occasionally. But when they are brought to deal with Him, they do so with most bright and blessed intelligence. They show that they *know* Him — Who and what He really is. They make no mistakes about Him; while even the apostles, who waited on Him day after day, betrayed, again and again, the ignorance and distance of mere nature.

Is there not a lesson in this for us? Is there not a fear, lest familiarity with the things of Christ be much more than the soul's real acquaintance with Himself? I may be often, so to speak, handling these things. I may be reading the books which tell of Him. I may be busy in the activities which make His service their object. I may speak, nay, write, about Him, while others, like the centurion, may be a good deal withdrawn from all this; but their growth in divine knowledge, and living understanding of Him, may be far more advancing. Saul had David about him, even in his household, at his bidding, as his minstrel, when he needed or wished for him; but Saul did not know David.

Surely this is a lesson for us, beloved. The multitude who waited on the Lord, and watched His steps, must have been able to give even Mary of Bethany, had she sought it, much information about Him. Hundreds in the land, as well as the Twelve, might have told her what He had been doing, where He had been journeying, the discourses He had delivered, and the miracles He had wrought. Information like this they had in abundance, and she but sparingly, save as she was debtor to them for it. But all that, I need not say, left them far behind her in real acquaintance with Him. And is it not so still? How many of us can give information about the things of Christ, and answer inquiries, correctly too, while the soul of the instructed sits and feasts on the things themselves far more richly. For the knowledge that a Mary may gather from the report of a multitude, nay, from the lips of apostles, often becomes another thing with her, than it had previously been with them. A poor stranger, making her modest and yet earnest way to Jesus, in the crowd, may shame the thoughts of those who were entitled to be the nearest to Him; yea, of Peter himself. Luke 8: 45.

We need not so much to covet information about Him, as power to use divinely what we know; to turn it, through the energy of the Spirit, into matter of communion, and the feeding and enlivening of our renewed affections. Then, and then only, is it what our God would have it to be. Col. 3: 16 may teach us, that, while inquiring

after knowledge, and laying up the word of Christ," the material of all wisdom, we should take care to nourish the simpler affections of the soul. Melody in the heart should be the companion of the indwelling word of wisdom and knowledge. Eph. 5: 19. If it be not, the knowledge will be wanting in its savour, and in its power to refresh either ourselves or others.

This, at the same time, let me say, is not to lead us to give up action, or, if it may be, daily companionship with the interests and people of Jesus in the world. Perfection is likeness to Himself; and in that living Pattern we see this — busy in service wherever or whenever a need called Him, but all the while, in spirit, in the deep sense of the presence of God. Here alone lies the way that is fully according to the Great Original. As one sweetly says, pressing on the soul this grace of communion combined with service -

"Child-like, attend what Thou wilt say,

Go forth and serve Thee while 'tis day,

Nor leave my sweet retreat."

This, however, only as we pass on — if the Lord give us some profit from it.

The holy instructions which we get in the progress of this chapter, are found in the sermon on the mount in Matthew. We need not determine whether the Lord delivered them on two different occasions, one of which is given us by the one evangelist, and the other by the other, or whether the very same occasion is recorded differently by them.* The Spirit, I am assured, designs to serve a more general purpose by Luke than by Matthew. In Matthew, the Lord's words are recorded, as though He were very particularly addressing Himself to a Jewish ear. There are instructions there which would exclusively, I may say, reach the conscience of a Jew, awakening in his mind recollection of the law and the prophets. These are omitted here, and the Lord speaks as having *man* before

Him The sayings of "them of old time," that which was "the law and the prophets," errors in fastings, alms-deeds, and prayers, which so prevailed among the Jews, get no notice here; but all that was moral, applying itself to the heart and conscience of man, does.**

*It has, however, been observed by others, that the sermon in Matthew was delivered on a *mountain* and this in a *plain*. Matt. 5: 1; Luke 6: 17. And instances are given of the Lord preaching the same things at different times. Compare Matt. 9: 32-34, and Matt. 12: 22-24. Matt. 16: 21; Matt. 17: 23; and Matt. 20: 17-19.

**The warnings against covetousness (which, of course, are of this general or moral character) are an exception to this, for though they are found in Matthew, they are omitted here. But we shall find that they are thus omitted, only in order to bring them out in another place of this Gospel, in connection with other scenes and truths which were morally more suited to them. See Luke 12.

And this is so according to the mind of that perfect Teacher, Whose instructions are here and there thus variously delivered. He was sent to the circumcision, it is true. He could not, in actual ministry, pass the Jewish boundary, but He could *see* man through the Jew; and it has been the good pleasure of the Holy Ghost to show us, by Luke, the Lord's mind reaching out and apprehending man in this way, dealing with the *human*, and not merely with the *Jewish* conscience and affections.

Luke 7. — This chapter opens with another instance, in our evangelist, of disregard of mere circumstances and order of time; for the place which the case of the centurion fills in this Gospel is not according to that which it holds in the others.

There are also, in this narrative, peculiar and characteristic touches. Thus, we learn here of his sending the Jews to the Lord in his behalf, a circumstance which Matthew does not notice. Because Matthew, writing more immediately for the Jewish converts, would not record that feature in the case which might have nourished the old national

pride; but Luke, writing more for the Gentiles, would have them remember the ancient favour in which the others once stood with God. Both of these things had their moral value, which the Spirit would surely consult. So, with a like moral intent, Luke does not notice the Lord's comment on the faith of this Gentile, as Matthew does — the Jewish evangelist noticing this, as it might help to check the rising of a Jewish boast; the other not noticing it, for it might have helped to raise a similar feeling in the mind of a Gentile.

These distinctions appear to me to be perfect in their place. And then we get (and only here) the case of the widow of Nain, a case so tenderly affecting the human heart, that it properly lay under the notice of the Spirit in Luke. For in the style of one who was looking at man, and his sorrows and affections, our evangelist tells us, that the young man who had died "was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow;" and again, when the Lord raised him to life, that "He delivered him to his mother." These are strokes and touches quite according to the human tones which have their happy and gracious current through the mind of the Lord in this Gospel. And the little word "only" is peculiar to Luke. It is used in the case of Jairus's daughter, and of the man whose child was possessed with an evil spirit, and here in the case of the widow of Nain. And such a word would appeal to the tender heart of the Son of man, and is lovely and touching in its place. Would that we caught more of the same tender spirit, while delighting at the discovery of it in Jesus!

And I cannot refuse to notice, in connection with this chapter, what has struck me in the Gospels — the ease with which our Lord allowed the veil to fall from Him at the bidding of faith. In old time, when a king of Israel was asked to heal a man of his leprosy, he rent his clothes, and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive?" But Jesus, the despised Galilean, in all the repose and certainty of conscious glory, turns at once only to say, "I will: be thou clean." The glory of the God of Israel shone out then without distraction, when faith rent the veil. So here — the faith of a Gentile appeals to him as the Lord of heaven and earth, Who had once said in a word,

"Let there be light, and there was light and could now just "say in a word," and the centurion's servant should be healed; and immediately, with the same ease, the divine glory again breaks forth. No disturbance, as though some strange thing were being done; it was only looking through the cloud again, it was only letting the veil drop, that "the life-creating Sun," the countenance of God Himself, might appear in power and grace. Any thing that belonged to God was nothing too great for Jesus, when faith discovered Him. But, save to faith, He veiled Himself; for He came, the emptied Son of God, to atone for sins, and bring us home to Him from Whom we had departed in pride. Faith, as it were, entitled Him to know Himself again for a moment; and that must have been a blessed moment to Him. But otherwise, through love to us, He refused to know Himself in this evil and apostate world, saying, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee."

This chapter then introduces the mission of John the Baptist to the Lord, which I believe to be a matter of great interest and meaning.

John had, long before this, testified to the person of the Son of God. As to that he had no doubt. But it seems that he was not prepared for all the results of being the Lord's witness. Like Moses in his day. Moses was the minister of God, and had the conduct of the camp through the wilderness. But he became impatient under the charge, and says, "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?" The weakness of his hand to hold the glory betrays itself, and seventy others are made to share it with him. But though he is thus rebuked in the secret place of the Lord, yet before others his Lord will vindicate him; so that, immediately afterwards, Aaron and Miriam are put to signal reproach for not being afraid to speak against him. Num. 11, 12. Just so here with John the Baptist. John betrays the common weakness, and is offended in Christ. Like Moses, he becomes impatient, not being prepared for all the cost and charge of being the Lord's prisoner as well as minister. He knew Jesus to be the Son of God, as Moses had known Jehovah to be the Redeemer of

Israel; but as the murmurings of the camp had been too much for the one, so the prison and injuries of Herod now prove too much for the other; and John, like Moses, must listen to a rebuke in secret: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." But before men also, like Moses, he shall stand graciously approved by his divine Master. "Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

This is the constant way of the Lord. He smote Israel again and again in the secret places of the wilderness, but before their enemies He was as One Who had not seen iniquity in them. Many a question was settled between the Lord and the camp when alone, but into judgment of the ungodly they were not to enter. And so are the saints now under the judgment of the Father, but the future judgment does not await them. In that day they are to have boldness.

In this way, John here proves the faithfulness and grace of his blessed Master. And after the Lord has thus vindicated and honoured him before that generation, He turns to give them the character they had earned by their treatment both of John and of Himself. And what is this, but a telling of us, that man is a creature whom God cannot cure? God had now been making full proof of him, addressing him by different ministries, but man had no answer for God. When He mourned to him, man had no tears; when He piped to him, he had no dancing. The human heart was found to be no instrument for the finger of God. All was out of tune, when *God* tried it. Intelligence and zeal and action are there at the bidding and awakening of other influences. but nothing, was there for *God*. He would have raised a solemn tone by the Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking, and then a more joyous one by the social Son of man; but there was no music in the heart of man for God. This was now proved after the trial of the most skilful hands. For all these attempts had been proving the skill of the player, so that wisdom stood "justified of all her children." What could have been done more than had been done? "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept."

After this solemn word, our evangelist leads us to another scene — the house of a Pharisee, where the Lord had gone, upon invitation, to dine. For our Lord, in this Gospel, is eminently the *social* One — social as a Man, in order to converse with men. Therefore we find Him here, as I have already noticed, more frequently than in the other Gospels, seated at meat in the houses of others, be they who they may, for there He could find the mind relaxed, and free to show itself.

This scene in the Pharisee's house is one of great moral value. It shows us that nothing rightly or really introduces us to Jesus but our sins. Admiration of Him as a Teacher, or as a Doer of miracles, will never throw us across His path according to God. It is only sin and the sense of it that can really introduce us to the Son of God; for He is a Saviour, and sent to us of the blessed God as such. Nicodemus was led to Him as a Doer of mighty works; but Nicodemus must be born again, must get other thoughts of Him, ere he can duly go to Him. So, here, this Pharisee. It is clear that it was not as a sinner he knew Him. He had been attracted, amiably attracted too, by something which he had seen in or heard of Him, and he prepares Him a feast. But there is another in the house who reaches Him by a different path altogether. She is a sinner of the city, and her sins bring her to Him, and she prepares another feast for Him; and it is at her feast, and not at the Pharisee's, the Lord really seats Himself. Her tears and ointment and kisses are the feast at which the Son of God sits, while all the costlier provision of the host is passed by.

This is very blessed. It is the sinner who really provides the feast and the company for Jesus. Neither the table nor the friends of the Pharisee were quite the thing for Him. It is only the faith that apprehends Him as a Saviour that can spread a table for the Son of God in this wilderness-world. And I observe in each place where the conversion of Levi the publican is recorded, that we are told immediately afterwards he prepared meat for the Lord in his own house. For he was one of those whom Jesus came down from the bright heavens to visit. He was a publican, an owned and a

published sinner in the world; and Jesus was the Saviour. The faith of such, therefore, opened the door and entertained Him, made Him welcome in His own proper character, while every thing else only kept Him outside still.

It is our joy to know this and believe it. And when we begin as sinners with a Saviour, our journey is wonderful and glorious beyond all thought; for our sins lead us to Christ, and then Christ leads us to the Father. And what a path that is! It stretches all along from the darkest and most distant places of creation, where sin and death reign, up to the highest heavens, where love and glory dwell and shine for ever. Angels have their own untainted sphere to move in, but they have never trod such a path as this. The Church passes from a sinner's darkness into God's marvellous light, and there has been nothing like that; and none but a sinner conscious of the value of the Son of God can understand it. And I see, from this striking scene, that this character of a sinner saved by the grace of the Son of God, is remembered to the very end. This woman loved much, but her love did not serve her as a sinner; for at the end the Lord says to her, "Thy *faith*" (not, Thy love) "hath saved thee; go in peace." This is much to be observed by us all, for it is very comforting. The fruit of our love may be honoured before others, as here this poor woman's tears and ointment are owned before the Pharisee. A cup of cold water shall not lose its reward, if given for love to Christ. But before the conscience of the sinner nothing is owned but the blood, and the faith that rests in it. It is faith, and not love, that sends us on our way with the eunuch rejoicing, or bids us, with this poor woman, to go in peace. And sweet it is thus to be cast on Jesus, and on Him only. Let the soul be as elevated, the walk as bright and unspotted, and the love as glowing, as they may be, let the experience be as rich and various as David's or Paul's, yet Jesus, Jesus, is the only Saviour. Jesus first sends away in peace, and the *first* confidence and joy are to be kept steadfast to *the end*.

I cannot, however, close this part of our Gospel, or quit this house of the Pharisee, fruitful spot as it is, without another look at it. For it

seems to me to have been a place where the great conflict which has been often fought, the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, or between the two wives, the bondwoman and the free, was again witnessed.

By transgressions, such as Adam's, the creature assumed strength independent of God; and therefore, in restoring him, God must teach him that He alone is sovereign, and that all creature strength must fail. And this is the lesson which the law and the gospel together teach; for the law, testing man, shows the vanity of confidence in flesh; the gospel, revealing God, shows the safety of trust in Him. And the mystery of the two wives teaches the same. Hagar had strength in the flesh, but her seed was not the heir. Leah had strength and title in the flesh, yet her son did not excel, but lost the birthright. Peninnah had strength in the flesh, but no child of hers delivered Israel out of their misery and oppression. On the other hand, all blessing and honour lay with the children of promise. Isaac caused laughter, and was he in whom Abraham's house was established. Joseph got the birthright, and, as soon as he was born, Jacob spoke of returning to his inheritance, for "if children, then heirs." Samuel filled the mother's heart and lips with a song, and was nourished up till he lifted Israel from the dust, regained the glory out of the hand of the enemy, and raised the stone of help in the midst of the camp. And all these things teach us, as the law and the gospel teach us, that by strength shall no man prevail." The rich are sent empty away, the bows of the mighty are broken, but the poor handmaid is remembered, and she that was barren bears seven.

This is the lesson which God is teaching us; the necessary lesson in a world like ours, where the creature has departed from God in pride, in the assumption of strength affecting to be God. The Lord God is ever therefore saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit."

This is the conflict in this world of ours: and that which is of flesh or of man has ever struggled with that which is of God or of the Spirit,

and this struggle we have had exhibited from very old time, and have it still. The house of the two wives, to which I have referred, constantly presented it. That of Abraham very especially witnessed it. There Hagar and Sarah for a season dwelt together, but in discord and strife. The family of Jacob presented the same. Leah had the right of the flesh or of the first-born, but Rachel was the object of election and delight; and they two, the wives of the same husband, dwelt together, but could not agree together. Elkanah's house was the same. Peninnah and Hannah were the Hagar and Sarah, the Leah and Rachel again — pride and provocations with the one, and constant sorrow of heart with the other. And all these scenes were the expressions of the way in which the flesh persecutes the Spirit. Of the same struggle the Church in Galatia was another scene. And the heart of each believer is, in measure, the same. And nothing heals the house, the Church, or the heart, but strengthening the freewoman, giving fruitfulness to the seed of God, the spirit of adoption, the principle of child-like, holy liberty in us and among us. Bring forth Isaac, and send away Ishmael, and dwell in an undivided house. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Now the Lord found Israel very much the same. That which was born after the flesh persecuted that which was born after the Spirit. The poor barren woman was found there again, the tainted sinner and the publican, weak and lost in themselves, receiving the gracious visitation of the God of all power and love, but suffering the scorn and persecution of those who had strength in themselves, as they judged — the Pharisees, the Hagars and Peninnahs of that day. This was all, in principle, the flesh and the Spirit again the bondwoman and the free; and this house which we have now been visiting was a sample of this.

May our faith be strengthened to do justice to God's love! That love claims our full and happy confidence. To render it only a diffident and suspicious trust, is to treat it unworthily. May all such spirit of fear and of bondage be gone! May the true Sarah in our hearts cry

out, and cry till she prevail, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son." For when the Lord does His work, He does it in a way worthy of Himself. When Israel came out of Egypt, they came out, not as though they were ashamed of themselves, but *harnessed* and *full-handed*. They came out as the host of God should. Not a dog dared to move his tongue against them, nor was there one feeble person among their tribes. And so with us sinners going forth from under the power of darkness with our Redeemer. We are not to go forth with fear and suspicion, as though we could hardly trust the arm that was saving us. but in such a way as will declare plainly that the work is the work of Him Whose "love is as great as His power, and knows neither measure nor end."

We are to leave the Pharisee's house behind us, like this poor sinner, not minding what the company there say, but bearing the sweet echo of the Lord's voice, which tells us of peace, still upon our heart and ear. Then we shall go forth, like Israel from Egypt, as the redeemed of the Lord ought to go, letting hell and earth know, in our joyous and perfect assurance of His salvation, that He Who is higher than the highest is on our side, and that we are feeding upon "the mighty's meat."

Luke 8. — Entering on this chapter I would observe that in the case of the poor sinner, which closes the preceding one, we see *deep personal affection* as the fruit of conscious forgiveness or healing; here, in this company of women, *devoted attachment and service*. In the poor sinner, all the hidden fountains are opened at the bidding of the grace of Christ. She knew that He had accepted her, sinner as she was, and this commanded her heart. It left her without an eye for the Pharisee's feast, or an ear for his scorning, for Jesus had drawn her apart from every thing; and to come near Him, as near as love and gratitude and worship could bring her, was all her concern. And at the same bidding of His healing love, this company of women attach themselves to Him. They follow to serve Him. Grateful love told itself out in her silently; in them it was busy. It would be with Him wherever He was, that it might give Him whatever it could minister.

Various fruit, but each blessed. And Jesus can understand both, and receive the secret tears of the one, and the active services of the other.

The beauty of either case would be sadly soiled, if these were not the fruit of *conscious* healing. What affection, what service, so pure as that which comes thence? The publican may smite on his breast in *conscious guilt*, and that in its place is surely a right and godly affection. But how are the beauty and the attractiveness of it outshone by the tears and services, the love and the devotedness, that spring and flow forth from *conscious acceptance*! nothing so precious to God, nothing so lovely even in our own thoughts, when we consider it for a moment. And, on the other hand, how sad when (instead of tears and services) self-satisfaction, high-mindedness, slight and contempt of others, or the mere unspiritual pursuit of knowledge and the busy competition of party, mark the heart and the ways. May we all, beloved, cherish these simple patterns which the Spirit here records, and which so meet the approving presence of the Lord"

This is the first of a series of chapters, in which we see *the Lord, the Twelve, and the Seventy*, in succession, going forth to minister (see Luke 8: 1; Luke 9: 1; Luke 10: 1); and this extended exhibition of ministry is all according to the grace of the Spirit in this Gospel. And as a further expression of the same grace, our evangelist tells us that the Lord went "throughout every city and village;" leaving no spot unvisited by His light and goodness. And this divine Minister of grace is attended by a suitable train. A company who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, and cleansed of devils, follow Him now to witness His *grace*; as, by-and-by, when He comes forth in power, He will have behind Him an equally suited train of shining ones to reflect *His* glory. Rev. 19: 14.

Luke then records the parable of the Sower, given to us also, we know, by both Matthew and Mark. No doubt it has the same general character and purpose in each Gospel; but I observe that the Lord

here is not so careful, by directly quoting the prophet Isaiah, to apply the judgment of God *to Israel*; and this is still according to His mind in Luke.

In the progress of this chapter we get the case of the Gadarenes, of the woman with the issue of blood, and of Jairus's daughter, combined in the same way as in Mark.

On these and similar acts of power and goodness we may generally observe, that the Lord's ministry always bears these two characteristics upon it — *He was ever judging the devil, but never the sinner*. He went on blotting out the traces of the destructive power of the one, but leaving the traces of His own redeeming power on the other. By the very same stroke He did these two things. Every blind man made to see, every lame one made to walk, alike witnessed the judgment of the power of the enemy, and the blessing, of the sinner. When He cleansed the leper, when He raised the dead, this twofold testimony was given. And so the devil meets Him only to tremble, and the believing sinner only to take away a blessing and to take it always with a welcome. Let the Lord be doing what He may, or going where He may, did He ever allow the needy child of man to feel himself an intruder? Even His upbraidings cannot be called upbraidings. For what were they? They were only for want of confidence in Him — because the sinner did not come with sufficient boldness. He upbraided him, not for being too confident, but for not being confident enough. His language was after this manner, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

This was not upbraiding This was not repelling the sinner, but resenting his lingering and suspicions. Nothing can be surer, in the ways of the Son of God on earth, than these things, that He was ever judging the devil, but never the sinner. It was like Moses, who would go forth and smite an *Egyptian*; but if he himself were refused and insulted by an *Israelite*, he would go into exile, go where he might, unfriended and alone, rather than touch a hair of his head. Exodus 2. Or like Samson, another distinguished and

honoured type, who will seek occasion against the *Philistines*, and even join affinity with them, just to plague and impoverish them, but will be as weak as a child if the *men of Judah* resist him. Judges 15: 12. Moses and Samson had strength enough against the enemy, but none against their own people; as the Son of God will judge the devil and all his works, but say of sinners, "I came not to judge," not "to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9: 56; John 12: 47.

So was it now. Gadara was a portion of the Jewish or sanctified earth. It was within that land on which the eyes of the God of heaven and earth rested from one end of the year to the other. Deut. 11: 12. But the unclean had long since entered that land and defiled it, and there we find them at this time in herds, as also the full display of the enemy's unbridled strength. Legion and the swine were in Gadara, to tell us what the place of Jehovah's choice had now become. It was the very palace of the strong man, but the Son of God now enters as the stronger, to do His proper work, to show Himself the Redeemer of the captive, and the destruction of the power of death.

But the feeders of the unclean swine in that place are not prepared for this. It was a trespass on them, and they would have Jesus depart from their coasts. Terrible indeed this is. Nothing that we see in all the history of the Gospel gives us such an expression of the dark and unclean region of Satan as this. With such a display of the grace and power of the Stronger Man in the midst of them, still they desire Him not, but would sell all their interest in the Son of God for a herd of swine. This was very awful; and Jesus has but to leave them, and to return across the lake of Galilee, to pursue His way in other scenes.

A Jewish ruler seeks Him, that He would come to his house, in behalf of his little only daughter, who there lay a-dying. He goes onward with the purpose of proving Himself, in the house of the Jew, the resurrection and the life; but His path thither is interrupted by the faith of a needy stranger, who touches Him in the crowd. She

had a plague in her body. It was a kind of fretting leprosy, a fountain of uncleanness in her very flesh, which no skill of man could heal. In her extremity she hears of Jesus, and by a single touch, gets all that she needed. But no one knew her, or cared to know her. Both herself and her touching the Lord would have remained a secret in the busy crowd, only He Who heals her knows her, and owns her before them all. The multitude was thronging and pressing Him; but it was not need or sin that urged them, and therefore He feels it not. But her fainter touch was felt, because it was the touch of a consciously needy and defiled one, who had learnt to believe that there was virtue in Him. Her sorrow introduces her to Him, and He knows her because He had healed her. This was the ground and the character of their acquaintance; *and the Son of God and the healed sinner thus meet together to be alone in the crowd* — she a stranger to all but Him, and He treating as strangers all but her.

This is full of the truest and most solid consolation for our souls. But beside that, this path of the Lord is all full of *meaning*. It tells us what we know the path and action of the Son of God is to be. For He has before Him, in the distance, the day of His power in Israel, the house of the Jew, where He will make the dry bones live, and call His people from their dark and long sleep, as prisoners from the pit; but on His journey there, or during the present season, by the way, a stranger engages His sympathies, a poor, unnoticed one (save by Himself), whom conscious necessity had thrown in His way, like the Church of God, which alone occupies the Son of God, while on His way to display His power in resurrection and life in Israel in the latter day.

I judge this to be the character of what we get here. And thus, this chapter (which opens with the Lord going forth to His ministry) gives us these samples of the varied fruit of His toil both in the Church and in Israel; showing us also, as in Gadara, what a world it was into which He came to toil, that all His blessed travail might close in His own praise both in heaven and earth, the world's

conviction and judgment, and the comfort of every sinner who will but trust in Him.

Luke 9. — In the opening of this chapter, we get, in order, the mission of the Twelve. But the Lord does not here, as in Matthew, limit their labours, to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," this distinction being still according to the general character of each of the two Gospels.

The exercise of Herod's conscience is then noticed, and perhaps a little more largely than in either Matthew or Mark, and is again referred to in chapter 23. This is still according to our evangelist. But the martyrdom of the Baptist, on the other hand, is not so fully detailed; for that was a fact in the course and history of the Jewish apostasy, and lay, therefore, less within the notice of the Spirit in Luke.

The transfiguration is then given to us, and more particularly, too, than in either Matthew or Mark.

The full proof of Israel's unbelief had now been made.* Israel had refused to receive their own. They had not discovered in Jesus of Nazareth the Light that was to lighten the world, and be their glory. The earth, for the present, was therefore lost to Jesus. For Zion, by ancient decree (Ps. 2), is the seat of divine dominion in the earth. A cross, as the Lord here forebodes, and not a crown, awaits Him therefore.

*This proof is laid out more fully and orderly in Matthew's Gospel than in either of the others.

But if the earth be closed upon Him, the heavens must and will open to Him, and to His saints now, in the day of His refusal here, gathering around Him by faith. And the purpose of this vision on the holy mount is to give His saints a pledge of some of that glory in the heavens which is their inheritance.

There was no moment like this. This was the hour of passing from earth to heaven. The secret of God, in vision, was here disclosed. The heavenly Jerusalem stood, for a moment, with her opened gates, before those favoured disciples, Peter, James, and John. Moses and Elias appear in glory with Jesus; but Peter, James, and John behold it. There were, in this manner, both *companions and witnesses* of the glory. As in the coming millennial kingdom, the Bride of the Lamb will descend, as this glory now rests on the hill, and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it. Rev. 21.

Such I deem to be the great purpose of this vision, which we call "the transfiguration." There is an intimation in verse 37, that it was witnessed at night. A circumstance of much meaning, I believe. For as this was the place of the heavenly glory, and as that place will need neither sun nor moon, but the glory of God will lighten it, so this mount is now lighted up as by the body of the glorified Lord.*

*So "the holiest" in the temple, another type of the heavenly place, had no light but from the glory.

Again, I observe that these heavenly and glorified strangers talk with Jesus about His decease. Fit theme for such a moment! For that decease is to be had in everlasting remembrance. The glory will celebrate it. Rev. 5. The whole order of heaven, the redeemed, the angels, and all creation, will own it, as we see in that place of the Revelation. For *the glory* owes itself to *the cross* — as the trumpet which ushered in the jubilee was heard only on the day of atonement; the time of restitution and refreshing, in this manner, owning its dependence on the smitten Lamb of God (Lev. 25), or on "the decease" of Jesus.

And further, I find that this journey up the hill (taken as it was, under promise that it should lead to the kingdom, v. 27), was a little too much for the disciples. The Lord is in prayer till the glory appears, but they are heavy with sleep. This, too, has meaning. Nature was betraying its weakness — the flesh was burdensome, and could not travel such a road. It was an uphill journey to poor

man. The wise virgins slumber. All this is so. But still when Peter and his comrades awake, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," is his word — this telling us that his heart and desire were really in the right place, though flesh was weak; as the wise virgins, though they slumber, have oil in their vessels to recruit their lamps, when the Bridegroom comes — that oil, like this word of poor loving Peter, telling us that, in the real longing of their hearts, they waited for Jesus.

This is another point of interest and of comfort. And at the end, in full harmony with the great leading purpose of this vision, and of which I have spoken, "the excellent glory" appears. 2 Peter 1: 17. The cloud comes to take the heavenly family home. The Lord and His companions enter it, while Peter, James, and John stand without.

This is all in harmony, but it is all wonderful. Within this cloud, as we here see, the glory was seated again — as of old, when it traversed the desert. It now acted as the veil separating the holy from the holiest; and it is the peculiar honour of the changed and risen saints, alike transfigured or glorified, to have their place in it, while Israel and the spared of the nations only walk in the light of it. And thus, this part of the vision being somewhat beyond the present thoughts of the disciples, they fear, as Jesus with Moses and Elias are enfolded in that cloud. For the heavenly places, or the top of the mystic ladder, up to which this cloud was now separating these glorious strangers, had not as yet been disclosed to Jewish faith. Jacob had been at the foot of it, and Jacob's people knew the God of Bethel, and lived in the hope of the promise touching the inheritance of the land. But neither Jacob nor they knew of any thine, at the top of the ladder, save the voice of Jehovah who addressed him. The transfiguration now discloses the secrets of that glorious place, and shows a family of shining, heavenly ones there with Jehovah-Jesus. This was a mystery; that God was to have a family in the place out of which the blessing was to flow, and the glory was to shine; as well as a restored people and a subject creation at the foot, to enjoy the blessing, and to dwell in the light of the glory.

Thus, this vision was an advance, filling up the revelation of the purpose of His will, that God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Eph. 1: 10. Indeed, so glorious a vision as this had never been enjoyed. Abraham's passing lamp was glorious, and the ladder of Jacob was glorious. The sight of the burning bush was full of blessing. The sight of the God of Israel by Moses and the elders at Horeb, was glorious, and also that of the armed Captain under the walls of Jericho. Angels were welcome visitors from heaven to patriarchs and rulers of old, and the passage of the Lord Himself before the mediator (Exodus 34), and the prophet (1 Kings 19), at the mount of God, were both perfect in their season. But this vision on the top of the hill is beyond them all. That which, perhaps, the most nearly approaches it, is the rapture of Elijah in the presence of Elisha, for that was the conducting of the glorified ones up to the place where they are now seen. But this therefore, surpasses it, giving us to see the heavenly family, not merely on their way to glory, but peacefully at home in it; no terror making them afraid, no surprise as from light that was beyond them, as with Isaiah, Daniel, and others; but all is the consciousness of being at home, though in the very midst of the brightness of it all.

Excellent, however, as this was, it was destined to yield to something more glorious still. Acts 7 gives us what is Stephen's mount of transfiguration after this. And then the martyr himself is stamped with the heavenly glory. He shines with the light of the children of the resurrection, who are to be as the angels. Matt. 22: 30. It is not that, like the disciples here, he sees that light reflected in others, but he bears it immediately himself. Nor is it that the glory is let down on the mount that he might see it here, but the heaven itself is opened, and he sees it there, and One waiting to receive him into it. His eyes behold Him for himself, and not for another. And his word before the council is a comment on all this, showing a line of strangers and sufferers (among whom he there takes his place), led by "the God of glory" up to "the glory of God." Acts 7: 2, 55.

Whether, however, there with Stephen, or here to Peter, James, and John, heavenly secrets are disclosed, and the Church is shown to be at the top of the ladder, in the glory of the Son Himself. There is the celestial, as well as the terrestrial. The heavens declare the glory of God. Heaven and earth are both to have in them the witness of redemption. Redemption is too excellent a work to remain uncelebrated either here or there. It is a work that has called forth the full flow of divine love and power, and must be known, therefore, in heaven and on earth. The Church is appointed to tell of it there, and Israel with her attendant nations to speak of it here; and this heavenly witness of it is here, for a passing moment, seen in her place on the top of the hill. But what a arace and calling that is! The very conception of it is divine. None but God could have conceived such a purpose; nothing less than infinite love could have formed the thought of a family drawn from among sinners, to be loved with the love, and glorified with the glory, of the Son; to dwell in one house, and sit on one throne with Him. But, oh, how little do our wretched hearts value either Him or His glory!

After the vision had passed, and they were descending the hill, the Lord, in the other Gospels, talks to them of the ministry of Elias. But that is unnoticed here; for being Jewish ministry, it was less suited to the purpose of the Spirit in Luke. Beyond this, there is nothing characteristic in this chapter, till we reach the close.

Luke 9: 51 - 19: 27.

Luke 9. — At this place, what has been suggested as the fourth part of our Gospel begins. The Lord, having ended His more formal ministry in Galilee, begins His journey to Jerusalem. v. 51.

Our evangelist is the only one who notices the circumstances with which this journey opens. And there is something of his *moral* arrangement of incidents to be noticed here. As has been observed by another, commenting on this part of Luke, "this passage of history seems to come in here for the sake of its *affinity* with the text before (the Lord's rebuke of John for forbidding the man who followed not with them); for there, under colour of zeal for Christ, the disciples were for silencing and restraining separatists; here, under the same colour, they were for putting infidels to death; but, as for *that*, so also for *this*, Christ reprimanded them."

The moral order in our evangelist's narrative is, I believe, thus exhibited in this place of his Gospel. But it introduces a very peculiar path of the Lord.

The recent vision on the mount may have led to it; but whether that be so or not, we find our Lord here addressing Himself to His journey, in the consciousness of its leading Him to glory. The time had come, we read, when He was to be "received up" — words which express His ascension to glory. And He seems to act according to this consciousness, sending messengers before His face, as though it were to prepare for Him a way suited to this anticipated glory. The chariot of God would be in readiness to attend Him from Jerusalem upwards (Luke 24: 51); but it was now for the children of men to prepare His previous way from the place where He then was to that city. And He was thus, as it were, trying whether the world would own His claim to be received up," as afterwards He tried whether Israel would own His royal place in Zion. Luke 19: 28. But neither would the world know Him, nor Israel receive Him. The world was not ready for His claims, as is here expressed by the

conduct of the Samaritan villagers. The earth did not care for His heavenly glory. "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head," an infidel world was again, in the spirit of it, saying.

The disciples, who had, it may be, caught the tone of their Lord's mind on this striking occasion, look on Him as another Elijah travelling on to meet the chariot of Israel, and they move Him to do what Elijah had done, by resenting this indignity of the Samaritan villagers, as of the captains and their fifties. But the way of the Son of man, for the present, must be different. He will pass to glory rather through sorrow of His own than through judgment of the world. He "will suffer thus far;" and therefore He here restrains this motion of His disciples, bows His head to this scorn of men by seeking another village, and that, too, not with preparation before His face, but as the rejected Christ of God.

In such a character, He accordingly resumes His journey. No sense of glory fills His soul, as it had done when He set out. The Samaritans had changed its current, and He goes on, consciously despised and rejected of men, who had now in full deliberation hid their faces from, and shut their doors upon, Him. And if, beloved, it be to the praise of grace in Paul, that he had learnt how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and how to be hungry, do we not see all this to perfection in our blessed Master? He knew how one moment to act in the perfect sense of His fulness of glory, and the next to become the despised Son of man. He takes the place which the scornful villagers of Samaria give Him, without an effort or a murmur. Perfect Master, as well as gracious Deliverer!

And in this place of rejection we see certain ones brought into intercourse with Him, that we through them may have some good lessons read to our souls. Two of them are introduced in Matthew (Matt. 8), but not in the same moral connection as here.

The Lord speaks on each case in the full sense of His present place of rejection in the earth. The whole bearing of the instruction proceeds from that. It is the Lord's rejection that has given His saints

a new place, new duties, and new attachments; and these are here brought out for our contemplation, that we may count the cost of being His. Nothing brings the saints into these new things. but the total rejection of their Lord by the world; but let the Lord be apprehended in His rejection, and then these things will be entered into by the soul at once. No "looking back," no knowing of man "after the flesh," by those who have gone forth to the Son of God without the camp; and it is only when we, in spirit, stand there with Him, that we understand Him rightly.

These holy and solemn lessons are read to our souls by our divine Teacher from His present place — "despised and rejected of men." He would still teach us, even through His own sorrows, that we might be kept in company with Himself and His thoughts, as we pass on from scene to scene across this evil world.*

*In answering the third of these persons, our Lord seems to refer to the call of Elisha, to which the recent mention of Elijah by His disciples may naturally have turned His mind. His little analogy and instruction taken from a ploughman, seems to have been suggested by Elisha's history. See 1 Kings 19: 21.

Luke 10. — This chapter gives us in order the mission of the Seventy. But it is only here that we get this; for the Lord, as I have already observed, in this Gospel looks out to man beyond the Jewish boundary; and thus we are given to see a ministry more extended in its character than that which properly suited itself to Jewish arrangements. It intimated a departure from strict primitive order in Israel, as did a similar appointment of seventy elders in the days of Moses. Num. 11. But this is all according to Luke.

This mission is sent forth with a message of peace from God to every city and every house; but, withal, no man was to be saluted by the way. This has great value in it. Jesus proposes, beloved, to settle not the mere intercourses of men in their social order, but the connection between God and sinners. That is the great circumstance, and which the Lord must first provide for. So with our apostle

afterwards. With Paul it mattered little whether the saints were bond or free; for if bond, they were still the Lord's freemen, if free, they were still the Lord's servants. Their relation to the Lord was the great thing (1 Cor. 7); as here, we see it was so in the judgment of the Son of God. There was to be no saluting of any man, while there was to be the publishing of peace to every city and every house. It was not the courtesies of human life the Lord's messengers were to bear on their lips, but a happy, holy, and weighty message from God to sinners.

This was the mind of the blessed Lord on now sending out His messengers; and on their return with a report of their labours, He anticipates the fall of Satan. A little sample of power in the hands of the Seventy hints this result to Him. But, after expressing it, He turns to check in His disciples the looking chiefly at *power*, telling them there was something for them richer than that, even *a name in heaven*, a memorial with a Father there; and however excellent authority over devils might be, or power in the earth, yet that memorial was happier still. It is not that He undervalues power, or withdraws it from them. Nay, He rather rejoices in it, and confirms it in their hands, saying, "I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions." But the home in heaven of the children is to be still more precious than the power on earth of the heirs of God.

And it has interested me much to observe, that it is just here (and in the corresponding place in Matt. 11), that the mind of the Lord in those Gospels approaches the most nearly to what it afterwards is in John. In John the Lord is in connection with the Father and the heavenly family, and it is just in this place of our Gospel that He looks out to those objects beyond all that was then surrounding Him in the apostate cities of Israel. It is as though our evangelist had just laid hold on the skirts of John; or rather, as though this mantle of our prophet, that energy of the Spirit which clothes him here, were taken up by that other prophet to do by it greater wonders, and bring out richer revelations still. The Father, the Son, the headship of all things in Himself, and the family who have their names written in

heaven (Heb. 12: 23), these are the objects which are here present to the thoughts of the Lord, as He looks onward to what none saw but Himself, through the unbelief of the Jewish cities, and this little sample of power in the hands of the Seventy. And, in spirit, He rejoices in all this, and takes afresh His complacency in the person and the purpose of the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, and also in His own place in the blessed mystery; turning, too, in all personal intimacy towards His disciples, as meaning to identify them with this blessedness which passes before His mind, and which prophets and kings of old had not attained.

We have here, however, a painful instance of the way in which the Lord was liable to be intruded on, in this low-thoughted world. He was at this moment, as we have seen, happy in thoughts of heavenly things, when a lawyer proposes an inquiry which comes from other sources and springs altogether. But He bows His head to the intrusion, and comes down to man's level. And in many other places, as here, we may notice the ease and patience with which He ever turned Himself towards man. I have already noticed the way in which He occasionally comes forth in divine glory at the bidding of faith (Luke 7); but His ease as a Teacher or a Healer coming forth at the call of man's ignorance or need, is equally lovely in its place. Nothing was too glorious in God for Jesus to assume, when faith unveiled Him; and nothing too little in man for Him to wait on, when necessity or ignorance appealed to Him. And in all this He was never in haste, as though He felt He was meeting a difficulty, but always turns in the graceful as well as gracious ease of conscious power, telling the occasion, let it be what it may, that He was equal to it.

But this is only by the way, if haply the Spirit would give us some delight in marking the ways of Jesus.

This inquiry of the lawyer leads the Lord to the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is peculiar to our evangelist. The purpose of it was to show this lawyer who his neighbour was: but in the usual way of

the Lord, this instruction is conveyed in a body of larger doctrine; so that we get not only an answer to the inquiry, but other principles of truth. I see the same in the character of the apostles' teaching afterwards. And this is always the way of power, and the way of God. God, in His dispensations, has done this. He does not merely restore what we had lost, but He brings in other glories and blessings which also carry with them the full restoration. And God, in His instructions, has done this. The Spirit of revelation not only answers the anxiety of an inquirer, but conveys that answer through truths and principles which unfold wider thoughts still. As here; the law of neighbourly love is taught and illustrated by a beautiful exhibition of the grace of the gospel of the Son of God, brought in upon the complete inadequacy of every thing else to answer the need of sinners.

The case which the Lord suggests in this parable was a defiling of the land; and all that the law could do in it, was to find out the wrong-doer, and exact eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Nor could the ministers of the altar under the law provide for the case. They had their service elsewhere. But a stranger, in the liberty of his own love, may attend to it if he please. And so with us sinners. God must come forth in the activities of His own love to meet our sad condition, for it lies beyond all other help. The services of a temple will not do for those who have no cleanness fit for a temple. Man is not there by nature; his heart is no sanctuary for God; but he lies in an unclean place, defiled in his blood; and what he wants is to be sought out and brought home. Man has been made the prey of a strong and cruel enemy, and it is that love which will go, and, at a great cost, bind him up, that he needs. And such a one has met him in the person of the Son of God in the gospel. Under the law, God was in the holy place, and the unclean must be removed, and the priest and the Levite attend that sanctuary. But in the gospel, God is in the unclean place, seeking the ruined ones; Jesus is going about doing good, the Stranger from heaven has come where man lay in his blood, and has looked on him and had compassion, has gone and had to do with all that pollution,

untouched by it, washed the wounded sinner from his blood, and anointed him with oil. Ezek. 16. All this He has done, and changed places with the wounded sinner also. For, though rich, He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich — though without sin, He was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him — as the Good Samaritan changes places with the wounded traveler, getting down from his own beast and setting him on it. And He has done more than this; for He has told us that He has His eye upon us for ever, that whether present or absent He thinks of us; as the stranger charges the host to take care of the poor, helpless man, and that when he comes that way again, as surely he will, he will repay him.

All this love, this costly and needed love, we have in the Son of God, the Stranger from heaven, the True Good Samaritan. He kept the law of love to His neighbour, but only He; and we must go to learn the way from Him, do "likewise," kindle our heart at His heart, if in any wise we hope to answer that end of the law. This lawyer was making his boast in the law, but he had evidently reduced and qualified it, as every one must, who seeks, like him, to be justified by it. "Who is my neighbour?" said he; little judging that he was about to hear such a tale of love to one's neighbour as was coming forth. The law was too high, too noble for this man's thoughts. And so is it for us all. We see nothing worthy of that word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; . . . and thy neighbour as thyself," till we trace the well-spent life of Jesus. The lawyer would have stood on the law, and refused Jesus; but he has to learn, if his ears could hear it, that Jesus alone upheld the law, or gave it efficacy on the minds and consciences of others.

It is our salvation to know Jesus as the Stranger that met us in our wounds with His oil and wine. Luke alone gives us this parable, but this is quite according to the largeness of the spirit of grace which fills his Gospel throughout.

The little scene which then closes this chapter is also peculiar to Luke, serving his general purpose of instructing us in great principles of truth. The two sisters here introduced were differently minded. and being brought to the trial of the mind of Christ, we get the judgment of God on matter of much value to us.

The house which we now enter was Martha's. The Spirit of God tells us this, as being characteristic of Martha; and into her house, with all readiness of heart, she receives the Lord, and prepares for Him the very best provision it had. His labours and fatigue called for this. Martha well knew that His ways abroad were the ways of the Good Samaritan, who would go on foot that others might ride, and she loves Him too well not to observe and provide for His weariness. But Mary had no house for Him. She was, in spirit, a stranger like Himself; but she opens a sanctuary for Him, and seats Him there, the Lord of her humble temple. She takes her place at His feet, and hears His words. She knows, as well as Martha, that He was wearied, but she knows also that. there was a fulness in Him that could afford to be more wearied still. Her ear and her heart, therefore, still use Him, instead of her hand or her foot ministering to Him. And in these things lay the difference between the sisters. - Martha's eye saw His weariness, and would *give to* Him; Mary's faith apprehended His fulness underneath His weariness, and would *draw from* Him.

This brings out the mind of the Son of God. The Lord accepts the care of Martha, as long as it is simple care and diligence about His present need; but, the moment she brings her mind into competition with Mary's, she learns His judgment, and is taught to know that Mary, by her faith, was refreshing Him with a sweeter feast than all her care and the provision of her house could possibly have supplied. Mary's faith craved Jesus a sense of His own divine glory. It told Him, that Though He was the wearied, One, He could still feed and refresh her. She was at His feet, hearing His words. There was no temple there, or light of the sun (Rev. 22: 22, 23), but the Son of God was there, and He was every thing to her. This was the honour

He prized; and blessedly, indeed, was she in His secret. When He was thirsty and tired at Jacob's well, He forgot it all in giving out other waters, which no pitcher could have held, or well beside His own supplied; and here, Mary brings her soul to the same well, knowing that, in spite of all His weariness, it was as full as ever for her use.

And, oh, dear brethren, what principles are here disclosed to us! Our God is asserting for Himself the place of supreme power and supreme goodness, and He will have us debtors to Him. Our sense of His fulness is more precious to Him than all the service we can render Him. Entitled, as He is, to more than all creation could give Him, yet above all things does He desire that we should use His love, and draw from His treasures. The honour which *our confidence* puts upon Him is His highest honour; for it is the divine glory to be still giving, still blessing, still pouring forth from unexhausted fulness. Under the law He had to receive from us, but in the gospel He is giving to us; and the words of the Lord Jesus are these — "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And this place He will fill for ever; for, "without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." Praise shall, it is true, arise to Him from every thing that hath breath; but forth from Himself, and from the seat of His glory, shall go the constant flow of blessing the light to cheer, the waters to refresh, and the leaves of the tree to heal; and our God shall have His own joy, and display His own glory, in being a Giver for ever.

Luke 11: 1-13. — It is the Lord's way in this Gospel, as I have already noticed, to bring His mind into contact with all the exercises of the hearts and consciences of men, that we may get the judgment of God (for that He ever carried in Him) on ourselves. These verses illustrate this. And the subject is *prayer*; one of deep interest to our souls. May the Lord guide the counsels of our hearts upon it!

The law, generally, did not require prayer, for the law was testing man, and calling on him to use his strength, if he had any; while

prayer, on the other hand, comes forth on the sense of our weakness and dependence. I remember, however, two forms of prayer, provided by the law; but one is on the ground of innocency, the other on that of obedience; and thus both were suited to the dispensation with which they were associated. Deut. 21, 26. John's ministry advanced beyond the law, convicting flesh of being but grass; and as we learn here, that he had taught his disciples to pray, we cannot doubt but that, like the law, he provided an utterance for their hearts, suited to the standing up to which his ministry was leading them. So in the same wisdom here with the Lord. He provides a prayer for them suited to the condition of faith and hope to which He had conducted them. And all this is perfect, because seasonable, because suited to them who had just said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

But it would not have been thus perfect or seasonable had it been an utterance altogether according to the increased light into which the Church has been since brought. The Lord had not then entered, as the High Priest of our profession, into His heavenly sanctuary, nor was the Holy Ghost then given. His own name, therefore, is not pleaded here; as the Lord Himself says after this, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name." But shortly after saying that, He adds, "At that day ye shall ask in My name" — thus plainly telling us that there would be an advance in the character of the worship of the saints. And so indeed we find it. The prayers which the apostles, through the Spirit, make for the saints, entertain higher thoughts and deeper desires than what this prayer (perfect, doubtless, in its place) of our Lord expresses. See Eph. 1, 3; Col. 1, etc., etc.

And, from all this, I do indeed judge, that we may easily admit the perfectness, *because of the seasonableness* of this holy form of prayer, and discern spiritually that the Lord was not providing it as the utterance of the Church. I do not at all say that the soul may not still use it, and find its desire at times expressed by it. But I believe the soul, fully aware of its new place, under the Holy Ghost, with Jesus ascended on high, is doing no despite to the Lord's holy

furniture of His own sanctuary, if it do not use it. He is the Lord of the temple, and it is surely our joy to own Him thus; but He has now given the Holy Ghost to be the living power there, and He fills it with true and spiritual worship, with groanings which cannot be uttered, with supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, with the spirit of adoption which ever cries, "Abba, Father." For the same Lord of the temple has now ordained it thus, and it is obedience to walk onward with Him. What once constituted the beauty of His house are now "beggarly elements," because the Lord has gone onward, leaving Jerusalem and its worship behind; and it does not become us to look back on the goodly stones with admiration, if Jesus have gone forth to the Mount of Olives.

But these things, beloved, I rather suggest in connection with this scripture. He Himself further shows to us here, in the parable of the friend asking for the loaves at midnight, the *value* or *success* of prayer; and then, in His contrast between the human and heavenly Father, the *warrant* or *securities* of prayer. And these securities are twofold — one drawn from the *love of the relationship*, the other from the *positive goodness* of God Himself, that we may have strong assurance of heart, when we seek the Lord and His blessing.

I cannot, however, pass on from this without asking, Does not the little expression "from within" carry much moral value with it? I think it does. It seems to tell us that being "within" has a necessary tendency to indispose us to enter into those sympathies into which we should at all times allow ourselves to be called. Moses, it is true, though in the midst of Egypt, went out to look on the burdens of his brethren; and Nehemiah, though in the Persian palace, wept over the desolations of the city of his father's sepulchres. They were both "within," but faith thrust them out. Their circumstances made this trial of faith the severer, and its victory more excellent and unusual. For it is dangerous to get much or far "within," lest the soul, surveying its condition, should say, "My children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee" — then the need of a brother

"without" will scarcely be heard, the burdens of Israel or the desolations of Zion will scarcely be looked at or inquired after.*

*As a distinctive mark of this Gospel I would observe that, in the corresponding place in Matthew, the Lord says that the Father will give "good things" to them that ask Him, but here it is the "Holy Spirit." And again, in contrast with John, the Lord here says that the Holy Spirit will be given on *our* asking, but there on *His* asking. John 14: 16. But this distinction is also very characteristic of the two Gospels; for here, the Lord is teaching His disciples, training them, and calling their hearts and consciences, as I have said, into exercise; but in John, He is presenting Himself, and revealing Himself; and, therefore, in that Gospel, He speaks of *His* place and ministry in the great matter of the grant of the Holy Ghost to the Church.

Luke 11: 14-54. — These verses give us other scenes, still illustrating, according to the way of our evangelist, matter of value to us.

The Lord. listens to two challenges from His enemies; for, in this world of ours, reproach was ever breaking His heart. But in the holy power of a great Teacher, as He was, He returns both these challenges on the head, or rather on the conscience, of His accusers. One said that He was allied to Satan in what He was doing; another, that at any rate He had not sufficiently proved that He was allied to God in it: "He casts out devils by Beelzebub," said the one; "Show us a sign from heaven," said the other. The Lord exposes such thoughts, and then lays open to them their condition, that they might learn that it was not in Him, but in themselves, this evil and this obscurity were to be found; for that He was the "Finger of God," and the "Candle set on the candlestick."

The Lord's reasoning here is beautifully simple and powerful. But I may observe, contrasting verse 26 with Matt. 12: 45, that He does not here, as there, expressly apply the lesson of "the unclean spirit" to the state of Israel. And this difference is quite in keeping with the

stricter Jewish nature of Matthew's Gospel. So, His sentence upon the state of that generation is here delivered in the house, in one of *the social hours* of the Son of man; in Matthew a like sentence is pronounced from the seat of judgment in *the authority* of the Son of man (Matt. 23); a difference which vividly illustrates the style of the two Gospels.

The Lord, in His answer to the challenges of His enemies, leads to these thoughts. In the progress, however, of this scene, we have to notice an interruption. What He was saying seems to have borne, with moral power, on the heart of one who was listening; so that, "as He spake," she lifted up her voice, and said, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked." This was a testimony to the power of the words of our divine Teacher, which is His glory in this Gospel. And a like testimony is given to Him in the next stage of this same scene, for again, "as He spake," a Pharisee who was present "besought Him to dine with him." That man had evidently been moved by the power of His words, but not perhaps with the same affection as the poor woman, and he invites Him to his house. And so again, when He enters the house, He continues to act as the Great Teacher still, rebuking the religious pride and dark hypocrisy which He found there, until a lawyer, who was present, feeling the righteous rebukes, interrupts Him in like manner, and says to Him, "Master, thus saying Thou reproachest us also." But the light abides faithful to its work, and goes on, still making manifest the darkness that was surrounding it, till the enmity of that darkness is fully raised, and scribes and Pharisees together begin so to urge Him, that He has to withdraw the light, the power of which had thus become intolerable.

Luke 12. — It is, however, to pursue His way as a Teacher, though in other places, that the Lord thus retires from among the scribes, the lawyers, and the Pharisees. He enters the multitude, and at once resumes His teaching, taking for His subject what was suggested to Him in the house of the Pharisee — hypocrisy, and the persecution which a righteous remnant had to count upon.

Thus we have the Light here, the Great Teacher, as in the preceding chapter, doing His holy work. But I observe, that though much of the matter of this chapter is found in Matthew, it is given to us in a different manner. There it is simply as a discourse of the Lord, but here it comes forth as reply to others. But this distinction is still in the character of this Gospel; because in it, as I have already noticed, the Lord is dealing with man, and drawing forth his thoughts and conscience and affections into exercise, that they may be corrected, and formed by the mind of Christ according to God. The Lord's teaching, therefore, is of ten, as in this chapter, in the way of answer to the inquiries and thoughts of others. And, as I observed at the close of the preceding chapter, that much which is delivered in Matthew, as from a judgment-seat, comes forth in Luke at a supper table, so I may say here, that that which had been as a sermon from an elevated place or pulpit in Matthew (Matt. 5 - 7), comes forth here as words spoken in the heart of a multitude that were thronging about Him. There was more of the ease and relaxation of social life here.

And here again, as in the previous chapter, we have a testimony to the power of His words, for "one of the company," judging, as it seems, from the current of the Lord's discourse, that He was set against oppression, and the assumptions of the rich, seeks Him to entertain his charge against a wrongful and injurious brother of his. But the Lord has only to act as the light that rebukes darkness wherever it finds it, and He now among the multitude addresses a word against covetousness, as just before, among the rulers, He had been addressing another word against religious pride and hypocrisy.

On such a subject we might well pause for a little. And specially here, because, after this interruption, it seems to lead our Lord's thoughts to nearly the end of His present speaking.

The love of having, of acquiring and possessing, which is covetousness, is, as we know, one of the great principles which form the course of this evil world: "the lust of the eyes," as John calls it.

The great contradiction of it, as of every other principle that animates "the old man," was expressed in the life as well as in the teaching of Jesus. In Him to perfection we see that description of the apostle made good — in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of His joy and His deep poverty abounded unto the riches of His liberality. His poverty was deep. He had not where to lay His head. And when He wanted a penny, in order to say a word on the image and superscription which it bore, He had to ask to be shown one. And surely His liberality was rich. He had a big purse, so to speak, but He never opened it except for others. He had the resources of all creation to draw upon. He could command bread for thousands out of a few loaves, and gather fragments by basketfuls afterwards. He could turn water into wine. He could summon a piece of money up from the sea, and, as the Lord of the earth, claim the beast of a stranger. This was surely a large purse. But He did not open it for His own use. He would rather go afoot, and be thirsty, and a hungered. And even out of His own slender store — the few loaves and fishes which He had for Himself and His disciples, He would still spare something for others. John 13: 29.

Where are riches of liberality like this? What was all this in the constant daily life of Jesus, but the contradiction of the covetous course of the world? Men could not praise Him because He did well to Himself. Ps. 49. With what decision of heart was He always forgetting Himself, and with what holy, conscious authority might He resist the motion of that one who, on the occasion of this chapter, covetously desired a share of the inheritance. He deals with the interruption thus occasioned as if a subject had been suggested to Him which was too weighty to be quickly laid down. He goes on with it, in the hearing of His disciples, till He shows them how this principle, this desire of having, this concern to acquire and to possess, *must keep us unready for His coming* — a subject which He then deeply and beautifully opens to our hearts and consciences. He aims to bring it morally very near to us showing that there are three different ways in which the soul is to entertain that object, or have communion with the great fact of the Lord's second advent* — as

the coming of a thief in the night to surprise the house; of a lord to reward his faithful stewards; and of a loved master, to make his watchful servants happy by his restored presence.

*The Lord's coming is the saint's proper hope. His coming as a thief is to the world.

Matthew suggests the same in Matt. 24, 25; only with this difference, that the figure of watching, desirous servants, is changed for that of virgins waiting for the bridegroom. But the moral is the same. And the variety of these figures has a great lesson for us; because it tells us, that Jesus seeks to range far and wide over our hearts. Presenting His return to our hearts under such different forms — a thief in the night, a master, and a bridegroom — He claims to be the Object, the Supreme Object, of the different passions of our souls. Fear, hope, and joy respectively would rise in the breast of the good man of the house, the stewards, and the watchful servants or virgins, in commanding power. The fear of the thief, the hope of sharing the rewards, or the joy of the bridegroom's presence, would be *supreme* in the heart for the time. And this is happy, though it may be serious. It is happy to know that our Lord claims our affections. He knows that He has a right to be our Supreme Object. And the passion that does not render Him its *highest* exercise is not a *worshipping* passion.

This is holy and serious. For we may ask, Is it so with us? Is the seat of our affections a place of worship? Is Jesus there in the chief room? "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me," He says; and again, and that too in this very chapter, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body. . . . But I will forewarn you Whom ye shall fear; Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell." The watchfulness of *fear*, and the watchfulness of *desire* are both called forth. Every motion in the heart is only fully right, when it is making confession to the lordship or supremacy of Jesus.

The interruption given to our Lord led Him this way. In this manner the light in Him broke forth. For this world was but the place of man's darkness; the light of heaven was, therefore, in all places where it entered, a *reproving* light. Eph. 5: 13. The rich and the poor, the rulers and the multitudes, were alike exposed by it. As Jeremiah, in his day, visited "the poor," and found that they knew not the way of the Lord, and "the great ones," and found that they had altogether broken the bonds. Jer. 5: 1-5. And so here with Jeremiah's Lord. Jesus had been in the midst of the accomplished scribes and Pharisees, and among the multitude, but all was out of order. The most solemn impressions were left on His mind. vv. 49-59. He would have healed men. He came preaching peace, and had sent forth the Twelve and the Seventy, with peace to every city and house. But the peace had to return to Him and them. Division now, and judgment by fire by-and-by, were the portion of the earth. There was both intelligence and contention about the present things, but the testimony of God was not discerned, and man was satisfied with himself.

Luke 13. — The teaching of the previous chapter was all very important to our souls; and now, at the opening of this, we are *in the same season* as we read, and so I believe upon the same truth also. The man who had accused his brother to the Lord learnt from the Lord that he himself was on the way, with another accuser, to another Judge; for those words, in verses 58, 59, were, as I understand them, addressed to him. So here, some tell our Lord of the special sufferings of certain Galileans, as though they must have been sinners above others (John 9: 2), and thus they were, in like manner, bringing up their brethren for judgment. But the Lord would have them also know that they were in the same condemnation, and, if they repented not, would all likewise perish.*

*It has been observed by others that this occurrence may have taken place in connection with the faction of Judas of Galilee (Acts 5: 37), in which there were Galileans who refused Caesar's authority, and who would, therefore, of course, provoke Pilate. But the Galileans

were Herod's subjects. Luke 3: 1. It has been, therefore, supposed also, that this interference of Pilate occasioned the quarrel between him and Herod, of which we read in chapter 23: 12. Josephus mentions Pilate's killing some Samaritans on their way to their own temple. on Mount Gerizim.

With the same thoughts of the sin of Israel upon His mind, the whole nation being ripe for the judgment of a mightier slaughter than that of the Galileans, the Lord indites the parable of the barren fig-tree.

This fig-tree was planted in a vineyard, as Israel was set in God's vineyard, in the midst of ordinances and privileges, watered and tended with all diligence and care; but without fruit. Israel had no root in itself to yield God any thing; and the ministry of Jesus, the patient Dresser of this vineyard, had now nearly proved this. By that ministry the goodness of God had been leading them to repentance (Rom. 2); it had been the digging about and dunging of this barren tree; but, withal, there was no fruit. And we then see, in the next little scene, that there was no sense in Israel of their real state. The sick were there, and thus the need of a physician; but they seem unconscious of it. A daughter of Abraham is found to be in disease, but the rulers of Abraham's house reject with pride the attendance of the Good Physician.

In all this way, the corrupted state of the nation passes before the mind of the Lord, and He seems to utter thoughts according to all this, reflecting on the great tree where the unclean had found their rest, and on the whole lump which had now felt the leaven. And in this mind He enters on His journey. The proved sin and the coming judgment of Israel being before Him, He pursues His way to the city.

But here let me notice that, in John, the Lord is seen frequently at Jerusalem, for Jerusalem had no higher character, in the esteem of the Stranger from heaven, than any other spot on the earth. But in the other Gospels the Lord is not seen to enter that city, which was

the ordained seat of His government as Son of David, till He enters it, when His ministry was closing, in royal state, offering the kingdom to the daughter of Zion, and when He is fully and formally rejected by her. In this Gospel by Luke His gradual approach to the city for this purpose is more distinctly traced than in either Matthew or Mark. See Luke 9: 51; Luke 13: 22, 33; Luke 17: 11; Luke 18: 31; Luke 19: 1, 11, 28. He seems to linger, as it were, from stage to stage, not willing to hasten the doom of the nation, because what was to happen to Him there was to fill up their sin, and leave them for judgment. He was waiting to be gracious, as now in this age, the long-suffering of God in not sending Jesus is salvation, not willing that any should perish. And this reserve in His movement towards the city reminds me of the departure from it of the glory in Ezekiel. See Ezek. 1 - 11. The glory there lingers from stage to stage, as loth to depart, though the pollution in the city would not allow it to stay. And so here; the Lord lingers, in the same way, delaying the hour of Jerusalem's judgment, journeying still towards it throughout the Gospel, but not reaching it till His ministry was closing.

It is with strong and clear thoughts upon His heart that He makes these approaches to the city, and eyes it in the distance. In Luke 9: 51, as I have observed already, He moved onward as though His journey were conducting Him to glory. In Luke 18: 31, He has the city before Him as the place of His suffering. But here, in Luke 13: 22, He is looking toward it as though His presence there was to close "the day of salvation" to Israel, and bring forth the judgment of God. It was this thought that was now on His mind. All the previous scenes of this chapter, the report of the Galileans, the parable of the fig-tree, and the hypocrisy of the rulers in Abraham's house, with the disease of Abraham's daughter, all led Him to these thoughts. as He is now approaching the city. And it may be that this mind is so expressed in His whole manner that one who was observing Him, as somewhat understanding His thoughts, says, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" A moment, however, of interest to our souls this was, and I would for a little pause over it.

It suggests to us this: that the Lord had a method — perfect, I need not say, like everything else with Him — in answering questions. He never aims at merely conveying information, as we speak, but seeks to affect the heart or the conscience. It is not so much the *inquiry*, but the *inquirer*, that He deals with. Perhaps every case would show this; but I would instance it shortly. Thus: when asked as to the time when His word against the temple should be accomplished, He does not satisfy that, but leads the disciples' thoughts into large and serious matters, sealing His instructions on their souls by the weighty parables of the ten virgins and the talents. Matt. 24, 25. In answer to John, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" He does not say, "I am He, and ye need not look for another," but shows John's disciples those objects which were fitted to carry the answer home to them in real, living power. Matt. 11. And so here: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" was not answered formally, but morally, or in such a way as was suited to the man himself, giving him matter for serious self-inquiry and self-application.

A method, this, we may surely say, that bespeaks His wisdom and His goodness, and that He was indeed dealing with man; not displaying His own resources of knowledge, but, in good earnest, seeking and saving the lost. Man's method is a poor thing. For look at Jesus in contrast with the learned men, or (as Paul speaks), "the princes of this world." When they were asked where Christ should be born, they answered formally — truly, it is true, but formally — not seeking to stir the conscience of the king on the occasion thus offered them. Matthew 2. But when Jesus was asked *of Whom He was born* — "Where is Thy Father?" — His answer comes not merely to their ears, but with all serious and solemn power to their consciences. John 8.

He needs not our commendation, beloved; but it should be happy to any of us to ponder His perfections, and admire His beauty. And I am sure that these reflections are of value nowadays. For the present is a time when many are running to and fro, and knowledge is

increasing. And this should be a caution to our souls; for the saint has always to watch against what is called *the spirit of the times*. Paul, when he prays for the saints, that they may grow in *knowledge*, first desires that they might have the *spiritual understanding*. Eph. 1: 17, 18; Col. 1: 9. For the mere intellect is not valued. Rather let us lay our inquiries aside, than follow them in the acuteness of human ability. And is it, beloved, out of season to recur to the thought of one who lived to Christ in days before ours — *that the desire to know much even in spiritual things may be the witness that God Himself is not known in reality?* To know *Himself* is life eternal. And as another of our own day has most profitably observed — "The natural man often receives truth more quickly than the saint, because the saint has to learn it in his conscience, to have that exercised before God by what he is learning." Most needful is this admonition. We may hasten to be wise and full of knowledge in this busy age, and the soul be injured, deeply injured, all the while. But this only by the way.

In this reply of the Lord to the question now put to Him I apprehend that the "striving" and the "seeking" are not merely different measures of intensity in the same action, but *morally* different actions. The "seeking" comes upon the alarm of the Master's rising, and it is fear that awakens it; the "striving" is an action of the heart and conscience before God, ere the Master of the house had risen up; an action, therefore, not resulting simply from the fear of being left on the outside. And how often is this description of "seeking" exhibited among ourselves. Sudden alarm will call forth religious affections; but they live only while the danger passes. As saith the Lord by the prophet, "O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail! . . . Yet . . . I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life." Jer. 22.

This passage in our chapter is, thus, one of very important admonition to all. But as the Lord pursues His way, it is still not of Himself, either in His suffering or glory, that He is thinking, but of

Jerusalem, and her sin and her judgment. Some tell Him of Herod, and his purposes against Him; but the Lord simply tells them that Herod and all his purposes could not prevail against Him; for that, unimpeded by him and every thing else, He must walk on till He reached Jerusalem; which, as eminent in privilege under God, was eminent in wickedness against Him also; and had to fill up the measure of her guilt, by slaying the last and chiefest of the prophets. Herod's rage was not, therefore, to be considered, for Jesus must walk through his jurisdiction. And thus it is, that Jerusalem is the object which the blessed Lord still has on His mind, as intimated in verse 22. And to all this, with which His soul had in this way been labouring, He gives expression, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Jerusalem "would not." The care of the hen was refused, but the fox was already within; and, therefore, there is to be nothing but present scattering instead of gathering. Herod and Rome were boasted in, and God and His Christ refused. "Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it." And the Son of God has but to leave His mountain for the present in their possession, until, in the spirit of repentance and faith, the people should welcome Him back, and say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."*

*This Herod was the fourth son of the Herod who, in Matt. 2, is called "Herod the king." From Luke 3: 1 we learn that Galilee was the scene of his government, as may also be drawn from this passage. Some have judged that he desired to get the Lord out of his dominions, because the Lord had a great and growing interest there, and because he hated Him for His righteousness and His testimony. Not daring, however, to put Him to death, because of the people, he seeks to drive Him out, or frighten Him away. He would have Him, perhaps, act the part of a fearful one, and thus act unworthily of Himself; as Nehemiah's enemies sought to ensnare that dear and simple man in his day. See Neh. 6: 10-14.

Luke 14-16. — In these chapters we have the Lord's characteristic way in this Gospel very strongly marked. Throughout them He is the teacher, the social Son of man addressing Himself to all around Him, whether in the power of One Who was convicting the conscience or in the grace of One Who could bind up the heart.

The contents of these chapters are very generally peculiar to this Gospel. Several parables are delivered which we find nowhere else. And I may here observe that there are more parables in Luke than in any of the other evangelists; and this still shows the special mind and action of the Lord in this Gospel.

As we pass along the pages of the evangelic narrative, or alone, the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world, what a character do we see gradually unfolded. And what a simple piece of truth-telling are we listening to! In every page (to use the language of another) we are struck with a candour, a simplicity, and a naturalness not to be found in the same degree in any other book; and as to its great Subject, Jesus, who, save by admitting their inspiration, can explain the fact that a few fishermen should have conceived the idea of a character of such perfection as no author, even in the most enlightened age or country, ever equalled? "The gospel bears an imprint of truth so great, so striking, so inimitable, that its *inventor* would have been more wonderful than its *Hero* is." And, as has been often said, there is no repose for *reason* but in *faith*; for the existence of the Bible cannot be accounted for without bringing God in.

There is no moment or passage in His history at which we might not have paused to listen to all this. But I observe it here, as we enter on a portion of our Gospel, in which the blessed Jesus has to do with men in great variety of character; and while the evangelist is bearing Him along the chequered scene, the naturalness of the story, and the perfection of Him Who is the great Subject of it, may be easily noticed by us all.

The first scene is laid in a Pharisee's house, where, as His custom was, He had come, upon invitation, to dine. The principals of the company, as we may judge them to be, watch Him to entangle Him just as *He enters the house*. He shortly answers their thoughts, making them their own judges and witnesses.

On His being free, if I may so say, to look round Him, *after He had entered*, the object that He first looks at is, the guests taking their seats at the table.

He is offended. The old mind of Adam, and not the mind according to God, formed this circumstance, simple as it was. They chose the chief rooms. This was Adam. This was according to that desire to be something, which, of old, grafted itself on the heart of man. Jesus could not but be offended. In Him, from the beginning hitherto, and down to the death of the cross, there had been, and was to be, the full contradiction of this. Adam was nothing — a creature of the dust — and he sought to be every thing. Jesus was every thing, but emptied Himself of all. He became a Man, and, in that form, humbled Himself in every way. In the person He assumed, or the station in life that He filled — in the testimony which He bore to Himself, or the cloud with which He veiled His glory — in all this He ever took the *lowest room*. But here, in the Pharisee's house, He finds Himself in the midst of those who were choosing the chiefest. How could He but be offended? Such guests were not to His mind.

Then the host who bids them becomes His object. But there was no relief for Him there. Selfishness in another form shows itself to Him. The host's board was not such a one as He had been spreading in this world, since He came into it. For He had been feeding multitudes who had nothing to give Him in return. The *selfishness* of the "old man" grieved Him now, as his *pride* had just before. The host is not after the mind of this perfect Witness of the mind of God, any more than the guests.

Then, after the guests are seated, and the feast proceeds, *the conversation at table* leads Jesus to other sorrows.

I believe it was a gracious motion that had come over the heart of one of the company, when he said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." He was, I doubt not, attracted by the Lord. But this matters not. It directed the Lord's mind to sad thoughts on the whole scene which was at that moment under His eye. He saw a well-filled table. Guests in numbers were there — as many as had been invited. But the thought seems to arise in His mind — If God had spread this table, He would not have gathered His guests so easily. And this reflection gives occasion to the parable of the Marriage Supper.

It was a painful thought to Jesus — and so will it be to those who have His mind. There is relief for it surely in the knowledge of this, that "the foundation of God standeth sure" — and that the unbelief of man shall never touch the purposes of God. But to think that, when man spreads a table, guests will be found there, as many as are bidden; but that when the living God makes a feast, not one that is *merely* bidden eats of His supper! A mess of their own pottage is preferred. A piece of ground, a yoke of oxen, or a wife, will estrange the affections of the very best of us - and no one guest at His costly board would the Lord of life and glory find, if He Himself did not *compel* them and *bring them in*. Mere bidding would never do. It was tried, but it failed — and He Who - was at the cost of spreading the table must be at the trouble of gathering the company. His oxen and His fatlings shall load the board, and His servants shall visit the lanes and alleys, the highways and hedges, to get some to eat of them.

Was ever a feast treated so? The present scene answers that, as the sorrowing heart of Jesus mused upon it.

Surely He came into the world to be thoroughly wearied, as one has said. How could He but be a Man of sorrows in a place fashioned and filled, throughout all its order, by the pride of life and the lust of the eyes? He did not wait for His darkest hours to make Him "acquainted with grief." The most promising moments, the social

hours of human friendliness, brought their sorrow with them to the heart of this blessed Stranger. And this parable tells us so.*

*In Matthew, this parable stands in another connection, having more direct reference to what was Jewish. See Matt. 22.

We have not, however, followed our Lord through the whole journey yet. We have seen Him grieved and offended on entering the house, and while in the house; but we have now to watch Him on leaving it.

The multitude follow Him. But this will not do. This was done every day. Thousands waited on Him continually, thronging and pressing Him along the streets or highways. But that will not reach the heart of Christ. Luke 8: 45. Neither does this action of the multitude; for it does not bespeak their conscious need of Him as a *Saviour*. It is rather their adoption of Him as a Teacher or a Pattern. And that, as the first thing, will not do. He turns to address this crowd with words of solemn warning. His soul is not at that ease in the midst of them, which speaks their full welcome to Him; for they had not come to Him in character. Nicodemus would have honoured Him as a Rabbi, or a Scholar — the people at the lake of Galilee as a King — the multitude here as a Pattern or Forerunner; but He is not at home in such company — not fully at home. He is not grieved in the same measure, perhaps, that He had been in the house which He had just left, but there was no rest nor joy for His spirit here. He must go onward ere He reach His rest, as His words to the multitude tell us.

When we think of this for a moment or two, we may well say, we know not how sufficiently to bless God for it. Let us *give* to Him in what shape or way we please, it will not do; we must *receive* from Him. The Pharisee gives Him a feast inside the house, and the multitude give Him their respect and admiration outside; but He is either grieved, or, at the most, unsatisfied. He passes on through all this till "publicans and sinners" draw near to hear Him. They do not come to give Him any thing, but to get something from Him. Luke

15: 1. Then did He in spirit rejoice; His heart tasted the desired fruit of its journey, and was satisfied.

What can surpass this in consolation to us? These poor publicans, these tainted ones of the city, would have no business in the Pharisee's house; nor did they affect to follow the Lord with the multitude, for they are unworthy, and know that they are so. But they can go and touch the hem of His garment, or take their pitchers to the Fountain, and there "in shame and poverty sit down." And so they do; and so they are welcome to do. He is happier to give to them, than they are to receive. Jesus had now travelled far — far in the spirit, I mean. He had come to, and through, and from the house of the Pharisee, and along the road with admiring crowds; but it was wearisome to Him. He found no rest, till now that the sinner came to get from Him. For the joy that fills this chapter tells us that His weariness was now over. The fold that had received the lost sheep, the house that witnessed the recovered piece of money, and the home of the father that had entertained the returned prodigal, set off, as in figures, the Saviour's joy now in the midst of publicans and sinners.

This is beyond expression — wonderful to tell it; but this to Jesus was the house of God — this to Him was the gate of heaven.

He had been charged by the Pharisee with receiving sinners, as though His ministry did not secure righteousness, but gave liberty to evil. Of course He might have pleaded various answers to this. He might have defended His grace to sinners, on the ground of the necessity of the case, or on the ground of God's glory. But in this chapter, from beginning to end, in each of the lovely parables, He vindicates it simply on the ground of the joy that He, and the Father, and all heaven itself, were finding in it.

Only think of that, beloved! If the Lord God be asked a reason for His ways of salvation with you and me, He says that He takes delight in them — they make Him and His glorious habitation to rejoice. What assurance, what consolation, spring from that! Would

his neighbours, think you, murmur at the shepherd's joy over his lost sheep now found by him; or the woman's friends grudge her pleasure, as she swept her piece of money into her lap? And so it is with God. It is His own joy in the salvation of sinners that Jesus proposes as His warrant or vindication. And why should man either murmur or disbelieve? May not the Lord prepare joy for Himself, as well as the shepherd? Who dare deny our hearts the assurance and consolation of this! Let us cherish the thought deeply in our souls, that the gospel of our peace is a spring of joy to Him Who planned and accomplished it; that our God has done nothing less than this, *laid the scene of His own happiness in our salvation*, as these parables testify to us.

This chapter is, in this way, a gate of heaven to us, as it was to the wearied feet of Jesus. He had travelled, as we have seen, past Pharisees, guests, host, and crowds of attendants; and was now sitting with sinners who knew their need of Him, and came to get what they wanted. Heaven, in one sense, is but this spot stretched out — the habitation of saved sinners and of a rejoicing Saviour.

The Lord, as we shall now find as we still pass on with Him, has, however, others to converse with still. He has to meet *disciples*, after all this variety at which we have been looking. And accordingly, at the opening of Luke 16, He does meet them. He gives them a word to stir their diligence, and encourage their hopes. He tells them to aim high in their expectations, and to lay out their energies to sure and eternal profit. Being disciples, they are to be regarded as having already come back like prodigals, and their business now was to value the hopes which grace had set before them, and to "make to themselves friends" of every talent and opportunity, as knowing that their labour should not be in vain in the Lord.

A word in season to disciples was this, enforced on them in the parable of the Unjust Steward. For our great Teacher had chosen words — words seven times refined in the fire; and He rightly

divides them among all. And this we may now still further see; for the Pharisees are to close these scenes, as they opened them.

The heavenly principles with which the Lord had just exhorted His disciples these men deride; for they were covetous. They were every thing which the world could esteem - and this estimation they sought and served for; and, of course, they could not but deride the heavenly principles of the Son of God. But He exposes their moral state; and then, in a parable, the doom of that state. He convicts them of having been false to that very law in which they boasted; and also of having refused that word of the kingdom which the God of the law had sent forth to succeed it. Their whole moral condition might, thus, in a sentence or two, be exposed and rebuked. But this was nothing to them; they were served in the world; their principles fed them sumptuously, and clothed them in fine linen and purple; and in this they were satisfied, though upon this lay the judgment of God.

This was the closing solemn word, addressed to "the accomplished religionists" (as the Pharisees have been called) of that day. The mind of the Lord makes this its last disclosure on this great moral occasion. It had dealt with guests, and host, and multitudes, and disciples, and Pharisees. It had divided the word of truth among them. And if we prize the thoughts of God on all we see around us, we shall study such exercises of the mind of Christ as these. His candle, in this way, should shine on our head, and by His light we should walk through all the darkness which so thickly and variously surrounds us.

I know of nothing as a grand display of divine morals beyond this. The soul, in going through these chapters, should be lost in admiration. The style of the Lord here illustrates what another has said of Him — "He watched His opportunity of instructing; it was brought out on the suitable occasion. Hence the danger of systematizing, Christianity; for it was not so introduced. The law was an ordered system, but grace and truth were incapable of being

exhibited at once (save in His person), but required to be unfolded gradually, as man's necessities discovered themselves." This is very just. And from this it is gathered, most justly also, "that it is of no small importance to notice attentively, not only the matter, but the manner, of the Lord's discourses; that which led to them, as well as the point to which they tend."

But there is another thing to be observed here, and it turns to us for searching and warning. Jesus judged righteous judgment. He was not to be flattered. He did not try either persons or circumstances in reference to Himself. That is where we so commonly fail in all our judgments. We see objects, whether persons or things, so much in our own light. How have these circumstances affected *ourselves*? How have these people treated *us*? These are the inquiries of the heart; and in the answer they get the judgment is too commonly formed. We are *flattered* into good thoughts of people, and *slighted* into hard ones. Jesus was not such a one. The Pharisee's compliment and good fare did not affect His judgment on the whole scene in his house. The friendliness of a social hour could not relax the rightness of His sense of things; as Peter's recent confession, on another occasion, did not hinder the rebuke that Peter's worldliness deserved. Jesus was not to be flattered. Like the God of Israel in old times, His ark may be boasted in, and brought into the battle with a shout; but He is not to be flattered by this. Israel shall fall for their unrighteousness. 1 Sam. 4.

What a lesson for us! What reason have we to guard against the judgments of self-love! against the trying and weighing of things or persons in relation to ourselves! This firm, unswerving mind of Jesus, may be our encouragement, as well as our pattern, in this; and we may pray, that neither "this world's flattery nor spite" move us from having our thoughts as before the Lord all the day!

The sense, however, of God's way, as being so above ours, and of the perfections of Jesus as only serving to expose our many errors, must not be allowed to swallow us up with overmuch sorrow. 2 Cor.

2: 7. We are disposed oftentimes so to consider and mourn over *experiences*, as to get below the place where *faith* would put us. This, however, must not be. Faith must prevail. And faith, as well as conviction, has a separating power. Conviction of sin separates to the place of sorrow, as it did Nathanael to the shade of the fig-tree, and as it will the repentant Israel by-and-by, "every family apart, and their wives apart." Zech. 12: 14. But so faith. It concentrates the power of seeing and hearing upon its object, opening the ear of a prodigal to the music which the Father had commanded, but closing it to even the recollection of past follies, and to the murmurs of present, conscious coldness.

Precious faith! It deals with God. The prodigal was silent. He did not stay his father's hand, as though he was doing too much for him. That might have appeared modest and humble, but it would not have been so — for true humbleness forgets ourselves. His silence at the table was faith. And it had a rich feast before it. Among other things, it might have fed on the well-known truth, that the *ascending* affections are never equal to the *descending*. A child never loves a parent with the intensity with which a parent loves his child. Yea, and more than this — the parent is satisfied to have it so. A father is satisfied to know that his love will never get its "recompense in the same" from the bosom of the child.

These thoughts might have fed the heart of the prodigal, as he ate in silence of the fatted calf. And they should be our thoughts towards our heavenly Father. Not that He is indifferent to the state of our hearts towards Him. That would be neither His glory nor our joy. But He knows that *His* love will ever be the larger. He will ever be the One to "exceed" as David with Jonathan. For He is in the higher place; and that place will maintain its rights and attributes. And it is among the attributes of the *descending* affection (which comes out of the higher place), as I have said, to flow with the richer and more generous current; and all that faith has to do is to allow this, and to rejoice that it is so. Faith ascends to God, and makes that journey in silence. Not even the complaints and confessions of a righteous,

self-judging spirit are to be heard. But nothing, except that "light that no man can approach unto," can transcend the elevation of that rest and dwelling-place up to which it bears the heart in triumph. "Lord, increase our faith!"

Luke 17: 1-10. — The reflection with which the Lord opens these verses appears to have been suggested to His mind by these scenes of Luke 14 - 16. All that had been passing under His eye and ear led Him to thoughts of offences; and such thoughts find their utterances here, in secret with His elect. He found hindrances to the display and settlement of His kingdom in the place where all should have been prepared for it; and He is led to pronounce woe on the offender.

Offences are those principles which are inconsistent with the nature of His kingdom, and hinder its exhibition — "obstructions and oppositions given to faith and holiness." And in order, it may be, the more carefully to guard His disciples against offending, the Lord gives them two admonitions, according to which two essential virtues of His kingdom were to be preserved its purity and its graciousness. If there were trespass, He requires rebuke; for this would maintain His house in pure or holy order; if there were repentance, He commands forgiveness; for this would maintain His house in loving, gracious order.

But these demands which He makes on the hearts of His disciples they find to be quite beyond them, and lead them to know that they must needs get strength out of Another for them. Under this consciousness they say, "Increase our faith" — faith being that which takes us into the resources of One Who is greater than ourselves, and draws virtue out of that which has been divinely ordained to meet our necessity.

For, in addition to our previous meditations on faith, I might, say that, considered as that by which a sinner is justified, faith is simply the believing of a testimony, that testimony being the gospel; our justification being "by faith, that it might be by grace." This

intimates that *work* must be excluded. And this the fourth chapter of Romans discusses and teaches. But Scripture also speaks of faith as the principle which animates the life of a saint. This the eleventh chapter of Hebrews presents to us. And, in this character, it is a growing virtue or principle in the soul. It may be either weak or strong, great or little. As we read here, "Lord, increase our faith;" and as we elsewhere read, "O ye of little faith;" and again, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed;" and again, "Your faith groweth exceedingly."

In this sense Scripture considers it, as I before said, a growing principle in the soul. It is our entrance into the power of the testimony which is believed; "the substance [confidence] of things hoped for, the evidence [conviction] of things not seen." It is, we may say, the power of divine life in the soul, and may be in health and vigour there, or the contrary. It stands for the energy of the kingdom of God within us. Scripture mentions it as that which apprehends God, waits on Him, walks with Him. So that if faith be strong, those, and the like graces and actions, are fresh and lively. And being this, it should be with real, unfeigned humiliation we speak, when we confess that *our faith is weak*; for this, if made in spiritual intelligence, is a confession of how little our souls are alive to God.

Scripture, I need not say, abounds with notices of this great principle. It considers it in its source, its actings, its qualities, its value with God, and the like. And the Lord here, in answer to the desire of His apostles for an increase of it, describes it to them in its two chief attributes — its sovereignty, so to speak, and its self-renunciation — being that which can *command the sycamine-tree into the sea*, but then will come back to God and say, that *all is nothing*. These are its necessary excellencies. It takes all blessing from God, but leaves all glory *with* God. Rom. 4.

Luke 17: 11-19. — These few verses form another distinct portion of our Gospel. The Lord is again looked at on His way to Jerusalem,

passing through Samaria and Galilee; and in this scene — simple in its materials as it is — He takes a place before us which may well fill our souls with joy and praise — the place of the altar, God's ordained place of sacrifice and worship. This suggests a subject of deep interest to our souls, which I would follow for a little.

All knowledge of God must flow from revelation, for man by wisdom knows not God. 1 Cor. 1: 21. True worship has the same source. Each of these — knowledge of God and worship — is always to be according to such revelation as He has at the time, or in the dispensation, given of Himself.

Understanding this, I might instance shortly a line of true worshippers from the beginning.

Abel was a true worshipper; for he worshipped in faith, or according to revelation. Heb. 11. The firstling of the flock was according to the promise of the *bruised* Seed of the woman, and according to the coats of skin, with which the Lord God had covered his parents.

Noah followed *Abel*, and worshipped in the faith of the woman's *bruised* Seed. He took the new inheritance only in virtue of blood. Gen. 8: 20. He was therefore a true worshipper also.

Abraham was a true worshipper, worshipping God as He had revealed Himself to him. Gen. 7: 7.

Isaac, precisely in the track of *Abraham*, worshipped the God Who had appeared unto him; not affecting to be wise, but, like *Abraham*, raising his altar to the *revealed* God. Gen. 26: 24, 25.

Jacob was a true worshipper. The Lord appears to him in his sorrow and degradation, in the misery to which his own sin had reduced him, revealing Himself as the One in Whom "mercy rejoiceth against judgment;" and he at once owns God as thus revealed to him; and this revealed God of *Bethel* was his God to the end. Gen.

28, 35. Here was enlarged revelation of God, and worship following such revelation; and that is true worship.

The nation of Israel was a true worshipper; for God had revealed Himself to that nation, and established His memorial in the midst of them. They knew what they worshipped. John 4: 22. But in the midst of this worshipping nation there might still be true worshippers who did not conform to the divinely established order, provided their departure from it was also according to new revelation from God. As, for example, *Gideon, Manoah, David*, who were all true worshippers, though they offered sacrifices on rocks or in threshing-floors, and not in the appointed national place; just because, by a new and special revelation, the Lord had consecrated those new altars. See Judges 6, 13; 1 Chr. 22. *The healed leper*, in this passage of our Gospel, exactly on this principle, was a true worshipper, though, like Gideon, Manoah, and David, he departed from the usual order; just because he apprehended God in a new revelation of Himself. The healing which he had felt in his body had a voice in the ear of faith, it being only God Who could heal a leper. 2 Kings 5: 7.

The Church of God is now, in this dispensation, a true worshipper on exactly the same ground; worshipping according to enlarged revelation, having fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And this is still, like the other cases, worship "in truth," because according to revelation. But it is "in spirit" also; because the Holy Ghost has now been given as the power to worship, enabling the saints to call God "Father," and Jesus Christ "Lord." 1 Cor. 8: 6. There is now *communicated power*, as well as *revelation*, for the purpose of worship.

This subject of worship is indeed a blessed one for further meditation for us all. The faith of the Samaritan leper, who turned from the priest at Jerusalem to lay his offering at the feet of Jesus, thus Using Him as God's anointed altar, has suggested it. He heard the voice of healing — he owned the God of Israel in the mercy that

had met him. This was revelation to him, and he believed it, and was led by it into the sanctuary. And this that had happened to him is the only ground of worship from creatures such as we have been, live we in what age or under what economy we may. He had been healed, and he knew that he had been healed. On what ground can we stand to worship but this? We may cry out in the bitterness of a surprised conscience; but that is not worship. It may be the way of the drawing of the Father, and end in the sanctuary; but it is not worship. The blood of Christ purging the conscience from dead works alone leads to the service or worship of the living God. Heb. 9: 14. As in the very heavens, and so for ever, the saints, in their glories, worship while standing on this ground, as the floor of their temple. Rev. 5: 9. "Our calling," as one has beautifully said, "is to consecrate our life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the mercy of God's redemption - our whole life is to be a continued priesthood, a spiritual serving of God, proceeding from the affections of a faith working by love, and a continued witness of our Redeemer." It is mercy, as the Spirit Himself teaches, that opens the temple doors, and leads us in to exercise our priesthood before God. Rom. 12: 1. And that mercy is ours, we know, only by the hands of our wounded, stricken Redeemer. As that fervent hymn tells it out:

"Hark how the blood-bought host above
Conspire to chant Immanuel's love,
In sweet harmonious strains!
And as they strike their golden lyres,
This theme alone their bosom fires,
That grace triumphant reigns!
Join thou, my soul; for thou canst tell
How sovereign grace broke up thy cell,

And burst thy native chains!

And from that dear and blessed day,

How oft art thou constrained to say,

That grace triumphant reigns!"

We must, after this manner, take our own part in the worship. As the psalmist, after calling on all creation to praise, says, "Praise the Lord, *O my soul.*"

Luke 17: 20 - 18: 8.* — In this portion we again get another subject for our thoughts, as disciples of the Great Teacher, Who was ordering all for our edification. "The kingdom of God" is here treated by the Lord, in answer to an inquiry from the Pharisees. We do not learn the circumstances of this scene where it was, or when it was; such notices are beside the purpose of the Spirit in our evangelist, as I have said; but we have largely our Lord's teaching upon the matter itself.

* Luke 18: 1 ought rather to be, "to the end that *they* ought always;" etc., etc.; thus linking this parable with the previous discourse.

His manner here illustrates what I have already said on His answering questions. See page 257. He addresses the conscience, giving a word suited to the *moral state of the inquirer*, rather than to *his question*.

With this view He here rightly divides the word between different hearers; for, in verse 22, He turns from the Pharisees to the disciples, giving different views of the kingdom of God to each: that given to the Pharisee being faithful to his condition of soul; and that given to the disciples being seasonable food for *the renewed mind*, according to its growing capacity. As He says in another place, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." And so, in the wisdom of the Spirit of Christ, when Paul was met by the

inquisitive Athenians, he did not answer them according to their inquisitiveness, but declared to them the serious things of God, of judgment, and of repentance.

The subject of this short discourse is "the kingdom of God." That expression indicates a dispensation in which divine power is brought in. As the apostle says, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." It is, I judge, as another has said, "the exercise or exhibition of the ruling power of God under any circumstances."

It has different exhibitions; and it is this truth which our Lord opens to us in this place. He teaches us that this kingdom of God is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" — but, by-and-by, it is to be "the days of the Son of man," or manifest, glorious power. In John also the Lord speaks of these two forms of the kingdom, only under different expressions from those which we have here. I mean in His confession to Pilate, where He owns Himself "King of the Jews," but lets the Roman know also, that that character of His power could not then be manifested; but that, for the present, it was to take another form under Him as the "witness unto the truth." John 18. So here; it is now the kingdom "within;" and, by-and-by, it will be the kingdom of "the days of the Son of man." The glories belong to the same Jesus, but they are diverse. It is hidden glory now — glory within, in the Holy Ghost, the glory of a sanctuary known only to God and the worshippers. It will be displayed glory by-and-by, or glory in the world, known from one end of the heaven to the other.

Having thus testified these two forms of the kingdom, the Lord goes on to teach what was to take place ere it could pass into its second form. He tells the disciples that He Himself was to "suffer many things;" that they were to be in "desire;" to always pray and not faint; and to dwell in the separated places, the house-top and the field, the places of prayer and desire, as Isaac and Peter witness. Gen. 24, Acts 10. And then, as to all beside, He further tells them, that just on the eve of the kingdom's taking its manifested form, or

when "the days of the Son of man" should begin, the world would be found in all the surfeit and intoxication of the times of Noah or Lot; and that, consequently, those "days of the Son of man" would break in upon them with the surprise of lightning, but with a just discerning also between man and man — between those who are in the appointed desire and prayer, and those who have found in planting and building, in buying and selling, the spoil of their hand, and are satisfied.

Isaiah appears to see those two in the bed, at the mill, and in the field, in this day of the Lord. Isa. 3: 10, 11; Isa. 33: 14-16. Malachi, also, looks at them in the day of discerning, when the same Sun, which rises with healing in His wings on the one, will burn as an oven for the other. Mal. 3, 4. For this day of the Lord will act with discerning, or in judgment. One shall be taken, and the other left.

There was, however, a third object. In the history of the times of Lot there was not only Lot himself, and the people of Sodom, but also Lot's wife. She perished not in Sodom, but between Sodom and Zoar. To her the departure from Sodom was *exile*, not *deliverance*. Many of the camp in the wilderness treated separation from Egypt with the same mind. And this yields a solemn, practical question for us. How do our souls entertain the thought of separation from the world? In the esteem of our hearts is it *exile* or *redemption*? Are we singing over that thought, like Israel at the Red Sea; or, like Israel afterwards, are we remembering the fish of Egypt, its onions, its leeks, and its cucumbers? Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. She sighed as an exile from Sodom. Do we sing, as the ransomed of the Lord, out of it?

"Remember Lot's wife," was the Saviour's weighty word in the midst of this discourse on the kingdom of God. And it is a weighty and serious word to lie on our hearts.

And the Lord further teaches us that, in neither form, is this kingdom of God subject to the "Lo, here" or the "Lo, there" of man. It makes itself known. It is the property of *power* to do so. Whether

the kingdom be within, or abroad in the world, it will make itself known. As the Lord says of the Comforter within, "But ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And I may instance Paul as being thus *conscious* of its presence. As soon as it filled his soul, as soon as he had the Son revealed in him (and that was the kingdom within) it had power at once to separate him to God. With this new and wondrous joy in him, he could go forth, like Abraham, from home and kindred. He did not want man's seal to be set on his title, nor man's supplies to be opened for his happiness. He neither conferred with flesh and blood, nor did he go up to Jerusalem, to them that were apostles before him, as though he needed their countenance. He went down to Arabia, where sands and solitude awaited him, instead of to the pillars in the Church, and to the city of solemnities. For the Son was revealed *within* — his title was sealed, and his resources were opened there, by the hand of God Himself — and he was independent of man's sanction and man's supplies. God was both his Witness and his Portion. Gal. 1.

But this may well humble us, beloved. For how little have we learnt this divine independency of the creature! Even to look to Arabia with our back upon Jerusalem, would it not be something too much for us? Have we such a kingdom within, such light and strength and joy in God, that "flesh and blood" are no longer our resources? What would our hearts feel if only sands and deserts were before us? But the first joy of adoption in Paul gave every place on earth the same character to him, and that first joy should be ours to the end.

The parable of the Importunate Widow closes this discourse. It may raise the question with us, Whence comes this cry, this day-and-night cry, of the elect? The saints now being gathered are to rejoice in the delay of the Lord as salvation to others. 2 Peter 3. But the Jewish election of the latter day are often presented as crying on the Lord, the righteous Judge, to show Himself. And the Lord appears to have them, the rather, in His view, as He uses this parable. Notwithstanding, there is a cry from the saints, in some sense, unceasingly heard of God. There was a cry from Abel's blood. There

was, we also learn, a cry from Sodom. Gen. 4, 18. There is a cry from the unpaid wages of the hireling. James 5. Even stones may have a voice in the ear of the Lord. Hab. 2: 11; Luke 19: 40.

But after the Lord had given His elect this high place with God, this place of interest and prevalency, He closes with words fitted to put a holy reserve upon their hearts, and to make them look to *themselves* rather than to their *privileges and powers*. "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Surely this was the way of a perfect Master, mingling the chastened and the brilliant lights together, giving a character of holiness to our dignities, and, in respect to the exercise of our highest functions and powers, imparting a modest estimate of ourselves.

Luke 18: 9-30. — Here we find another subject in like manner distinctly considered.

There are three scenes in this portion of our Gospel, two of which we have in Matthew and in Mark. Our evangelist does not notice their circumstances in time or place, but appears to present them together for the purpose of illustrating one great moral subject, according to his usual manner.

The subject is our *approach to God*, or *way of entrance into the kingdom*; and it fitly follows the previous scene, in which the nature of the kingdom was considered and taught; as we saw. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, in the case of the little children, and that of the young ruler, we are taught what are the characteristics of those who enter, and have their welcome in, the kingdom.

It is the renouncing of self in every form. This is our calling, our perfection; to forsake all that is of man, or of the flesh, or of the world - that we may be established certainly and happily in God Himself, and in His rich provision for us.

These three cases set forth this self-renouncing. The poor, broken-hearted publican did so; the little child does so; the young ruler, had he become the Lord's follower, would have done so. By these instances, and His reflections upon them, the Lord opens this doctrine. The apostles, afterwards, under the Holy Ghost, go on with it more fully. For the thorough emptying of the creature, or the renunciation of the flesh, is, we need not say, essential to the obedience of faith.

The law had previously come seeking for good in the flesh, or fruit of it unto God. But it found none. The Son of God, on the contrary, came in such a way as condemned sin in the flesh. Rom. 8: 3. Paul accordingly, in his doctrine, has done with *the flesh* altogether. He saw it to be a mighty wreck — not as yet fully out of sight, or gone to the bottom, but left by him to perish in its own corruption. He had been cast on a new world, in a new creation, with the risen Son of God.

It is edifying to mark the fervency and decision with which, in every shape and pretence of the flesh, he either escapes from it, or renounces it. Is it subject to *condemnation*? Yes, but Christ has borne the judgment of it, and he, a believer in Christ, is free. Has the flesh its *religion*? He counts it all as loss and dung; its ordinances and observances, its bondage and fear, he disclaims and refuses, glorying in the righteousness of God by faith. Has it *wisdom*? Yes; the world has its princes — the wise, the scribe, and the disputer; but Paul insists that God has made all this as foolishness, and covets only that wisdom which the Spirit searches out and reveals. He escapes from all that it was exposed to; he renounces all that it could pretend to. He was not in it, but in Christ raised from the dead for him. And this is glorious faith, which, after this manner, leaves the flesh in its condemnation, on the one hand, and, on the other, in its endowments — whether of wisdom or of righteousness or of any thing else — far away and for ever behind us.

Paul had been specially gifted of God to be a witness of the worthlessness of man or of the flesh in its best estate. For if any other might have had confidence in it, he more; as he tells us. Phil. 3. But his renunciation of it exposes its utter vanity, as being the act of one who had made the fairest and most flattering attainments in it.

And it is faith alone that does this. That is the transcendent excellency of faith — doing what nothing else can do. Love is exalted among the virtues to the chief place. 1 Cor. 13. But faith does what it was never committed to love to do. It is that which lays hold on God's salvation for the sinner. And till we get to God, our best thing only keeps us the farther from Him. Paul's zeal, a good thing in the flesh, led him to persecute the Church. The wisdom of the *princes* of this world led them into darkness and ignorance of the mystery of God. 1 Cor. 2. They were princes, it is true, the most exalted of their generation, but they were princes of *this world*; and their being princes there only strengthened them against the Lord of the true glory. For with such the world is the object; with God the world is judged.

Returning, however, for another moment, to our evangelist, I might observe that, in the midst of all this teaching on self-renunciation, in the cases of the publican, the little child, and the young ruler, the Great Teacher Himself practises His own lesson. Jesus renounces Himself. "Why callest thou Me good? none is good, save One, that is, God." He was good, but He would not look on His goodness. This was self-renouncing. What He renounces bespeaks His personal and moral glory; what we have to renounce betrays our shame and pravity; but still, He practises the lesson He teaches, and goes before as our Pattern. We have this again shown us by the apostle in Phil. 2. There he presents the Lord Jesus emptying Himself. It was, surely, of that which was infinitely or divinely glorious; yet He emptied Himself; and upon this He exhorts us to empty ourselves of all spirit of strife and vainglory. Thus there is sympathy; but such sympathy as, while He and we are found exercising ourselves — to speak in this manner — in the same

lessons, yet does it bespeak His perfectness in every thing, and our state of dishonour; so that we may assert the sympathy, but by that be only speaking to His praise and our own shame. And when, not merely our sympathy, but our *oneness* with Him is declared by the apostle, the same is made to appear; for though one, He is the *Sanctifier*, and we the *sanctified* (Heb. 2: 11), characters which tell out loudly and clearly the infinite moral distance that there is *personally* between us, though thus *one in the purpose of God*.

May the gracious Hand that has redeemed us as sinners, beloved, still lead us safely onward as saints; and the Good Shepherd, Who once laid down His life for us, feed us in the pastures of His holy Word for His name's sake!

Luke 18: 31-43. — In this portion of our Gospel, which I separate to itself, there is nothing, perhaps, characteristic. The Lord here, as in the corresponding places in both Matthew and Mark, addresses Himself to His journey, in the full anticipation of the sorrows and death in which it was shortly to end.

But there is in Him, all through this journey, the expression of a greatness of soul that is perfectly wonderful and blessed. He has Jerusalem, and His cup of sorrow there, full before Him. He finds no sympathy from those who were His own. He gathers no admiration from the world. It is the cross, and the shame of it too, that He is called to sustain — all human countenance and support being denied Him. Yet He goes on without the least possible abatement of His energy in thoughts and services for others. We deem ourselves entitled to think of ourselves, when trouble comes upon us, and to expect that others will think of us also. But this perfect Sufferer was thoughtful of others as He was going onward, though every step of His way only conducted Him to still deeper sorrows; and He had reason to judge that not one step of it all would be cheered by man in return. His own little band, even, understood not the sorrows about which He was speaking to them.

And here let me observe, that while, through this Gospel, we have been noticing our Lord as the Teacher, dealing with the thoughts, the hearts, and the consciences of men, we cannot but have observed the great ignorance of Scripture which even the apostles themselves betray continually. It does not appear that it was acquaintance with the prophets which had beforehand prepared them for the claims of Jesus of Nazareth; nor afterwards, in their intercourse with Him, do they seem to grow in knowledge. They wonder at one thing after another which He was constantly either doing or saying, though all was "according to the Scriptures," or "that the scripture might be fulfilled."

Their *hearts*, as Lydia's afterwards, had been opened. The attractions that were in Jesus, had entered, and separated them from their fishing nets, and kinsfolk, and publican's tables. So their *consciences*, more or less, like Peter's, may have been visited by a convicting ray of His glory. But their *understandings* had remained but little affected.

That grace and blessing, however, came in due season. After He rose from the dead, when all the comforts of His own personal intercourse with them were about to cease, "then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24: 45); and the first chapter of the Acts, before the Holy Ghost was given, affords a sample of the fruit of this new endowment — this opened understanding to understand the Scriptures. A great comfort all this was in the increasing sorrow and darkness of their condition. Their Lord had gone, and the enemy was still alive and in power, therefore the light of God now began to shed its beams on opened eyes, that thus, by nothing less than God's light, they might walk through the world's darkness. Their gracious Teacher was personally withdrawn, and their understandings were, accordingly, opened to know the treasures, the comforts, and the strengthenings of His Word.

But as yet it was not so, as we gather from this passage. The Lord addresses Himself to His journey, in the anticipation of the sorrow and shame in which it was to end; but He gets no sympathy from those who had been His care and the objects of His teaching. "Uncheered by earthly smiles," we may surely say, His lonely journey was.

We are, however, to witness refreshment and cheer for His spirit, provided by the unseen hand of the Father. For that hand draws a few sinners to Him; and, under that power (John 6: 44), they come in faith to Him, as He now repairs to that *guilty* city, where the prophets had perished. He has not to spend any toil of His own upon them. This beautifully distinguishes these cases. They are got ready for His enjoyment, as by the teaching and drawing of the Father in secret and alone. And, as the joy of a harvest, they are brought to Jesus in these dark and lonely hours: the blind beggar, whose faith we see here; Zaccheus, who meets Him in the next stage of the way; and the dying thief, who calls on Him just at the end of the way. These are His good cheer during His journey. They had cost Him no care or toil, as those who were daily His companions had. He was not tried by the slowness of their hearts, or the dimness of their faith; but they were as the joy of harvest to the reaper.

The strong decision and intelligence of faith which appears in these cases is exceedingly blessed. The blind beggar whom we have here is not to be put off by the religious ceremoniousness of the multitude who would not have "Jesus of Nazareth" intruded on, but he urges his case on the ear and the heart of "Jesus, the Son of David." Here was faith in its decisiveness and intelligence. He knew what and Who Jesus was. And Jesus owns the good cheer and refreshment which this faith yields Him. For He stands at once at the bidding of this faith, and entirely commits Himself to it, saying to the poor man, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?"

Thus did the God of grace cheer the way of this toiling, travelling Minister of grace. What will His satisfaction be when He sees the full fruit of the travail of His soul!

Luke 19: 1-27. — The stages of the Lord's journey are here every distinctly marked. He is seen, as in the preceding chapter, approaching Jericho, and now passing through it. Then on His road from Jericho to Jerusalem. just outside of which He pauses for a moment, and then formally enters it. And here, as also in Matthew and Mark, the closing scenes in the trial and conviction of the city are also very exactly noticed, this being the subject of these two chapters, like Matt. 21 - 23, and Mark 11: 12.

But they have their peculiarities. The conversion of Zaccheus, a little narrative that strikingly exhibits the work of God in the soul of man, is peculiar to Luke. And the parable of the Talents, or of the Nobleman who went into a Far Country, here follows that little narrative, though given by Matthew in another connection; for, here, these two scenes are made to illustrate the several purposes of the first and the second comings of the Lord; it being the way of the Spirit in our evangelist, as I have noticed, so to combine circumstances and matters of instruction, that moral ends may be answered to the heart and conscience, and that principles and truths of the kingdom may stand illustrated before us. But the parable of the Marriage of the King's Son is omitted here, being introduced, more suitably with the design of the Gospel, in Luke 14. For there it takes a general or moral character; whereas, had it been introduced here, it would have had a stricter application to the Jews. So the curse on the barren fig-tree is not here, nor is the sentence on Jerusalem largely and fully pronounced.*

*I have observed throughout these meditations (as well as here, concerning the parable of the Talents or Ten Pounds), that Luke does not strictly observe circumstances and sayings in order of time, because his purpose is moral. In Psalms 105 and 106 we may observe just the same. The purpose of the Spirit there being moral

and not historical; that is, to vindicate Jehovah in His dealings with Israel, and to convict Israel in their dealings with Jehovah; the psalmist does not give the events to which he refers in their succession, or order of time. He speaks of the plague of darkness before that of flies, and of Korah's rebellion before the making of the golden calf. This is precisely according to what strikes the mind in Luke.

Zaccheus, as I observed on the preceding meditation, was one of the refreshments provided, through the grace of the Father, for the wearied soul of Christ, as He was travelling His present way to the city. And the Lord owns this refreshment; for He says of the conversion of this publican, that it was answering the purpose of His coming: and, therefore, He must have tasted in it something of the fruit of the travail of His soul. The character of this conversion is simple and comforting. The boldness of faith is remarkable here, as in the preceding case; Zaccheus being deaf to the injurious observations of the *righteous* or *moral* world, as the poor blind beggar had been to its *religious formality and reserve*. And the fruit of communion with Christ, in the place where He was giving the convicted sinner the pledges of His favour, is brought forth very fresh and abundant.

The parable which follows this happy history, as we see plainly, and as I have shortly noticed before, illustrates the great end of the Lord's second coming. The prophets had not distinguished the two comings so clearly. Thoughts both of grace and glory arise at once and together from what they say of the advent of Messiah. Isaiah 61, to which our evangelist has already led us, instances this. See Luke 4. The grace, the vengeance, and the kingdom, appear there in unbroken order and succession. So the praise and prophetic words which attended the birth of Jesus in this Gospel rehearse the same. See chapters 1, 2. But the need of two advents comes out formally upon the unbelief of Israel, and their rejection of their King I say formally, because, of course, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." And the history of Christ under

the figure of "the stone," to which allusion is here made, gives us these two advents exactly on this principle, and the consequent vengeance which is now to accompany the second.

Luke 19: 28 — Luke 23.

Luke 19: 28 — Luke 20. — Jesus enters the city with royal state. The fifth period of our Gospel begins with this action. See page 181. The multitude take the tone of the occasion, and, by their welcome, their palm-branches, and their exultation, fill out the scene of this kingly procession. The shout of a King was among them. But the question still was, Would Zion rejoice? Would the children of Israel be joyful in their King? Would Jerusalem be glad because He was coming, meek and lowly, and riding upon an ass? Zech. 9: 9.

This was the inquisition now held. And we know the answer. In one language or another all the evangelists give it. "Ye would not," is said to the children of Jerusalem. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," is again the word upon Israel. And the whole course of the action here recorded gives the same answer. Jerusalem — that "favoured seat of God on earth, that heaven below the sky" — had defiled itself. The temple is unclean; the elders of the people are unbelieving; hypocrisy and love of the world stain the priests and scribes and rulers; they challenge instead of accepting Jesus; and traps and snares are laid for His feet where the crown should have been prepared for His head.

The action of these chapters, in this way, joins in the universal testimony against Jerusalem; and Jesus has to weep over that "city of peace." It had, of old, been His desire. "This is My rest," He had said of it. And as the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, He seeks no relief from other cities here, but weeps over this faithless one. And, till Jerusalem be restored, the earth, from one end of it to the other, is a Bochim to the spirit of Jesus in His saints. Their joy is divine and heavenly till then; for the earth yields not joy to them, if Jerusalem be disobedient.

It is very blessed to see that the place which the Lord chose for His dwelling on earth was Salem, the city of peace. There, in very early time, His holy witness and minister showed himself. Gen. 14. And

so, when He Himself really descended to the earth, He came as "the Prince of peace," seeking Jerusalem; His heralds proclaiming "Peace on earth." Luke 2. But man was not ready for this. Man had previously built a city of confusion (Gen. 11); and builders of Babel could scarcely be prepared for a king of Salem. "The son of peace" was not on earth to answer the salutation of "the Prince of peace" from heaven. Jerusalem, in her day, knew not the things that belonged to her peace. He had, therefore, as we see here, only to weep over her. Her citizens had refused Him, had said He should not reign over them; and He has to return to the "far country" (the supreme seat and source of all power), to get His title to the kingdom sealed afresh.

All this, however, tells us that, when He returns, it must be in a new character. His return will be in "a day of vengeance," seeing that this visitation in "peace" was refused. And, as promising Him this day of vengeance on the citizens, the Lord says to Him, on reaching that "far country," "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." The Stone that was first offered as a foundation stone, sure and precious, was disallowed by the builders; and therefore now, ere it can reach its destined place of honour (that is, fill, like a great mountain, the whole earth), it must first smite the image. The kingdom that is to be taken by the returned nobleman is first to have all things that offend taken out of it. The unbelief and rebellion of man have thus shaped the course of the Lord of heaven and earth; and He has now to travel up to His glory and kingdom through "a day of vengeance."*

*This day of vengeance is to be on the Gentiles as well as on Israel; on "all nations" (Isa. 34, 63); for Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, as well as Herod with the Jews, rejected the Chief Cornerstone. Acts 4: 27.

But (let the earth be for a while never so angry) He will still take the city of peace for His dwelling, and Salem shall still be true to her name: as He says by His prophet Haggai, "And in this place will I

give peace;" for that alone is *His* "strong city" (Isa. 26); its walls will be salvation, and its gates praise. Man's strong city" will then have been made a ruin. Ps. 108 Isa. 26. The day of vengeance will have accomplished that, for the city of confusion and the city of peace cannot stand together. And when He has thus, on the overthrow of man's confusion, established His own peace, the earth will learn to answer the salutation of heaven, and to say, "Peace in heaven," of which the acclamations here give us the pledge and sample. See Luke 2: 14; Luke 19: 38.

It is easy to apprehend this, and the course of these two chapters presents it all to us very simply. Jerusalem being unprepared for Jesus of Nazareth, accounts for the need of two advents, and for the nobleman's returning in a day of vengeance. But we may remark that, in the midst of all this, denied as He was every thing for the present by the sons of men, still does He act in the consciousness of His lordship of every thing. He claims the ass from the owner of it, because He could say, speaking of Himself, "The Lord hath need of him." And it is very striking that, in the course of His life and ministry, though He was the rejected Galilean all the time, there was no form of the ancient glory that He did not assume. I have before observed how faith at times drew aside the veil, and disclosed His glory. But now I ask, What glory? All glories of Jehovah known and recorded of old — all glories which had taught Israel that their God was the one only Lord of heaven and earth. Thus: He healed leprosy, the well-known peculiar honour of God (2 Kings 5: 7); He put away all sicknesses, as the ancient Jehovah-rophi of Israel (Ex. 15: 26); He fed the multitudes in wildernesses again; He stilled the waves, as though He could again divide Jordan and the Red Sea; and He made the fish to bring Him tribute, as here He claims the ass, treating the earth and its fulness as all His own. The judicial glory of Jehovah He would also fill, when the occasion demanded it, pronouncing woe on the people, or leaving the city for desolation; as, of old, He had again and again judged and chastened His people, both in the wilderness and in Canaan. All the ancient forms of praise and honour known in Jehovah to Israel, He would thus put on; the

Redeemer, the Leader, the Healer, the Feeder, and the Judge too, of His people. And, as led forth by the faith of a Gentile, He could show Himself one with Him Who, at the beginning, *by His word*, had made the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them. Luke 7.

It may well be a happy service to gather up these fragments of His glory in the midst of His humiliation. But I may further observe, that the two parables which we listen to in the course of this action bear us very much through the whole of the divine dispensations. That of the Labourers in the Vineyard gives us the dealings of God with Israel, from the day when they were planted as His people in Canaan, to the time of the mission and rejection of Christ, the Heir of the vineyard. That of the Ten Pounds takes the divine economy up from that moment, and carries us through the present age, until the second coming, or kingdom, of Christ. And in each of them we read of the Lord's going into a far country." Luke 19: 12; Luke 20: 9. The Lord of Israel did this. After He had left His people in their inheritance, in the days of Joshua, He withdrew in some sense, expecting that they would till the land He had given them, for His praise in the earth. But their history and this parable tell us the full disappointment of all such hopes. So Christ, the rejected Heir of the Jewish vineyard, has done this. Upon His rejection, He went into the same "far country" (heaven), leaving behind Him, not an earthly portion to the care of Jewish labourers, but talents, opportunities of serving Him, with His servants, under the promise of His return in the full title of the kingdom, then and there to reward them. And the parable tells us, as well as the history of our present age will tell us, the end of this. A very full view, after this manner, of God's great plans these parables give, coming out here in the most artless and natural way, in the course of this action.

But is not that a tender thought which is suggested here — that the saints are, in this age, left to serve their Master in a place where, after fullest deliberation, He has been refused and cast out? The *citizens* of it have said they will not have Him; and service,

therefore, to be fully of right character, should be rendered in the recollection of this rejection.

And again; if we thus learn the *nature* of service from this parable generally, from the history of the Unprofitable Servant we learn the *spring* of service. This man did not know *grace*. He *feared*; he judged Christ an *austere* man; his best calculation was to come off free in the day of reckoning; the bondage of the law filled his heart, and not the liberty of the truth. He was not a Zaccheus, who bore away in his soul, from the joy of communion with Jesus, and the certainty of His love, a readiness to give half his goods to the poor, and a purpose to restore to any he had wronged even more than the law exacted. But this man was no servant. He served himself, and not Christ. And so do all who do not begin with knowing that Christ has first served them, and that theirs is to be the service of grateful love. Grateful love! How happy the thought! Paul served in this spirit. The life that he lived, he lived by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved him, and gave Himself for him. Grateful love, in the sense of forgiveness sealed and made sure to his soul, accounts (under the Spirit, surely) for fruitfulness in Paul; the want of that — ignorance and disesteem of it — in the unprofitable servant, accounts for his barrenness.

Luke 21. — Thus have we seen it — the Lord of Israel, the Lord of the earth and its fulness, rejected by earth's citizens; and He Who once visited them with a day of peace taking His seat at the right hand of power, waiting to visit them with a day of judgment. Luke 20: 42. This was the bearing of the preceding chapter, and this present one shows us more fully all the results to Israel and Jerusalem of this rejection of their King; that is, "the times of the Gentiles," the season of Jerusalem's depression, with the close of those times in the return of the Son of man.

This chapter corresponds, in its general purpose, with Matt. 24, 25, and Mark 13. But, among other distinctions, we may observe the

little circumstance which opens it. And it is very peculiarly in the way of Luke.

This poor widow stands in contrast with the nation generally. Our Lord gives her this place. At least, in contrast with those who may be judged a sample of the nation in its worldly wealth and religious self-importance. And as the Lord of Israel here looks at these two together, so had the prophets of Israel before Him. They see the nation in apostasy, and the remnant in the midst of it; like the two at the mill, or in the field, as we have already seen. For, in the last days, when the things of Israel become the subject of divine notice again, these two will once more be manifested.

It was easy for the blessed Lord to pass from the rich benefactors in this scene, to the widow with her two mites. We know His mind too well to think that it could have been otherwise. His Spirit in His prophet (Isa. 66: 1, 2) shows a wonderful thing, somewhat similar to this. He sees the contrite and broken-hearted man, and turns to such, rather than to all the gorgeous works of His own hand. The heavens and the earth are and were and shall be both His delight and His glory, but "to this man" will He rather look. The deepest affections are stirred there.

What comfort is this! And how easily do our own affections understand it? For that which *sympathizes with our mind or taste* is really nearer to us than that which *serves our interest*. The one who, abroad, in the affairs of life, promotes our advantage, is not so near to our hearts as the one who can sit with us, and enter into the enjoyments of our mind and taste. And so with our God. That which secures His glory, like the heavens and the earth, is passed by for the humbled sinner that trembles at His word. There the divine mind meets its dearer object.

Who would have it otherwise? But who can measure the consolation that comes to us from this?

It has often been observed with what propriety the Lord, when quoting Isaiah 61, breaks off with the words "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4: 19-21); because the words which immediately follow in the prophet being, "and the day of vengeance of our God," the Lord could not of them, as of the preceding words, say, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," His ministry being one of grace and not of judgment to Israel. But now, in this chapter, the Lord, as it were, continues His quotation from the prophet, and goes on to reveal "the day of vengeance," in order, as He tells us in verse 22, "that *all* things" (not *some* merely, as before) "which are written may be fulfilled."

This day of vengeance upon Israel as a nation extends, in some sense, all through these present "times of the Gentiles." The crisis in the latter day is the character of the whole period. They are all "*days* of vengeance," as the Lord here calls them, though there is to be a special season and visitation at the close — "the *day* of vengeance" as the prophet calls it. Isa. 34, Isa. 63. And it is the whole period which our Lord here, I judge (rather than in the corresponding chapters in Matthew or Mark) gives us to look at — that dreary and evil season, the portion of Jerusalem during "the days of vengeance," or "the times of the Gentiles." And accordingly, instead of pointing at "the abomination of desolation" (as is done in Matthew and Mark, and by which is described the *last* enemy of Jerusalem), our evangelist has the more general expression, "when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies;" introducing "all the trees," in the parable, in connection with "the fig-tree" — these being still further marks of the more *general* character of this Gospel, and of the more extended view of Jerusalem's sorrows which the Lord is here taking. Indeed, it is only Luke who has the expression, "the times of the Gentiles."

And this being so, the Lord here looking through the long vista of Jerusalem's griefs, the strong impression left on the mind, after reading this chapter, is this - that the Lord's great purpose was to guard His saints against the thought that the kingdom of Israel was

to be entered *at once* or *in quietness*. He tells them that they were to count on no such things at all, for before the kingdom could arise there were to be judgments and sorrows. "The time draweth near," some would say; "I am Christ," others would say;" or the same seducer might utter both (v. 8); but the Lord here warns His disciples against such. The citizens had already hated their offered King; and, as enemies, they must be slain, ere the kingdom could fully appear. And to leave on the hearts of the disciples the clear and full impression of all this, so that they might stand in an evil day, and not be seduced by any false prophet of peace, was the great purpose of the Lord in this discourse with them.

I believe that Daniel, in like manner, looks through the whole time, "the times of the Gentiles," as being one and the same in character; and calls it "the war." Dan. 9: 26. The end, it is true, will be special, and will be manifested "with a flood," as he speaks; but the whole is a war, and desolations are determined, till that which is also determined be poured upon the desolater.

But it is very significant, that, while Matthew and Mark give us more particularly the last great Jewish sorrow, or "Jacob's trouble," and Luke more widely the whole age of "the times of the Gentiles," John does not notice this remarkable prophecy at all. The Lord's solemn entry as the King into Jerusalem goes off quite in another direction from what it does in any of the previous Gospels. The Greeks, representing the attendant and obedient nations in the latter day, come desiring to see Him, and this leads Him out at once to other thoughts. His soul then passes through a trouble; and shortly afterwards He forebodes, not the judgment of Israel, according to this prophecy, but the judgment of the world and of the prince of the world. And at length, in the riches of His grace, as Saviour of the world, He tells of Himself being lifted up on the cross, and of His being the Light of the world, and the One Who spoke according to that commandment which the Father had given Him, and which is life everlasting. See John 12.

This is all strikingly characteristic of the four Gospels, and aids the conclusion that this prophecy, not found in John, is about *Jewish* matters, and connected with the return of "the Son of man" to the earth. For that is not the Church's prospect. The saints now wait for the descent of "the Son of God" from heaven to the air. 1 Thess. 1. It is the Jewish election, who, by-and-by, will have to wait for the days of the Son of man.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah are the proper utterances of the heart, in sympathy with Jerusalem and her children, all through these "times of the Gentiles." The city still sits solitary. The mountain of Zion is still desolate. The crown is fallen, and the joy of the heart is gone. The punishment of iniquity is not yet accomplished in that land and among that people. Rachel still weeps. But the Lord will not cast off for ever (Lam. 3: 31), and Rachel has been told this, "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy." Jer. 31: 16.

But there is another expression, also peculiar to our Gospel, which happily leads to other prospects. Speaking of the consummation of these Jewish sorrows, the Lord says, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; *for your redemption draweth nigh.*"

To say, "The time draweth nigh," before any trouble could come, would be deceit, as we have seen; but now when the day of vengeance is at its height, to say "Your redemption draweth nigh," would be holy and seasonable comfort to the faithful. And, in like manner, the prophets connect "the day of vengeance" with the "year of My redeemed," as the Lord here does. Isa. 63: 4. Judgment on the apostate nation, deliverance and joy to the remnant, are both to be looked for. For though the Lord make a full end of all nations, yet will He not make a full end of Israel. The promised "times of the restitution of all things" will surely follow the threatened "times of the Gentiles." And those promised times of restitution, called here

by the Lord "your redemption," will be the true Jewish or earthly jubilee, which pre-eminently was the time of restitution or redemption. See Lev. 25.

In Israel the land and the people both belonged to the Lord; and in the year of jubilee He dealt with them as His own. For forty-nine years He allowed confusion to prevail. Lands might be sold, and the people themselves go to the creditor. But this was to be only for a season, for God's claim was paramount; and every fiftieth year He would assert it. Israelite might traffic with Israelite, and corrupt the primitive order, or *God's* world, making the whole system man's world; but all this corruption and disturbance was to have an end, and this end came in the returning year of jubilee. Then the Lord arose, as it were, to act on His own principles, and assert His own rights; to undo all the mischief which man's trafficking had introduced, and to replant the land and the people according to their beginnings under His own hand. His hand was then uppermost, and His order and purpose would show themselves openly. And what joy it is to see this, that the moment we get things again under *God's* hand, the moment we find ourselves in His world, it is a jubilee we are keeping, a season of joy, a time for the restoration of grace, a time for making a happy return, every one to his family, and every one to his possession.

How blessed (to speak according to the figure or symbol of this ordinance) thus to have the Lord the Landlord of the earth again. "Happy are the people that are in such a case." And this jubilee was introduced by the day of atonement. Lev. 25: 9. That was the day that was to open the millennial age. For it is nothing but the work of the Lamb of God that can lead to any joy or deliverance among us. The precious blood is all our title. And thus it is that the jubilee and redemption are connected; so that when the Lord here says, "Your redemption draweth nigh," it was as looking out to this jubilee of Israel and the earth. The jubilee was *God's redemption* of His land and people. Supposing that no kinsman could be found able or willing to do this previously, God Himself, in the fiftieth year,

would exercise both His rights and His resources in behalf of His oppressed land and bonded people. And thus this jubilee was "the year of My redeemed" (as spake the Lord by the prophet), or, the season of "redemption," towards which the eyes of the expectant, suffering remnant are here directed by their blessed Master.

We learn, then, that "these things shall come to pass;" these "days of vengeance," these "times of the Gentiles," will run their course, but "redemption" is to be behind them all. The "smoking furnace" will pass first, because the Lord's rights and claims have been denied by the rebellious citizens of this world, because there was no "son of peace" in man's "city of confusion;" but, as surely, the "burning lamp" will follow. Gen. 15. A cry from the citizens, that they would not have Him, followed the Lord; and on His return He must therefore visit them, in His sore displeasure, ere He proclaim the jubilee. But the jubilee waits to crown and close the work.

This is food for *hope*; and God is the God of hope. To be without hope is to be without God. Eph. 2: 12. We cannot have faith without having hope; because the truth we believe is *God's* truth; and God, being Love, will not reveal truth to us without making that truth of such a character as will inspire hope in us. He must give this shape to His revelations. He Who called Israel *out of Egypt* called them *into Canaan*. And so with us; "Being justified by faith, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5: 2.

This is most sure. God is the God of hope as well as of salvation. But the style of this chapter suggests (what has struck me generally throughout Scripture) that the food which hope gets in Scripture is comparatively little — rich indeed, but small in quantity. This, however, is only a further witness of the perfection of the divine oracles. Because *God Himself* is our present lesson. We are called to learn *Him* first, and then the inheritance or glory He has to give. And this is so right. For when we thoroughly know the excellency or goodness of a person, we can easily assure ourselves that we shall be no losers by him. His character warrants our hope, and is the

security of our expectations. Nay, we wrong him, if we do not hope from him. Had man, however, been the author of the Scriptures, they would have been very different from this. They would have been filled with descriptions of the promised joy. Just as touching the life and character of Christ: had man been the author of such a history, he would have dealt largely in description and encomium. But the way of those who have spoken of Him under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost is the very opposite. So as to our prospects. Look at Job's history. Long account we get of his sorrows and the exercise of his faith, but the joy and honour in which all those sorrows resulted are given us in one short chapter. Bright, to be sure, is the exhibition there of his final condition, but comparatively small, and soon disposed of. And in this manner, generally, the testimonies of God give us large and repeated account of the evil of this world, and of our consequent trial of faith in it, but feed the hopes of our hearts more sparingly. For, as I suggested before, it is rather *Himself* we are to know now, and on *Himself* to feed now.

Our present chapter is after this pattern. We have sorrow and trial occupying the scene largely, but the, prospect at the end presented shortly, and soon filled up — "Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

Luke 22, 23. — These chapters find their likeness, to a general intent, in Matt. 26, 27 and in Mark 14, 15. But still, as ever, there are distinctive marks and notices.

In the opening of these solemn scenes the Spirit, in Luke, accounts for the act of Judas, as He does afterwards for the denial of Peter, by disclosing Satan as the source of both. Neither Matthew nor Mark do this; but John does it with even more exactness, noting the progress of the power of Satan over the traitor. And these distinctions are quite according to the mind of the Spirit in the different Gospels. Matthew and Mark do not touch the secret spring of wickedness, for it had not been much noticed in Israel; Luke does, for he was looking out to larger and deeper principles of truth;

and John still more fully, because he reaches farther into divine things and spiritual power than any of them. And this might again give us some recollections of Job; for in his history the source of the trials of the saints is strikingly opened also, the accuser therefore appearing before God against the righteous man, as here he is shown desiring to sift the disciples like wheat. But here the sources of security are also opened, the Lord saying, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." This we have not in Job.

Again: I observe that the words with which the Lord seats Himself at the paschal table the inquiry among the disciples at such a moment as this, as to which of them should be the greatest, and the marvellous grace of the Lord's reply; the notice about buying a sword, or of the militant state into which the disciples were now to count on entering; the healing of the wounded ear; the look at Peter; and the reconciliation between Pilate and Herod — all these are peculiar to Luke, and quite of the character of his Gospel, giving us the exercise of the Lord's grace, and also the workings and affections of nature in others.

So, as we advance still farther, it is here only that we see the affections of the "daughters of Jerusalem" — a sight quite within the Spirit's proper vision in Luke. And this company of women hold a very peculiar place. They do not take part with the crucifiers, but at the same time they are not of one rank with "the women of Galilee," who, as disciples, left their distant homes and kindred to follow Jesus. They melt, as with human affections, at the sight of His sorrows, and return from it smiting their breasts; but they do not appear to receive Him as the Hope of their own souls or of the nation. And yet, in all grace, He appears to receive them as the sample of the righteous remnant in the latter day. But indeed, dear brethren, we may say, in connection with this little incident, that one feels too sadly, in one's own heart, that it is one thing to render to Jesus the tribute of admiration, or even of tears, and another thing to join one's self with Him for better or for worse, through good and

through evil, in the face of this present world; one thing to speak well of Him, another thing to give up all for Him.

In like manner, it is only our evangelist who gives our Lord's desire for Israel on the cross — "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And so (as is well known amongst us), it is only here that the repentance and faith of one of the malefactors is recorded. And suited, characteristic expressions of grace these are. For as the exercises of the human heart are especially called forth in this Gospel, so are the ways of that divine goodness which had all their utterance and current in the midst of us through the Son of God's love. It abounds with discoveries of man; but so does it with the gracious actings of the Lord; that the evil and the darkness of the one may find their blessed remedy in God Himself through the other.

This conversion of the dying malefactor was further refreshment for the heart of Jesus in these dark and lonely hours, as we observed on the case of the poor blind beggar and that of Zaccheus the publican. His faith, like theirs, was truly precious. What a ready Teacher the Spirit was to him! In the twinkling of an eye (to speak so) the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ sprang forth in his soul! He understands himself in his guilt and just desert of judgment; he understands Jesus in His faultlessness, and right possession of a kingdom! And he learns, in his conscience, that his only refuge is to pass over from his own state of guilt and exposure into the shelter and glory of Christ!

There was no fruit in this poor soul, it has been said. He never did any thing for Christ. But where, we may ask, is such fruit to God as faith itself? There is no fruit of faith that glorifies God as faith itself does, faith in the gospel, in the sufficiency and worthiness of Christ. Because it receives a revelation which exalts and sets off every thing that can be to God's praise. It admits a report or declaration about the blessed One, which magnifies all the divine excellencies, and every thing that is worthy of God.

And this is His own purpose in it. As the apostle says, "That He might show the exceeding riches of His grace." Eph. 2: 7. This is His purpose, to display Himself to let it be known abroad, through all His creation, Who He is and what He is, and thus make His own works again, but more gloriously than of old, utter His praise. And how blessedly was this purpose answered in the soul of this dying thief; and how is it to this day answered in the history of this glorious conversion! May we never, with some, stand to inquire about the fruit of faith in him, but read in his story the purpose of God in the gospel of His dear Son, to tell out His own doings "to the praise of the glory of His grace" for ever. But this only as we pass by this little history, which is peculiar to Luke.

So, though they are but slight additions, Luke is the only one who calls Golgotha by its Greek or Gentile name, Calvary; and while, in Matthew and Mark, the centurion's testimony is given to Jesus as "the Son of God," here it is to Jesus as "a righteous Man."

But beyond all that strikes me as characteristic in these chapters is that other utterance of the Lord on the cross — "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." This is peculiar, and shows us that the Lord's mind, while passing through His last hours, is not given to us in the same path in the different Gospels. In Matthew and Mark, we have the cry of conscious desertion: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" — the cry of the smitten and bruised Lamb. In John He passes on without reference to God or the Father at all, but simply, as with His own hand, seals the accomplished work in the words, "It is finished!" But here it is between these paths that His soul is kept. It is not the sense of desertion, and its due attendant, appeal to God; nor is it the sense of divine, personal authority; but it is communion with *the Father*, the utterance of a soul that depended on Him, and was sure of His support and acceptance. And this is quite according to our Gospel. It is that central path, so to speak, which the mind of the Lord has been taking all through it. It is *God* as absent from Him that He feels in Matthew and Mark; *the Father* as with Him that He knows here; *Himself* that He is divinely

conscious of in John. All these Thoughts had their wondrous and holy course through the soul of the Lord in these hours. Perfect in every exercise of heart, though various; and none could trace them thus, by the pen of one evangelist after another, but the Spirit that awakened them. "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then *Thou* knewest my path."

By this cry the independent life of the spirit is fully and formally owned. The Lord, in dying, commends His "spirit" to the Father. Stephen afterwards, in dying, commends his to Jesus. A happy witness to us that both the Lord and His servant looked for something superior to, and independent of, the body. They looked to a condition of *the spirit*. This was not what the dying thief looked for, but what, through surpassing grace, he got. As a Jew he looked for a future kingdom; but his dying Lord promises him present life with Himself in paradise. For "life" as well as "immortality" (incorruption of the body) are brought to light through the gospel. 2 Tim. 1.

Death bounds the empire of sin and Satan. Sin reigns unto death. The judgment that follows death belongs to God. The enemy may follow up to that point, but he goes no farther.

"Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" was the word here to one who was then just passing the gate of death. The kingdom that he looked for, and of which he spoke, was not yet; but the gracious hand of Christ was alone entitled to lead him; and though it will not lead directly and at once into the promised land, where the tribes of the Lord are to share their desired and abiding inheritances, yet it will lead in paths worthy of itself, paths of light and life; for He is the God of the living only, and in Him is no darkness at all. God is the "Father of spirits;" and the ghost given up, or death past, we are alone with the living God. The spirit returns to Him Who gave it; and it is said to us, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, *and after that have no more that they can do.*"

Have we not the fullest testimony that it was so with the Lord? Did not the rent rocks, the opened grave, and the riven veil, tell that He was Conqueror on the other side of death? "In that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. And we may trust the single Hand that meets us there also. It may lead to paradise first, and not to the kingdom till the resurrection, but every path will be according to the Hand that opens it. It was to lead the dying thief that day — but where, except to paradise, the place where Paul had such visions and revelations as he could not utter when he returned to earth? And into that paradise a dying *malefactor* and the dying *Lord of glory* (wondrous company!) were to go that day.

Paul counted it better to depart, and be with Christ. He had, in some sense, already experienced paradise. 2 Cor. 12. It may have been by a surprise that he was taken there. He had no time, it is likely, to prepare himself for such a journey and an untried journey, an untravelled road, it was to him. But there was a Hand that could conduct the spirit without amazement. And so with us. We hear of the sudden, unexpected death of saints. But He Who is principal in the scene, and Who holds the keys of hell and death, cannot be surprised. And, therefore, though we learn from the apostle that the visions and audiences which he got there filled him with an occasion for glorying, they were so exalted, yet never does he intimate that they were too great or too high for him. His spirit was attempered to them, for the One Who had prepared the scenes in the third heaven for him, had, in the same moment, got him ready for them.

He that hath wrought us for the resurrection in glorious bodies is none less than God Himself, and He has given to us the earnest of the Spirit; "therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord . . . we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." 2 Cor. 5.

And our meeting death (entrance to this paradise, as it is to us), is altogether different from Christ's meeting it. - We are to meet it as any pain or trouble in the flesh, the enemy using them all for our mischief, if he may, but God bringing blessing and praise. No three hours of darkness is there before us, but the sense of a love that is stronger than death. But He had. to know that time as the hour of the power of darkness, as He speaks in this Gospel. And He had to know the full righteous exaction of that penalty (of old incurred by us), "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." That was the cup He drank — the bitter cup, tasted at Gethsemane, and exhausted at Calvary. Blessed for us who love Him to know, as He speaks in the Book of Psalms, that "the cup of salvation" is also His. And He will take it, by-and-by, in the kingdom, leading the praises of the congregation in the sanctuary of glory.

And a thought full of joy (had we but hearts for it) arises here — that every thing is heightened and honoured by the hand of the Son of God. Every thing that has been spoiled and broken by us is taken up by Him, and, in His hand, raised to a character which we could never have given it. The law broken by us has been magnified and made honourable by Him; all human grace, all fruit of human soil (as we see especially in this Gospel), has been presented to God by Him, and in Him, more fresh and lovely than we could ever have offered it; all service has been rendered to perfection, and all victory gained gloriously, by Him, to God's praise for ever. And so *worship*. What prayers and supplications were those which Jesus once made in the day of His grief and bruising; and what praise will that be which Jesus will hereafter lead, when He thus takes the "cup of salvation"! Where could have been the temples that would have been filled with such incense as the Son brings! What sacrifices has our God thus accepted in His sanctuary! Surely it is our comfort to know this; for it is in the midst of our ruins these temples are raised.

These thoughts arise while thinking on that cup which Jesus drank here, and on that other cup which He refused for the present, waiting to take it in the kingdom. But I will pass on, just again observing,

that wherever we have noticed any thing peculiar to our evangelist in this portion of his Gospel, it is still, as we have now seen, according to the design and manner of the Spirit by him. The great materials are, of course, the same in all, for all is fact and truth; but the Lord's mind through it all is thus variously given out to us.

Luke 24.

Luke 24. — WE have now reached the closing chapter of our Gospel, and there, as in the corresponding place of each Gospel, we find the Lord in resurrection.

In resurrection, the Lord breaks forth, laden with the full fruit of complete victory over all the power of the enemy. It is, in His person, the "burning lamp" after the passage of the "smoking furnace." Gen. 15. The previous season had been man's "hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22: 53), Satan's time for the putting forth of all his strength. But wherein they dealt proudly the Lord was above them; and this is our comfort, that the enemy has been met in the height of his strength and pride. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the second morning in the history of creation. When the foundations of old were laid "the morning stars sang together." But that workmanship was spoiled. Adam betrayed the kingdom he had received from God into the hand of Satan, and death entered. The Son of God, however, entered also; and as it was appointed unto men once to die, so Christ was once offered. Heb. 9. He took on Himself the penalty, the death deserved by us; and thus the grave of Jesus is seen by faith, as the end of the old creation. But His resurrection is the morning of a new and more glorious one, and the saints, the sons of God, sing, in spirit, over it. It is the clay in the hand of the potter a second time, to bring forth a vessel that can never be marred. It is the foundation of an enduring kingdom; and that kingdom, thus to be received by the risen Jesus, the Second Man, He will not, like Adam, *betray into the hand of the enemy*; but will, in due season, *deliver it up without taint to God*, even the Father, that all may end in "God" being "all in all." 1 Cor. 15: 24.

How blessed this is — how satisfying and encouraging, thus to see the Lord undoing all the mighty mischief of the rebellion of the first man, and, in the way of righteousness, repairing the breach! And who can tell the glory of that economy where mercy and truth so meet together! Who can understand the riches both of the wisdom

and knowledge of God in such a mystery! And it is that by which He shows Himself. His glory is seen "in the face of Jesus Christ." In the work of grace, and in its fruits in glory, God is revealing Himself; so that to know Him, and to be happy in the assurance of His love through Jesus, is the same thing. "He that loveth not knoweth not God."

It was on this very ground that, of old, God sought to be known as God by the Jews. He claimed to be worshipped by them as the one only God, because He had shown Himself their Redeemer. "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." In this action He had made Himself known as God, full of grace and power for captive sinners; and if we know Him not as such we know Him not rightly. Any thought about God at variance with this is but the act of the mind of a, darkened creature busying itself about its own idolatry. The true God is He Who reveals Himself in redeeming grace and power; and, blessed truth, to know God is, accordingly, to know myself a sinner saved by grace.

By the primitive order of creation, glory was secured as God's portion — blessing as the creature's. The serpent beguiled the woman, so as to lead man to seek the glory for, himself: "Ye shall be as gods." And by this, the whole divine order was disturbed; for man righteously lost his place of blessing, in this attempt to take God's place of glory. The work of redemption restores this order. It puts things in their due place again. Redemption through grace does this; for it excludes boasting, and secures blessing. It reserves the place of glory for God, and that of blessing for man; and that is the way of God, according to the order of creation, as it came forth from His hand. He cannot own man in his pride, in his old attempt to be as God; but having humbled him, and asserted that glory is His alone, He will then show that blessing is man's. For indeed, through His own goodness, blessing is as much the creature's *due* place, as glory is God's. His love, which is Himself, has made it so. He has as surely consulted for man's joy, as for His own praise. He will show

Himself *just*, thus providing for His own glory; but He will also show Himself *a Justifier*, thus providing for the sinner's blessing. And the resurrection of the Lord tells us all this. it tells us both of God's glory, in His destroying the very head of all the offence, and of man's blessing in having grace imparted to him, though an offender. This is the lesson it reads to us: of course, hard to be learned by those who have sought to exalt themselves, and affected to be as God; but a lesson which if redeemed, we must learn; for redemption must restore God's own primitive and unchangeable principles, and put Him into the place of unrivalled, unquestioned glory, while it gives the creature equally the place of full, unquestioned blessing.

The subject of this chapter suggests these things, as general truths, to the mind. But in our evangelist's account of it, wherever there is any thing peculiar, it will, I believe, be found to be characteristic also. Thus the journey to Emmaus, which in detail we get only here, presents our Lord in the grace of the Teacher still, dealing with the Thoughts and affections of men.

When the Lord was in the world before, He showed Himself equally to all, for He was attracting their confidence by services of unwearied love. But now, in resurrection, He is known only to His own. The world had refused His goodness, had seen and hated Him and His Father, and were not entitled to see Him now in His exaltation, on His way to the highest heavens. But those who loved Him in the world shall see Him now. Five hundred such, unnamed and unknown though they be, shall look on Him, as well as Peter and John; and look on Him, too, with as full, appropriating a faith as they. And all His visits to them are in love and peace. But love will express itself differently, according to the condition and need of its object. If its object be in sorrow, love will soothe; if walking in light, love will gladden and approve; if gone astray, love will lead again into paths of righteousness. And so is it with the risen Lord, Who loves for ever. Thus, He visits Mary to refresh her desirous heart with His presence; He visits Thomas to restore his unbelieving

soul; and, here, the two disciples, to lead them back by the way by which they came, as they had taken their journey under the power of unbelief. All was, thus, the same love, though suiting itself differently to its different objects. These two needed restoration, and their Lord restores them. At first, He makes Himself strange, rebuking them for their slowness of heart; and then, as the Great Prophet of God, and the Teacher of men, leads them through all the Scriptures, till the light and power of His words warm their hearts.

This was full of divine grace. It was the restoring of the soul in the love of the Good Shepherd. But still it gives occasion to this thought — that *the Lord delights in reality, or truthfulness of heart*. These disciples, as they walked, were sad. That sadness was real; it was the affection that suited their circumstances, as they judged them to be. They had been disappointed. They had lost, as they feared, the Hope of Israel; and if their hearts were at all true to such things, they must have been sad; and they were sad. Thus there was reality about them, though also slowness of heart to believe *all* that the prophets had spoken. And Jesus loves that reality. Jesus loves that all about us should have the stamp of truth in the inward parts. And He joins Himself to these sad ones, to show them that the things which had happened at Jerusalem, as they spake, were really for them, and not against them; and He makes that, which was *shaking* their faith, *confirm* it. And, in His way of communicating it, there is so much of *human* loveliness, that all is still according to His path under the tracing hand of our evangelist.

"He made as though He would have gone further." How perfect that little movement was! What title had He, a Stranger as He seemed to be, to obtrude Himself on them? He had only joined them by the way, in the courtesy of one who was travelling the same road. What right had such a one to cross their threshold? If Jesus be but a Stranger in our eyes, beloved, He will still walk outside. Till we know Him as the Saviour, the Lover of our souls, surely He asks for nothing. We may dwell in our own houses, and furnish our own tables, till then. But when He is known by us as the Son of God Who

has loved us and given Himself for us, then He claims a place in our hearts and our homes; and then will He dwell with us and sup with us, as it were, unbidden; entering, in the person of some of His little ones, either to get a cup of cold water, or to have the feet washed, at moments when, perhaps, we looked not for Him.

And may we be ready, dear brethren! Indeed, it is a blessed state, though hard to our hearts at times. Ever ready, and at the disposal of the need of each other; thus entertaining, not angels merely, but the Lord of angels, and the Friend of sinners.

But as yet, on this occasion, to these two, He was but a Stranger; and, therefore, He would leave them to their rest and repast alone, though the day was far spent. But, oh, the adorning that was upon Him! The ornament of a perfect spirit graced every little passage of His life. What dignity, when dignity was the thing; what tenderness, when that, in its turn, was called for! If man had but the eye for them, what forms of moral beauty would have continually passed before him, in the doings and goings of this perfect Son of man! Never for a single moment was there the least disturbance in the moral bearing of all that was about Him. But man had no eye or ear for Him. When he saw Him, there was no beauty that he should desire Him. The true beauty was no beauty in man's eye. None of this perfection was according to man. But at times, through grace, there was the burning of the heart. And so it is here. These two happy ones own the power of His presence, and find their souls restored, and their feet led back to the city, by the way by which they had come, and which to them was the path of righteousness again.

This is the way of the grace of the risen Lord to those two disciples. And this is quite His way in this Gospel. So, in what follows in the larger company at Jerusalem, we have the marks of our Gospel still as fresh as ever. For there the Lord is especially careful to verify His *manhood* — to show that He was none other than the Son of man risen from the dead. He establishes that first, by showing them His

hands and His feet, and then by taking of a broiled fish and a honeycomb, and eating before them And thus we see Him, *the Man*, before us still; once the anointed Man, and now the risen Man. And having thus approved Himself, He deals with them as men, acting as their Teacher, according to His accustomed place in this Gospel, opening the Scriptures to them, and their understandings to the Scriptures. And having thus sealed to them this fruit of the resurrection, the opened understanding, He promises them "power from on high," in order that they might be witnesses of the things which they had now learnt.

This "power from on high" is, of course, a description of the Holy Ghost, called also "the promise of the Father." But it intimates the Holy Ghost under a special manifestation, and such a One, too, as is still according to the character of our Gospel. In neither Matthew nor Mark is this Divine Gift of the ascended Lord spoken of. But in John, in a still more blessed sense, He is promised as "the Comforter" or "the Spirit of truth;" that is, the Witness in the saints of grace and glory, the things of the Father and the Son. These distinctions are quite characteristic. The day of Pentecost brought this Divine Gift from the glorified Son of man, and that Gift at once manifests His presence according to the promise here made: Luke's Gospel, which is our evangelist's first letter to Theophilus, thus ending with the promise of the Holy Ghost; the Book of the Acts, which is his second letter to the same friend, opening with the gift according to the promise.

And that book has been properly called "The Acts of the Holy Ghost." It comes after the four Gospels. And as they, or the ministry of Jesus which they record, had given the full, formal manifestation of the Father and the Son, so this book, which records the ministry of the apostles and others, gives the same manifestation of the Holy Ghost. The Persons in the Godhead are thus in due season declared, for the full light and comfort of the Church. Notices of this divine mystery, no doubt, there had been from the beginning, but the name

of God, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," was now fully manifested and published.

All this, as every thing of our God, is perfect in its season. All is perfection in the ways of His wisdom, as in the works of His grace. The Lord tells out one secret after another, bringing forth each in due season, and leading the soul to say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

But this only by the way. I have already observed that the notice which we get here of the Holy Ghost is according to this Gospel; keeping it, as it were, between Matthew and Mark on the one hand, and John on the other; the former giving us no such notice of the Spirit at all, the latter giving us still larger and richer notice of Him, under the title of "the Comforter," and "the Spirit of truth." But so, after this, down to the last sentence, the Gospel is still according to itself. I mean in what happens at the closing moments at Bethany.

To that well-known spot, a retreat for "the poor of the flock," as at "the backside of the desert" (Ex. 3), the fold of those whom He loved in Judea (John 11: 3), the Lord now leads forth His disciples. And there, while blessing them, He is parted from them, and carried up into heaven. He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And as soon as He had done so, and sealed to them this further fruit of His resurrection, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, where He sits, as "the Man Christ Jesus," till we all come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. till all be brought in to form the new man, the fulness of Him Who filleth all in all.

Our Gospel had opened with the priest of the family of Levi in the temple at Jerusalem, and now closes with the Priest, the risen Lord, in heaven. It was *the Man* Jesus, in His infancy, in His human relationship and place, that we got at the beginning; and it is *the Man* Jesus still, risen and glorified, and about to be seated in His honours and place in the heavens, that we now get at the end.

In this character of the Priest and of the risen Man, so fully according to the mind of the Spirit in Luke, we now lose sight of our Lord. And the closing view which we get of Him in each Gospel does strike me as very distinguishing and characteristic. In Matthew the Lord does not change His place. He is still here, still upon the earth, simply saying, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . . lo, I am with you." As though He were just the Lord of the harvest, ordering and strengthening His husbandry. In Mark, He is received up into heaven; but still, on the apostles going forth to preach, He is spoken of as present and working with them. In John, neither He nor they remain on earth, but Peter and John follow Him, and we lose sight of them altogether. But here, He is carried up alone, and there abides, as their High Priest within the veil, sending down the Holy Ghost to be with them here, as power from on high.

This is all quite in character. In our Gospel the Lord ascends as the Priest; in Mark He ascends to the right hand of power, in order to preside over and share in the ministration of His servants; in John He ascends as the Son of the Father, in order to introduce the children to the Father's house.

He was "carried up." The expression implies that some conveyance waited on Him. And indeed He had been thus waited on from very old time. When exhibited and spoken of as "the Glory," "the Angel of God," "the Angel of His presence," or "the Lord (Ex. 14, Ex. 23, Ex. 32; Isaiah 63), the cloud conveys Him hither and thither. It first took Him at the head of His redeemed people, to lead them in the way. Ex. 13. It then carried Him between the camps of Israel and Egypt, that He might be light to the one and darkness to the other, and out of it so look as to trouble the Egyptians. (Ex. 14. At times, it brought Him to take His seat in judgment upon His murmuring and trespassing congregation. (Ex. 16, Num. 14, 16, 20. And after all this, it took Him to fill His place in the temple (2 Chr. 5), as it had before, in like manner, borne Him to fill the same place, in the tabernacle. (Ex. 40.

Thus did the cloudy chariot wait on Him of old. Ps. 104: 3. And when the sins of the people had disturbed His rest in the midst of them, the cherubim bear Him away (Ezek. 1); and the cherubim were, called "the chariot of the cherubim." 1 Chr. 28: 18. Thus He was attended, on all these occasions, by His appointed chariot. And so is He now. He is "carried up."

On all those former occasions, however, He is spoken of variously, as I have noticed, or indefinitely, as "the Glory," "the Angel of God," "the Angel of His presence," and "the Lord." And, in the last place that I have mentioned, in Ezekiel, His likeness is "the appearance of a man." From henceforth, however, this Glory, this Angel-Jehovah, becomes stamped with the form and characters of man. It is the risen Son of man Who is now carried up to His, place on high. It is not merely "the appearance of a man," but One Whose manhood has been assured and verified. As such He now ascends. *The glory has taken His abiding form.* And as the glorified Man it is that we from henceforth, in the Book of God, see Him. In the vision of the prophet He is, after this, as the glorified Man, brought with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days, to receive His kingdom (Dan. 7); as such He stands, in the eye of another prophet, in the midst of the golden candlesticks (Rev. 1); as such (as He tells us Himself) He will hereafter be seen sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26); and as such, when all the judgment is passed, His name will be made excellent in all the earth. Ps. 8; Heb. 2.

This is a wondrous theme. It is *man* that has been thus anointed, and *man* that is to be thus exalted. The ranks of angels, which have as yet surrounded the throne, must open, as it were, to let the Church of redeemed sinners in, that man may be displayed as the appointed vessel of the glory in the ages before us. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Ps. 8.

When the priest Zacharias went into the temple, the whole multitude owned the power of his entrance there, and were without, praying at

the time of incense, as we read in this Gospel. Luke 1: 10. And when Moses went within the cloud (being thus, as by the veil, shut within the sanctuary of God), the people rose up, and worshipped, every man at his tent door. Exodus 33. So here, on this entrance of the risen Son of man within the cloud (Acts 1: 9), as within the veil of the true temple, the people without own the power of His ascension there, and again look after Him, and worship. But then it is here, and only here, that they are His own people worshipping Himself. "They worshipped *Him*, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

Their worship was praise. Such only was now the seasonable service. How could they eat the bread of mourners, while surrounding such an altar as this? It was (shall I not call it?) the feast of the resurrection which they were now keeping; and it must be kept with rejoicing. The first-fruits of the harvest had been accepted for them, and they must offer their meat-offerings and their drink-offerings with joy in His temple. Lev. 23: 10-13. They were waiting for the Pentecost, the feast of weeks, but Jesus and the resurrection was their feast; and it was only with gladness they could look on that accepted Sheaf of first-fruits waved before the Lord.

We have not here the same rapturous note of admiration as at the close of John. For all the writings may not be equally elevated, though equally perfect in their order, and divine in their original; as one star differeth from another star in glory, though all are equally in the heavens, which God created and made. Luke, like the others, is in his own character to the very end, as we have now seen. It is the Son of man Whom the Spirit traces by him, as it had been Messiah, or Jesus in Jewish connection, by Matthew; Jesus the Servant, or Minister, by Mark; and Jesus the Son of God, Son of the Father, by John. And this perfect Man was first the *anointed* Man, walking through the varied paths of this life, and in all of them presenting to God offerings of untainted human fruit, in such a Vessel as had never before furnished or adorned His sanctuary; then the *risen* Man, showing Himself to His own in His victory over death and the

power of the enemy, and in samples of some of the blessings which that victory had gained for them; and, finally, as the *ascended* or *glorified* Man, about to perfect in their behalf before the throne of God, and in the heavenly temple, till He come again, all the fruit of His life and conflict and victory, and to fill them with joy and praise for ever and ever.

Here we leave our happy occupation, tracing the varied ways of our divine Lord and Saviour. Oh, that it could leave the same *power* in the soul behind it, as it imparted *joy* to the soul engaged in it! But the heart knows its own secret causes of full and constant humiliation, and has well learnt the fitness of that word, "When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room" May our God, beloved, train our hearts to His own joys, which ever find their springs in the person and work of the Son of His love! And may He also free us of ourselves more and more, that Jesus only may be seen by us!

In closing these meditations I would again say, that the skill which is thus, with a little care, discernible in this and in each of the Gospels, is perfectly divine. It is indeed of God's own hand. Had each of the evangelists introduced his writings by a formal declaration of the design of it, and how it was to distinguish itself from the others, the wisdom and perfections of Him Who indited them would not have been so glorified, nor would the same exercise of heart have been so called out, as now it is by reaching this distinct purpose through the "characteristic exhibition" in which each of the Gospels abounds. But, as they now stand, it is the very harmony of creation that we listen to. "There is no speech nor language." but without these, they express themselves. Thus we see, that the very same Hand which fashioned the heavens, and gave them their voice in the ear of men, has traced the glories that shine in the different Gospels, and given them a voice likewise in the ear of saints. See Ps. 19.

But after all this, beloved, the gospel itself must be our object. May the Lord keep that fresh and immediate upon our hearts continually!

It is the gospel itself, the tale of God's unmeasured love, and which heaven calls the earth to listen to, that bears with it the real and abiding blessing to our souls. It is the entrance of the living God (God of all grace as He is, through the testimony of the Son of His love) into our hearts, that sheds abroad the light the liberty, the victory there, and is the seed in us of eternal life. As one has said: "A man may be captivated by this intellectual and moral harmony, and take much pleasure in tracing it through all its detail, and yet derive no more profit from it than from the examination of any curious piece of material workmanship. — It is proper that this beautiful relation in Christianity (and, I might add, in the Scriptures that reveal Christianity) should be seen and admired; but if it come to be the prominent object of belief, the great truth of Christianity is not believed. — There is much in Christianity that may take a strong hold of the imaginative faculties, and give a high species of enjoyment to the mind; but the most important part of religion in relation to sinners is its *necessity*. The gospel has not been revealed that we may have the pleasure of feeling or expressing fine sentiments, but that we may be saved. The taste may receive the impression of the beauty and sublimity of the Bible, and the nervous system, may have received the impression of the tenderness of its tone; and yet its meaning, its deliverance, its mystery of holy love, may remain unknown."

This is valuable to us. With all our knowledge of other glories and secrets, may our knowledge of that message of surpassing love be still the dearest, and simplest, and most intimate possession of our souls. The gospel of His grace tells us that our necessities have drawn forth the sympathies and resources of the blessed God. On such a truth may our hearts still dwell with lingering desires, sitting down "at that one well-spring of delight." It is in the faith of that that the life, the joy, the liberty, and the strength of our souls will be found. There is One Who has loved us, and given Himself for us; and that One none less than the Son of God. Such was the spring of Paul's life, and to such may we turn continually for light and refreshing, our hearts taking counsel there still the oftenest. And

when the last of us is gathered in, and all have come "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man," it is that we may be taken there, where with enlarged powers, both of understanding and joy, we shall praise this Lamb that was slain for the love that He had for us, for evermore.

May His grace keep us with uncorrupted minds and undefiled garments, dear brethren, that we may know Him only in this evil world, for His name's sake!

On the Gospel by Matthew.

In this Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ is eminently and characteristically in connection with the Jew. It is very fitting that this should be so; that is, that the New Testament should open with a formal presentation of the Lord to Israel. The way of God in the earth had contracted itself to that nation; or rather, He had separated that nation to Himself to be His centre round which to gather all the nations in light, allegiance, and worship.

For this is His way; bright and perfect as such must be. There is separation, and yet largeness: separation because He is holy; largeness because He is gracious.

The river, at the creation, had its source in the garden of Eden; but it was parted thence, and became four heads, to water the face of the earth. Noah and his sons were set in the new world, God's preserved election; but they were to replenish the world, and to hold it in government and service under God. Abraham, in a still further day, was called alone from the abominations that were overspreading the earth; but in his seed all the families of men were to be blest. And so Israel was God's people; His throne and His tabernacle were among them; but still they were to be the centre of divine government and worship for all the nations.

Such are God's counsel and way; separation to Himself, but largeness of purpose and grace far and wide, all the world round.

Israel being this separated people, divine counsels touching the earth or the nations centred in them. The light that revealed God, the customs and ordinances which bespoke His mind, and were the witness which He bore to Himself in a dark, revolted world, were in

the midst of them. They were the garden of Eden in their day, where the river which was to water the face of the earth took its rise. The Saviour of the world was to be their Messiah. The Bearer of life to men dead in sins, was to be the King of Israel. So that, at His appearing, He could not but present Himself, with the fruit and virtue of His presence, to the acceptance of this people.

The Scriptures of the New Testament, therefore, most fitly open with a full and formal proposal of the Lord Jesus to the Jews. And, accordingly, this is Matthew's subject; for Matthew opens this new volume of the oracles of God. He details succinctly, and yet solemnly and fully, the making of the claims of Jesus, Jehovah-Messiah, upon His people Israel.

This is what this Gospel by Matthew gives us. And, according to this, its contents are easily distinguished and arranged, as in the following parts.

FIRST PART. — Matthew 1, 2.

The first proposal of the Lord Jesus to Israel; that is, as the Child born in Bethlehem, the city of David; according to the prophet Micah.

SECOND PART. — Matthew 3 - 20.

The second proposal of Himself by the Lord Jesus to His people; that is, as the Light from Zebulun and Naphtali; according to the prophet Isaiah.

THIRD PART. — Matthew 21 - 25.

The third proposal of Himself by the Lord Jesus to His people; that is, as the Kin. just and lowly, and bringing salvation; according to the prophet Zechariah.

FOURTH PART. — Matthew 26 - 28.

The result of Israel's refusal of the Lord; for Israel did refuse Him - upon each of these proposals of Himself to them.

Such are the contents of this Gospel, and such their arrangement in their simplest form. It is the record of the trial of the question whether or not Israel would accept their Messiah. Other things, as we shall see in the progress of it, are looked at now and again; but the Spirit in the evangelist never loses sight of this great leading subject. And I would now, in some further carefulness of heart and thought, consider this Gospel itself in these its several parts.

PART 1.

Matthew 1, 2.

JESUS is born; but He is born to the Jews, as well as of the Jews. His genealogy is given to us from Abraham and from David, heads and fathers of Israel; and His birth is announced in characters which Israel could read as their own language. The Child born is "Emmanuel," and Jesus God with Israel, and the Saviour of Israel. "To us," in some sense specially, Israel might now say, "a Child is born, to us a Son is given."

Jesus was born King of the Jews, and in the city of David. Son and Heir of David; as we read, "Of the seed of David according to the flesh," though, in His full person, He was David's Lord.

The rights of the family of David were His; and those rights were founded in divine title, and full of majesty and honour in the earth.

In 1 Chr. 17 the covenant made with David, the promise made to him touching his house and throne, is announced by Nathan. Mercy is to be David's for ever, the honour of his throne and the stability of his house likewise for ever.

In Psalm 89 this covenant is cited; but there is added the condition touching David's children, that, if they were not faithful, they should know the judgment of the Lord. And we know how this came to pass. The promise made conditional on the faithfulness of David's children was lost by them and to them, as generation after generation, in the history of the kingdom of Judah, witnessed.

But discipline is not forgetfulness. The promise is suspended because of conditions broken by a faithless Solomon, or by a rebellious Zedekiah; but it stands good in God's faithfulness, and in the hand of the Lord Christ. In Him all the promises are Yea and Amen.

Accordingly, when Jesus was born, the Spirit, by angels and by prophets, recalls, after so many ages, the covenant at first announced by Nathan. This is done, if not in terms, in spirit and reality, by Gabriel's word to Mary, and then by the word of Zacharias. Luke 1. Jesus is introduced as the Seed of David, Whom the oracles of God, in 1 Chr. 17 and Psalm 89, had spoken of; Heb. 1: 5 identifies Jesus with David's Seed of 1 Chr. 17.

This is simple and sure, though another wondrous witness of the divine unities that are found in Scripture. And blessed it is to see light thus shining out after centuries of darkness, when the hand of the Gentile had been uppermost, and the honour of David had been in the dust. David's Seed is brought forth in Luke 2; and now, in Matt. 2, this Seed is presented in full form and character, the Bethlehemite of the prophet Micah. And being thus set in His place (the Bethlehemite, the Seed of David, and King of the Jews), the Gentiles come to Him. This was needed to give the moment its full solemnity. All the prophets had thus invested it. Shiloh was to be of Judah; but to the Shiloh of Judah was to be the gathering of the peoples. The King of Israel was to be the God of the whole earth. The Jews were God's people, but the Gentiles were to rejoice with them. The Root of Jesse was to stand for an ensign of Israel, but the Gentiles were to seek to it. And our prophecy from Micah speaks the like language; for, after telling of the Ruler of Israel that was to be born in Bethlehem, it goes on to say of Him, "For now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth." Micah 5: 2-4. We therefore get the visit of the wise men from the distant East, when this Child is born in Bethlehem. They come, though it be to Him that is born King of the Jews, yet to worship Him *themselves*.

Thus the Gentiles appear as before God in Zion, and things for a moment (a moment full of typical or mysterious beauty) are put in divine order. Israel is the head. The first dominion has come to the daughter of Zion. The Gentiles give place, and Jerusalem is sought unto by the ends of the earth.

All, after this manner, is done in full solemnity. Nothing is wanting to make complete this presentation of the Child of Bethlehem according to the prophecy of Micah. If the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem receive Him not, they are without excuse.

The rejection, however, was immediate and peremptory, sealed by murderous hands which the spirit of the world in the heart had moved, but which sought to cover itself by lies and hypocrisy. Nothing can exceed the iniquity of Herod. The throne at Jerusalem was, at that time, in his possession, and he will not part with it, though the title of another be divine. If he may hold it, he will not give it even to God Himself. This is the language of his acts. And like killer like people. Jerusalem, as well as Herod, is troubled at the word of the men of the East, and ready executioners of the work of death are found at his bidding. The priests of the Lord had once been slain, because they had helped David; the children of Bethlehem shall perish now, because David's Lord may be among them. The voice of weeping is heard in Ramah. Messiah the Bethlehemite is refused. Israel will not be gathered, and Herod will still be king, though Jesus be first an Exile in Egypt, and then a Nazarene in the earth.

Thus is made, and thus ends, the first presentation of Christ to Israel. All this is peculiar to Matthew; and I need not add how characteristic it is of that which I have suggested to be the purpose of his Gospel.

In looking back on these chapters, some things may give us a little further thought.

What force and authority, I may say, is in that one word "Emmanuel." Did the soul but duly entertain it, what power to displace all things else would be found in it! *God with us*, is a thought, or a fact, or a mystery, which might well claim authority to make room for itself, whatever else would have to give way. And this may witness to each of us how little we have known the

sublime, authoritative force of that one sentence, "They shall call His name Emmanuel."

The wretched man who shares some of the principal action of chapter 2, and to whom we have already referred, knew nothing of that name. Desperate, victorious love of the world was seated in his heart. Unseen things had been brought nigh to him. The world of spirits and of glories, the world that faith deals with, the world of God and His angels, had been presented to his eye and to his ear. The star, by the report of the wise men, and the oracle of the prophet, by the interpretation of the scribes, had been pressing that world closely upon him; but that world was a trespasser. Herod's heart refused to enter it; for it had learnt nothing of the displacing, supreme authority of that one word, "Emmanuel."

The wise men, on the contrary, had blessedly learnt it. The star commanded them. At its bidding they had risen up, and taken a long, untried journey, which knew no end till "Emmanuel" was reached. Their souls had found authority in the revelation of God. It had worked effectually in them. The intelligence and the decision, the victories and the consolations, of faith are illustrated in this passing sight which we get of them. It is a history which, in its measure, may claim a place with that of Stephen in Acts 7. Both are brief, but brilliant.

The Joseph of these chapters shows us the life of faith also; not indeed in the same earnest character, but in that principle of it which says, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." There may be fear and infirmity in Joseph; but the Lord will meet this with His provisions, as He met the decisive, victorious faith of the men of the East with His *consolations*. Joseph, hearing how Archelaus was reigning in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, is afraid to go thither; and God, in consideration of his fears, directs him, by a dream, to turn aside to the parts of Galilee. And, I suppose, many of us, in our little histories, have experienced the like tenderness and consideration of our weakness; when, through want

of faith, or heart for Jesus, we could not reach His elevation, He has, by His providence, met us on our level.

The scribes, likewise, of Matthew 2, may read us a lesson as profitably as any. The lesson, however, is a painful, humbling one. They exhibit the heartlessness of mere Biblical information. Out of the Bible they teach the poor travellers their way; but they take not one step of it with them, though it were to the Bethlehemite of their prophet. Those wayfaring men of God may go alone, for aught they care. Oh, the terrible sight which this affords, beloved, and the solemn admonition it has for us!

PART 2.

Matthew 3 - 20.

YEARS have now passed since the day of the Child of Bethlehem. The long season of subjection to His parents at Nazareth is over, His term of obedience under the law, as the circumcised One; and now, being thirty years old, He is coming forth as the Light from the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, according to the prophet Isaiah.

There is, however, an introduction to this second presentation of Christ to Israel, as there had been to the first. The Child born had His genealogy recorded from Abraham and from David, His *legal* genealogy, Heir and Representative as He was of the rights made sure to those heads of the nation by the covenants of God; and then He came forth, in solemn form presented as the Bethlehemite of Micah.

In like manner this Light of the prophet Isaiah is now introduced.

The ministry of John, the preparer of the way of the Lord, as Isaiah had spoken, goes before it.

The baptism of the Lord by the hand of John then takes place; for Jesus would fulfil all righteousness. He Who, as circumcised, had thoroughly honoured God in Moses, or under law, fulfilling righteousness then, would now (as God, in dispensation, was going from Moses to John) follow obediently, and fulfil *all* righteousness, the righteousness announced by the *Baptist*, as well as that demanded by the *lawgiver*.

Then we get His commission or ordination, under the voice of the Father, and by endowment of the Spirit.

And then the temptation; a necessary part of this great solemnity also, and needful to the introduction of the Lord into His ministry.

If the work which now lay before Him be redemption; if He be about to repair, yea, more than repair, the mischief which the first man had wrought, and which till other men had but witnessed and perpetuated, so must He personally stand where the first man, and all beside, had failed. Hence the temptation. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. The Spirit, Who had descended and rested on Him at His baptism, in a bodily shape like a dove, now puts Him forth to withstand the serpent, who is also the roaring lion; for the dove-like ministry of grace to sinners is one with the full defeat of man's destroyer. Jesus came to save sinners, and to destroy the works of the devil.

Accordingly, Jesus, in the very outset, and as introducing Himself to His work, withstands Satan. He proves Himself to be impregnable. Eve surrendered God's word to the serpent; Jesus withstands him by it. No attempt of the enemy prevails. The Holy Thing that had been born is still as holy in full manhood as He had been in the virgin's womb. He proves Himself not to be in the common defeat and captivity. He leaves Satan without any title against Him; and thus He *binds* him.

And this binding of him is the first great action of our Deliverer with our destroyer.

He then comes forth at once, to enter his house and spoil his goods.

In the due season He will be his Bruiser, as well as his, Binder and Spoiler.

He will *bruise his head on Calvary*.

Then, in the far distance, He will *cast him from heaven*. Rev. 12.

Then He will *put him into the bottomless pit*. Rev. 20.

And finally, He will *cast him into the lake of fire*. Rev. 20.

These are the ways of our great Deliverer with our adversary; and these ways He here begins in the wilderness of the temptation. How simple, and yet how glorious! How perfect in order, as well as mighty in action, from first to last! No one binds or bruises Satan but Jesus the Son of God. Samson typifies him as the Stronger Man entering the strong man's house, to spoil his goods; and all the saints will have Satan bruised under their feet in season; but Jesus the Son of God bound the strong man, and bruised the head of the serpent. These works were all His own, and His only.

And all this was introductory to His ministry. As having fulfilled all righteousness, whether under the law of Moses, or under the baptism of John; as owned and ordained of the Father, in Whose eyes the feet of this Messenger were to be more than beautiful; as endowed by the Holy Ghost, and as the Binder of the strong man, the Son comes forth to fulfil His course. John had now been cast into prison, and his service was thus over. And, in order that Scripture might get, in every thing, its full answer from Him, the Lord departs into Galilee, and comes and dwells in Capernaum, on the sea-coast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali; because thus had it been written by the prophet, "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." This great light broke forth in regions which bordered on the great Gentile world, destined as it was, in its full and final power, to lighten every land.

Precious, as well as perfect, all this is. And this great light was the Light of life. It rose as on the shadow of death; for the darkness which it came to scatter was the darkness of death. If ignorance be in man, it is ignorance which is the loss of the life of God. Man is alienated from the life of God, by reason of the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart. Eph. 4: 18. The Light that was now going forth was, therefore, a quickening Light. The Lord *heals*. He went about doing good. He preaches and He teaches; but

He heals also. Soul and body, all the need and misery of fallen man, were His concern. He would leave behind Him, wherever He went, through the cities and villages of Israel, the voice of health and thanksgiving.

He begins His service, as John had begun his, by calling for repentance; and that, too, on the warranty of the same great truth. "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the voice of each of them. And as John had made moral demands upon the people, suited to the repentance which such a ministry as his would challenge, so the Son, the Beloved, now teaches according to the repentance or newness of mind which such a One as He must look for. The Son, in His teaching, must needs go beyond the lawgiver, Moses; nor can He conform Himself to John, who had come "in the way of righteousness." And this we find in the Sermon on the Mount, the first and great sample of the teaching of the Lord Jesus. There we have morals beyond the measure of Moses, and a largeness of grace, a light of purity, a strength of victory over the world, a humbleness and a self-sacrificing, a goodness of all sorts, and details of mind, character, and conduct, into which the Baptist never entered.

This, however, is not preaching the gospel. It is the morals which suited the school where the Son taught. And with such teaching the Lord meets His disciples on the mount, and then comes down to meet all manner of sorrow, need, and suffering among the people, at the foot of it. The leper, the centurion's servant, Peter's wife's mother, and the whole multitude of sick folk that come to Him, are made to know the virtue that was in Him, and that it was a divine Physician Who had taken up their case. No medicine was needed. It was the Lord of life Himself Who was healing them.

And yet it was the *sympathizing*, as well as the *divine* Physician. He Who was now on His way to the altar as the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world, by the way, or on the road, was taking our infirmities, and bearing our sicknesses. This was Jesus in Israel.

Matt. 8: 17. He had no medicines, nor did He prescribe any care or treatment. He spake, and it was done. He touched the fever, and it fled; the leprosy, and it was cleansed. There was all this intense personality, so to speak, this full and deep sympathy, this contact as of eye with eye, mouth with mouth, hand with hand; and yet no defilement. It was *God's* knowledge of good and evil, and God's dealing with such things Jesus bore all our burdens and infirmities, whether in sympathy or atonement; but He was unsoiled in the midst of them all. He was in God's holiness apart from them, and in God's grace and power in disposing of them.

And yet He was nothing, and had nothing, in the earth. If He be addressed as a Master His followers must count on not having the holes of foxes or the nests of birds; for He Himself had not where to lay His head. He had, in undertaking our redemption, entered into the forfeiture of every thing; that forfeiture which man, by sin, had incurred. By personal right this Son of man owned every thine, He had never lost Eden, nor man's place in the creation of God, in its fulness and order and beauty.

But with all this personal title, having kept up His first estate where Adam had lost it; with all this, I say, He took nothing. He had lost nothing, but still He would have nothing. Judicially He was exposed to no privation or sorrow. The earth on which He was entitled to walk was not one of thorns and thistles; but voluntarily He took up all sorrow and privation, and walked as acquainted with grief all His days. By-and-by He will leave Himself in the hands of wicked men who come to eat up His flesh, though He might have the army of heaven, twelve legions of angels, to rescue Him; so now, with title to all things, He takes nothing "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

And yet, with all this emptying of Himself, He was above that, which was around Him. He stands over disease, and rebukes it. He speaks to winds and waves, and they obey Him. He commands

devils, and at His bidding they leave one place and enter into another, though without His word they could boast of their liberty to go up and down in the earth, and to and fro upon it. Job 1, 2; 1 Peter 5. He forgives sins also. Peter's wife's mother in her fever; the sea of Galilee with its winds and waves; the poor Gadarene in his fury; the palsied man at Capernaum in his sins and disease; all these shall tell of this supreme, universal authority that was in Him.

He is allowed to do His work for a short space (as through the time of Matt. 8), without challenge or hindrance. It was, however, but brief breathing time that the Lord of glory was given in this world. The Child of Bethlehem, for a moment, receives the homage of the Gentiles; but He is speedily, after that, on the road to Egypt. So the Light from Galilee casts out a beam or two across the darkness; but it would then have been put out in obscurity, if man could have prevailed. The world, in the Jew, proves that it loves its own darkness, and will contend for it, resenting the Light that was now shining. The heads of the people are offended in Him, because He was the Son of Joseph, as they said, the carpenter of Nazareth. They accuse Him of blasphemy, when He was forgiving sins; of being the Friend of publicans and sinners, when He was doing the works of grace; of being Beelzebub, because He cast out devils; of breaking the Sabbath, because He relieved the needy and the sorrowful one day as well as another; they ask Him for signs, though He was filling every moment and every place with signs that were clear as the cloudless morning or evening sky; they accuse Him of breaking traditions, when He was insisting on the commandments of God! What concord, we may surely ask, has light with darkness? The enmity may address itself to Him somewhat timidly at first, but it feeds itself as it lives and grows, and soon rages fiercely and fearlessly. And as it had been with Herod and Jerusalem, so it is now with the teachers and the cities. Jerusalem was moved, with Herod, at the word of the wise men from the East; the cities are now one with their teachers, in the rejection of the Light that was shining in the land. Jesus has to lament over them because they repented not. There is indeed a multitude that follow Him, but truly it was a giddy

multitude. Disciples are attracted from the mass of the nation, but Jesus had rather to bear with them, than to find refreshment from them; and we know how it ended between Him and them.

Full of solemn meaning it is to us of *this* day, that the Lord in *that* day looked on Israel as an unkept, unfed flock. "When He saw the multitude, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." And yet (though this was the judgment of the Great Shepherd) there was much *religion* then. Sects were numerous; feast-days were kept; and there was a great stir in all that which might have marked a day of public religious decency and devotion. That generation were soon to bear witness to themselves that they would not go into the judgment-hall of the Gentiles, lest they should be defiled, and be thereby hindered from keeping the passover. The money that was soon to purchase the blood of a guiltless Man they would not put into the treasury. Excision from the synagogue was dreaded, and Moses was boasted in; the Gentile was despised likewise, and the Samaritan was shunned. Ceremonial cleanness would be preserved. Teachers abounded, and zeal. And yet, under the eye of Him Who saw them as God saw them, Israel was without a shepherd, an unkept, unfed flock. The land was as a field which needed the tillage of spring. It was no *reaping* time then, as it ought to have been, where all this religiousness was, and when the Heir of the vineyard had come. In the thoughts of the Lord of the harvest it was rather a time for "the first works" to be done over again, a *sowing* time; and the servants had to be sent into the field with the plough and the seed, and not with the sickle.

But as it had been with the Master, so are the servants to count on its being with them. In sending out the Twelve, in Matt. 10, the Lord gives them, as with Himself, a ministry of healing. But He warns them of what lay before them, that they were to be as sheep in the midst of wolves; that they would be called before magistrates and rulers for His sake, find enemies in their own kindred, have to *endure* to the end, and be called Beelzebub, as He had been. He

knew the *circumstances* that must attend their *testimony* to God in such a world as this. The Sun with healing in His wings had risen, and Israel should have sung, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases." But Israel could not learn that song (the Israel of that day); for they refused to be healed. Israel "would not."

Strange this is; for man knows how to value his own advantages. He knows the joy of restored nature, and how to welcome the return of days of health and activity. But such is the enmity of the carnal mind, that if blessings come accompanied with the claims and presence of God, they meet with no welcome here. We love the good things that flatter or indulge us, but not those things which bring God near to us. And yet from Christ we can get no other. He brings God to us with the blessing. Surely He does. This is His good and perfect gift (James 1: 17), this is His way and His work in the world. He glorifies God as He relieves the sinner. If man has been ruined, God has been dishonoured; and Jesus does a perfect work, vindicating the name and truth of God just as surely and as fully as He brings deliverance and life and blessing to man.

This has ever been so, and must needs have been so, in the ways of God in this world. His claims in righteousness have ever been owned, as the need of the sinner has ever been answered. God will not surrender His honour to our blessing. He will secure both; be *just*, while He is a *Justifier*. Mere mercy is not known in His ways. It is mercy to the sinner founded on satisfaction to God. It is blood upon the mercy-seat; the blood witnessing that the ransom has been paid, and giving mercy full warrant to open all its stores. Righteousness and peace kiss each other.

This is the power and character of the cross; but this also is the principle of the ministry, the point now before us in this Gospel. When the Lord went forth Himself, as in Matt. 4, He healed all that had diseases and torments, He cast out devils, and cleansed the lepers. But with all that He preached, saying, "Repent; for the

kingdom of heaven is at hand." He published God's claims while He met man's need. And so now, in Matt. 10. Sending out the twelve apostles as to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He both commissions them, and empowers them to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to raise the dead, and to cast out devils; but He commands them, at the same time, to preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." God's rights, again I may say, were to be published, while man's sorrow was to be relieved.

It is, however, this very thing, this full and perfect work of the Lord, that the heart of man is not prepared to welcome. And yet therein is its glory. Man is blest, but God is brought near. This does not do for man. The manna, if it come direct from heaven, and that continually, will, ere long, be loathed; though it be white as coriander seed, and sweet as honey. And so Jesus and His servants will be refused, and have to suffer, though they dispense health through all the villages of the land. Strange it seems, again I say; but, the enmity of the carnal mind may account for it.

In looking at the *ministry* of the Lord now, as we did at His *birth* in the First Part of our Gospel, we still find things that are peculiar. All the circumstances attending His birth as the Bethlehemite, as we saw in Matt. 1, 2, were exclusively the things of Matthew; and so in this Second Part, he is the only evangelist who introduces the Lord's ministry as the Light from Galilee, according to the Jewish prophet; and he is likewise the only one who tells us of the limitation put on the mission of the Twelve, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (so strictly Jewish is he); the only one, also, who speaks of the kingdom as the kingdom *of heaven*, a title which bespeaks the dispensational or national character of the kingdom, rather than its moral, abstract character, which is conveyed to us by its other title, the kingdom *of God*.

The mission of John the Baptist, with the inquiry as to Who the Lord was, our evangelist has together with Luke; and, in considering

Luke's Gospel. I have noticed it. The Lord's grief over the unbelief of the cities of Israel I have also noticed in the same meditations on Luke. In Matthew this occurs at the close of Matt. 11. The Father, the Son, the headship of all things in Himself. and the family taught and drawn of the Father, in sovereign grace, and by the effectual light and power of His Spirit, are the objects present to the mind of our Lord there. He enters the territory. so to speak, which He occupies in John. The occasion naturally called Him that way. He had just been surveying the moral wastes of Israel; and from thence He looks up to the purpose and energy of the Father, in grace *quicken*ing souls into the rest which a life-giving Son, under commission from the Father, has for them. And this is more characteristic of *John's* Gospel than any thing else we get in Matthew. Full of interest I believe this to be.

The narratives or cases in John distinguish themselves from those we get in the other Gospels. In Matthew and Mark, I may say, there are no illustrations of *quicken*ing power; no cases in which that divine operation is made the subject or principal business. The call of Matthew himself, in Matt. 9, is that instance which appears most like to this. The cases are, generally speaking, illustrations of *exercised faith*.

In Luke we have illustrations of each of these; but generally, as in Matthew and Mark, of faith exercised. Still, as in Peter, in the Samaritan leper, in Zaccheus, and in the dying thief, we have cases of the quickening power of God, or of souls beginning to live.

In John, however, on the contrary, we have, I may say, only one instance of faith exercised, but many of the beginning of life. The nobleman of Capernaum illustrates faith; but, in all the other cases, it is the quickening which we contemplate. Blessed sight! In Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael; in the Samaritan woman, and then in the Samaritans whom her word awakened; in the sinner of Matt. 8, in the blind beggar of Matt. 9, and in the Nicodemus of

Matt. 3, 7, and 19, we see the beginning of life, or instances of the quickening power of God.

This distinction is remarkable; yet fully characteristic of each of the evangelists. In Matthew, as we have been seeing, the Lord is in the midst of His own people Israel, giving witness of Himself in grace and power, and testing Israel's condition. So, with some distinguishing beauty, I might say, in Mark. We therefore would not expect instances of quickening there, but cases of faith (where it was found as in a remnant), or the sad witness of general unbelief. In Luke the Lord is more abroad, more free to act as the One Who had come to man, as well as to Israel; and consequently we get there a larger exhibition of His work, a more various expression of instances, both of exercised faith, and of quickening power. But, in John, the Lord is the life-giving Son, the Word become flesh, full of grace and truth, giving power to sinners to become the sons of God. And this sets Him immediately and alone with souls, to do His blessed work of quickening. This variety is strikingly and beautifully significant.

In our Gospel the Lord was testing Israel. But He found them wanting.

The Light had again done its work in the land. It would fain have awakened from slumber, and then have cheered and guided, according to its proper virtue; but the darkness "would not." The Light, therefore, exposed It judged by exposing; that is, *morally* judged all that was around it; other judgment the hand of the Lord carried out. He did not strive nor cry, nor let His voice be heard in the street. He would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. He spoils the goods of the strong man; but, like Samson, He will not touch Israel. He came not to judge, but to save.

The figure of the unclean spirit going out, and then returning, and finding the house swept and garnished, dwelling there again with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, is His picture of the Jewish generation in their last and worst estate. Israel had become

Gentile. Their circumcision may be counted for uncircumcision. He had come to His own, but His own had not received Him. So that the mind of the divine Teacher takes a new direction, and the Light that had risen in Galilee, and would have illuminated the whole land, has now (in spirit or in anticipation) to cast its beams on other and distant parts of the earth.

It is thus as we open Matt. 13.

Here we get, for the first time, a full anticipation of the present age.

The Lord's action here, at the very outset, has meaning in it. He went out from the house, and sat by the sea-side. v. 1.

As yet the world of the Gentiles had not been contemplated as the field of His labours. The faith of a Gentile, so early as in the time of Matt. 8, had led Him to speak of those who should come from the East, and from the West, to sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob, in the kingdom; but that was only one glance of that eye which surveys all things, and sees the end from the beginning. It was not the fixed gaze of Him Who had foreseen and appointed the field of the world to be the place of divine husbandry in the gospel. But now, in chapter 8, that eye looks out to the world of the Gentiles, and fixes itself there; for there, ere long, the Spirit and the truth would be dealing with man, and the Lord of the harvest would have His husbandry there, and not in the cities and villages of Israel. "The field is the world."

And now, likewise, the Lord begins to speak in parables; a circumstance deeply significant of the moment, because this style of speaking was one kind of judgment upon Israel. It was as the raising of the pillar between Israel and the Egyptians; only Israel was now put on the dark side of it. The Lord, as He Himself tells us, was now speaking in parables, that that word of the prophet might be fulfilled, "By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive." Here lay the reason why He now began to use these dark sayings. They had their own secret, each of

them; but it was not given to Israel to know it. The Lord had a people who should be instructed by them, instructed in mysteries, mysteries of the kingdom; but Israel was left in darkness by them. Sentence of blindness of eye was beginning to be executed upon them; their *dispersion* was not yet.

The Sower, in the parable which opens this chapter, is *among men*. He has gone forth, and "the field" is the world." And thence, throughout the chapter, the Lord as, in spirit or by anticipation, among the Gentiles, tracing, in a series of parables, the history of His gospel in the world, or during this present Gentile age. He looks at the tare-field, the scene of mingled good and evil, such as Christendom now is. He then contemplates in the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, the prevalency of the evil thing. Then, in the parables of the Treasure and the Pearl, the preciousness, but yet the obscurity, of the good thing. And may I not say that this is graphic, to the very life, of what has come to pass, and which, with our own eyes, we see at this very hour? There is before us a field of mingled seed, the work of the Lord and the work of the enemy, with the prevalency of that which is of the enemy, and the obscurity of that which is precious and of God. What an anticipation of what we see, and cannot but see, all around us! The world of this day, that part of the earth which is the scene of the Sower's toil, is truly a tare-field, a field of mingled seed. But faith knows that a time of separation is at hand. There is to be a harvest, according to the further teaching of another of these parables.

There is to be the end of the age, when the net, which has been cast into the sea, shall be drawn to the shore, and the good be gathered into baskets, and the bad be cast away.

These things we learn here; and this chapter, in its structure, and generally in its materials, is peculiar to Matthew. Some of the parables are found nowhere else; and those which are common to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, take a peculiar connection here.

It was a distinguished moment in the Lord's ministry. "Things new and old" were before Him, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven itself, the rule of the God of heaven over the earth and its nations, was no new thing. Daniel had distinctly told of such a kingdom, and all the prophets gave witness to it, in their way and measure. But the kingdom under such conditions as the Lord presents it in this chapter was altogether a new thing, foreign to all the thoughts and intimations of the prophets. Blindness of eye and hardness of heart executed upon Israel, and, during that season, the seed of God, the word of grace and truth, sown in the distant "field" of the "world," there passing through such a history as this chapter gives it; this surely was a new thing. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the creation (Acts 15: 18); but some of His saints have to wait till the due time for their disclosure come; and such a time for the telling out of some of them was the time of this chapter. The Lord, for a moment, in spirit, leaves Israel; and we, by anticipation, are introduced to our own Gentile history.

The occasion, however, quickly passes. Ere the chapter closes we find Him again in spirit, as well as in action and reality, in the midst of His Israel; not speaking, as in parables, the mysteries of the kingdom by the sea-side, but teaching and healing in the synagogues round about His own country. With the lost sheep of the house of Israel His business was, and He must needs return. And so He does.

This fresh period of the Lord's labours, after this interval of Matt. 13, opens with a very serious event. Herod had put John the Baptist to death.

Herod's experience at this time is awfully significant of the state of man's heart. We read of him: "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him."

A bad conscience is a very lively, stirring inmate of the human bosom - a good one is calm and noiseless. A bad conscience is apt

to act hastily, taking alarm at any thing and every thing, fearing where no fear is. It was that which, in Joseph's brethren, called up guilt to remembrance, in a day of innocency and false accusation.

Herod's conscience had kept the image of the murdered John ever before him, and the most distant thing would easily associate itself, in his mind, with that image. The works of Jesus would suggest to him that John was risen from the dead; and the thought was hell to Herod.

For truly the resurrection of a murdered man must be intolerable to the heart of his murderer. It tells him that He in Whose hands are the issues of life and death has put Himself on the side of his victim. And thus was it, at this time, in the apprehensions of Herod. and thus is it to be, by-and-by, in the apprehensions of the world; for in the day of the manifestation of the power of Jesus, Whom the world is now rejecting, kings, mighty men, bondmen, freemen, chief captains, great men, and rich men, all will call on the mountains and rocks to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. Rev. 6: 16.

This experience of Herod has, thus, a voice for the ear of the world. For the resurrection tells the world that God in the highest has set Himself on the side of Him Whom man has despised and rejected.

The news of this martyrdom of John is brought to the Lord, and it is evident that He is moved by it. He enters into the bearing of it upon Himself; for it did bear directly upon His own personal safety. If the messenger were thus dealt with, what might the Lord of the temple expect? If John has been put to death what will be done with Jesus? Such would be the natural suggestion of His soul at this time. After this He said to His disciples, speaking of John, "They have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them;" and His spirit, I believe, at this time, was anticipating such an utterance; for we read of Him, that He at once retires to, a desert place apart. Matt. 14: 13. As we see Him in John's Gospel again and again leaving Judea, because the Jews sought to

kill Him (John 7: 1; John 10: 31, 40); so now, on hearing that Herod had put John to death, He retires; and from that moment, for a season; that is, from Matt. 14: 13 to Matt. 17: 22, He continues in distant corners of the land. He was aware of danger, and He would not heedlessly encounter it. He will retire from the reach of it, if that can be done without any sacrifice of what became Him. He, therefore, for a season, is not seen in His usual track, in Capernaum or the parts around it, nor in Judea or at Jerusalem.

And how perfect, like every thing else, is this path of our Master, during this solemn and interesting season! Let His personal glory be what it may (and we know that He was none less than God over all, blessed for ever), yet was He Man in all the proper sensibilities of humanity. Those touches and passages in His history, which bespeak the weakness of His circumstances among men, are as precious as the mighty works which He wrought for them in that strength which was divine. The weary Traveller at the well of Sychar is as welcome a sight as the transfigured Lord of glory on the mount. And at this season, from the time of chapter 14: 13 to the time of chapter 17: 22, we see Him in the weakness of human circumstances. His life is in danger from the hand of man, and He retires; while we track Him, during this time, first in a desert place, then on a solitary mountain, then in Gennesaret, then on the furthest borders to the west, then on a mountain again, then in the coasts of Magdala to the furthest east, then at the highest northern point, and, at last, on a high mountain apart, which, in spirit or in mystery, was heaven itself. Matt. 14: 13, 23, 34; Matt. 15: 21, 29, 39; Matt. 16: 13; Matt. 17: 1.

Beautiful, perfect, natural path for the feet of this glorious One; at this time the exposed, imperilled One, the David as hunted like a partridge on the hills

But though consciously in danger, and therefore walking in comparative retirement, not heedlessly exposing Himself, He shows us that He was not afraid of the enemy that threatened Him, nor unmindful of the love and service which, in grace, He owed the

people. For it is during this time that He answers, again and again, the challenges of His adversaries, and again and again feeds the multitudes that wait on Him.

How full of moral glory all this is! And this is the Jesus Whose path shines before us. He would not despise the danger that threatened Him; and yet He would not be disturbed by it so as to forget how to carry Himself either to friends or foes, towards dependants or persecutors. Precious fruit in season from this Tree, which had been planted by the rivers of water!

And yet there is more than this.

While on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, during this time, He is sought by a woman of Canaan. She brings her sorrow to Him. She gives Him her confidence.

She would use Him; just what love delights in; the very joy which He came into the world to gather at the hand and heart of sinners. She knows that He is both able and ready to serve her. The occasion is one of very tender and touching interest.

Apparently in spite of all her grief the Lord asserts God's principles, and passes her by. To the disciples he says, in her hearing "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And to herself He says, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." But she bows. She owns Him to be the Steward of God's truth, and she would not for a moment suppose that He would surrender that truth to her and her necessities. She lets God be glorified according to His own counsels, and Jesus continue the faithful Witness of those counsels, though she were to remain in sorrow still. "Truth, Lord," she answers, vindicating all that Jesus had said; "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

This was lovely; it was perfect in its generation; fruit of divine workmanship in her soul. She would be blest only in accordance

with the principles and ways of God's grace and government, of which she received the Lord as the sure, infallible Witness.

The mother in Luke 2 is quite below the Gentile of Matt. 15. She did not know that Jesus was to be about His Father's business. She would rather that He attended to her. This stranger owned that it was His Father's business He was always to be about; and she would let God's way, in the faithful hand of Christ, be exalted, though she herself were to be set aside by it. And all this was a beautiful witness of her subjection to God. Her words were deeply welcome to the heart of the Lord; and that, too, at a time when that same heart was saddened enough by all that He was meeting among His own people.

Man would have used such an opportunity for himself. If Israel have slighted Him, the Gentile has sought Him. If dangers from His own people have cast Him out, and strangers have received Him, surely He may change His place. Nature would have reasoned thus. A Syrophenician was suing Him, while Israel was refusing Him. Will He not pass over? Will He not cross the border? No. He was the obedient One. He will not, like another, go over to the king of Gath, or to the land of the Philistines. He confers not with flesh and blood, nor does He take His warrant from circumstances or from providences. He had been sent as the Minister of the circumcision, to confirm the promises made to the fathers; and though Israel may forget the voices of their prophets and the hopes of their nation, He cannot forget His commission. He is theirs, and not the Gentiles'; and this He lets this Gentile know: nor will He dispense virtue to her, or let His mercies reach her necessities, till she takes her proper Gentile place in subjection to Israel. Then, indeed, let her take all that she wanted. "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Perfect indeed this is. How full of moral glory the whole of this path, from first to last! Danger separates the Lord to sequestered mountains and wildernesses, but He does not shrink from the face of

the enemy through fear, neither does He suspend His services of love through resentment, nor forget the rights of others, though in the midst of wrongs and sufferings from them.

David, under like circumstances, as we see him in 1 Sam. 18 - 30, does not give us this. In many a way he behaves himself beautifully. But, with all that, David is no model. Sadly he failed then, admirable and amiable man as he was above many. His lies at Nob cost the blood of the priests; his lies at Gath the capture of Ziklag. He conceived vengeance in his heart, and his purpose had to be turned aside by the word of a woman - and he would have been found fighting against the people of God in the ranks of the uncircumcised, had not the hand of God swayed the minds of the princes of the Philistines.

And yet David is indeed among the choicest of the children of men. But the David of 1 Sam. 18 - 30 is not the Jesus of Matt. 14-16, though in kindred circumstances. They were, each of them, in retirement because of danger, and the threatening of the power that was, in their respective days, in Israel; but the two histories only prove afresh that *there is but One*. None but He for our sins, and none but He for God's glory. Good things may be *said* by them of old time, good things may be *done* by them of old time, but all perfection of all kinds is with Jesus only. And happy is the thought, welcome indeed is the contrast. None but Jesus! In Him only the sinner finds his relief, in Him only God gets His glory. And these thoughts arise as we track the Lord's path through this part of our Gospel. Long, if one may speak of oneself, has it been the admiration of the soul; and solemn and interesting it is indeed. But it has its end, and we must look at its end. This we reach in Matt. 17.

The certainty of our view of an object depends very principally on the light in which it is set; and our enjoyment of a prospect is greatly determined by the way in which we approach it. It was unbelief in Israel which put the Lord in the tare-field, as we have already seen; and it is the same which now puts Him on the hill of glory. We

ought to see this in order to appreciate His place in either Matt. 13 or Matt. 17.

Every step of His bright path of blessing on earth, and in the midst of Israel, left traces behind it of One Who had come as the Repairer of the breach. He was, as we may say, renewing His covenant with His ancient people, His covenant of health and salvation. But they "would not." The great man and the poor man, the king and the multitude, bore their several witness to this. They "would not."

In the palace of the king the harp and the viol and the wine were there, and the blood of the righteous. The sin of Babylon was found in Jerusalem, and more than the sin of Babylon. Herod's was a feast full of more horrid rites than those which drew forth the fingers of a man's hand, to write the sentence of death upon Belshazzar and his kingdom. The vessels of the temple were profaned there but the blood of the righteous was slain here. This was the voice from the palace. The solitudes of Caesarea Philippi were heard also, and they witnessed the same, that Israel "would not." "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" asked the Lord of His apostles, as they were there together. But they had no answer for Him which could tell Him that He had been received by them. The exultation of the prophet, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given," the proper exultation of Israel over their Messiah, was not taken up by the people. They may have high thoughts and honourable thoughts of Him, as Elias, or as Jeremias; but this will not do; He was not understood.

This was a great moment. We must linger here for a little. It is an occasion which we cannot well pass by.

No confession short of that of "the Son of the living God" will do. The people may have high and honourable thoughts of Jesus, as I have just said. They may speak of Him as "a good man," or as "a prophet," as Elias or Jeremias; but nothing of this kind will do; nothing less than the faith which apprehends and receives Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The reason of the need of this faith is simple. Our state of ruin in this world, ruin by reason of sin and death, calls for the presence of God Himself among us, and that, too, in the character of Conqueror over sin and death. And He Whom God has sent is such a One. He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the living God in flesh; come here for the very purpose of bringing back life into this scene of death, destroying the works of the devil, and putting away sin. This is the One Whom our condition demands. Such is our ruin that nothing less than this will do for us; and if we can in our own thoughts, do with anything less than this, we show that we have not yet discovered our real condition, our condition in the presence of God. All acceptance of Christ short of this is nothing. It is no acceptance of Him. He may be a Prophet, He may be a King, He may be a Doer of wonders, or a Teacher of heavenly secrets; but if this be all our apprehension of Him, our all is nothing

Faith has great and noble work to do in such a scene as this world, and in such circumstances as human life furnishes every day. It has to reach its own objects through many veils, and to dwell in its own world in spite of many hindrances. It is the things not seen, and the things hoped for, that it deals with; and such things lie at a distance, or under coverings; and faith has to be active and energetic in order to reach them and deal with them.

In John 11 we look on a scene of death. Such, as I have said, our ruined condition in this world really is. Every one, save the Lord Himself, seems to have apprehended nothing but death. The disciples, Martha and her friends, and even Mary, talked only of death; and, as far as the present moment went, they have no faith in any thing beyond it. Jesus, in the midst of all this, stands alone, eyeing life, and talking of life. He moved onward in the consciousness of it, carrying in Himself light in this overshadowing of darkness and gloom. But there was no faith there doing its duties; that is, discovering Him. Martha represents this absence of faith; just as the multitude do in Matthew 16: 14. She meets the Lord, but her best thought about Him is this; that whatsoever He would ask of

God, God would give it Him. But this will not do. This was not faith doing its proper work, discovering the glory that was hidden in Jesus of Nazareth.

The Son will empty Himself. He will take the form of a servant. He will be obedient unto death. He will cover Himself as with a cloud, and he hid under a thick veil, a veil not only of flesh, but of flesh in humiliation, and weakness, and poverty. But while He is doing all this He cannot admit the absence of that faith which does its proper work only when it discovers Him. He will not be in company with depreciating thoughts about Him. He looks for faith's discoveries of His glory, in the saints that He walks with.

He therefore rebukes Martha. Instead of admitting that God will give to Him, as Martha had said, on His asking Him, He says to her, as on the authority of His own personal glory, "Thy brother shall rise again." And instead of complying with her afterthought, that He should rise again in the last day, He says to her, "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."

How all this commends itself to our souls! The Lord will give no place to these imperfect apprehensions of Him. Needful it was, in the riches of His grace, that He should empty Himself; our sins could find their relief in nothing less than that. But right it is that faith should make a full discovery of Him under this veil of self-emptiness.

But, happy to add, if Martha represent the unbelief which comes short of a just apprehension of Jesus, Peter, on this occasion, in our Gospel, represents the faith which, of the operation of God, does the due work of faith, discovering the hidden glory. Blessed to see this. Peter had it by revelation of the Father. Flesh and blood was not equal to render this duty, or do this business of faith. It was a revelation to Peter, as it must be to all of us.

On learning the thoughts of the people about Him, Jesus turns to His disciples, and says, "But Whom say ye that I am?" And then Peter's confession is made. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he says.

Jesus was satisfied; nay, He was filled with delight.. The glory of a direct revelation from the Father to the spirit and intelligence of one of His own now shone before Him; and He knew the rapture of such a moment. "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," says the Lord; "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven;" and then He recognizes this mystery (that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God) as the foundation of all building for eternity.

Surely this was a great moment. It warrants our tarrying over this place of our Gospel for this little space. We have turned aside to hear the word of the loving Martha in John 11; and taken occasion to contrast the poverty and imperfection of that, calling out a rebuke from the Lord, with this word of Peter uttered under a revelation of the Father, drawing forth the satisfaction and delight of the Lord.

But this moment was pregnant with great results. The darkness of man touching the Son of the living God shared the moment with the revelation of that Son which the Father had made to Peter. All this gave character to this great occasion, and the Lord instructs us by it.

As the unbelief of the earth now stood in proof before Him, from the report which His disciples had brought Him about the opinions of the people concerning Him. there was therefore but a step, so to speak, between Him and heaven. Accordingly, He prepares His apostles for it; for a sight of the kingdom in its day of power and glory, when the One Whom the earth was now rejecting should appear in His magnificence. "Verily I say unto you," speaks the Lord now to His Twelve, "There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom."

After six days, in accordance with this promise, Peter, James, and John are taken by their Lord to a high mountain apart, and there they are given a sight of Him in His glorified body, with Moses and Elias in glory also.

Hitherto there had been no vision like this. Abraham and Jacob had visions of angels and of the Lord of angels; but before them His glory was veiled. Gideon and Manoah had also seen Him, and so had Joshua, The burning bush, the cleft rock, and the top of Pisgah, had put Moses in company with God. Jacob saw the ladder whose top reached to heaven. Moses and the elders of Israel saw the God of Israel with the heavens under His feet, as a paved work of a sapphire stone. Prophets had seen Him in mystic garments, Isaiah in the temple, and Daniel at the river of Hiddekel. Elisha had a peculiar vision; not of the Lord, but of the chariot and horsemen of Israel, and of the ascending prophet his master. And this, in one sense, was the brightest of any. It soared very loftily into the heavenly purposes of God. It was as the rapture or translation of the saints, as that will be in the day of 1 Thess. 4. It was an ascension. Still, however, it was not a vision of men in glory. Elisha did not see a glorified human body, though he did see, in a mystery, the heavenly convoy of it. He was rather in 1 Thess. 4: than in 1 Cor. 15. But now, on the holy hill, Peter, James, and John have a finer sight of his master, than Elisha himself had of him on the other side of Jordan. They saw Elijah in glory, which Elisha did not.

So that hitherto there had been no vision quite equal to this in our seventeenth chapter. Stephen's, in a day after this, may be said to exceed it. But there was no vision in earlier days wherein men were seen, as now they were, in personal glory, transfigured after the image of the heavenly. And, had we but more desire after the presence of the Lord, we could not live forgetful of this great occasion. The light of the holy hill, where the majesty of Jesus was seen, and where the voice from the excellent glory was heard, would cheer the heart far beyond what it is wont to do; if one may utter his heart for others.

And thus was it now, in the progress of our Gospel. The unbelief of Israel, that is, of the earth, sealed by the answer which the Lord received to His inquiry, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" led Him to heaven for a moment. For if the earth were not ready to welcome Him, heaven in its higher glory stood open to Him.

This, however, like His visit to the tare-field of Christendom in Matt. 13, is but for a moment. His business is with Israel and with the earth, and to Israel and the earth He therefore quickly returns.

But we noticed on Matt. 13 that the Lord, in spirit, continues among the Gentiles, or in this present dispensation of ours, all through the important series of parables which forms the material of that chapter. Something like this may now be noticed after this visit to heaven in Matt. 17. For, although the Lord returns to Israel and the earth, still, through this stage of His ministry, which does not end till we enter Matt. 21, there is something of the heavenly mind in Him. He descends the hill, and lays aside His garments of glory; but His words savour of One Who had heavenly impressions on His spirit. The light; which had shone forth from Zebulun on the cities and villages of the land, had now imbibed something of the heavenly glory; and, in its shinings from henceforth, some of that glory is seen in it.

Thus, in setting forth the little child, rebuking the pride of His disciples, the Lord speaks of the Church in her unworldly principles, and in her place and authority in the Spirit. And, in the course of these chapters, He comments in such a way on the law of marriage, He prescribes such a rule of perfection to the rich young ruler, He makes such promises of place and honour in the regeneration or the coming millennial kingdom to His servants, as let us feel that He had returned to the earth from the holy hill with something of the heavenly mind forward and vivid in Him.

This may be gathered. It is indeed so, that He is not glorified at the foot of that hill, as He had been at the top of it; nor does He make

the Church, or the heavenly calling, His subject. It would have been out of season. The mystery of the Church had to wait for other ministry, under the gift and presence of the Holy Ghost, and upon His glorification. But now, since there had been a momentary anticipation of heavenly glory, there is enough to let us know that the Light of Galilee had now gathered to itself something of that glory.

And, in company with this, I think we may perceive, that though He has come back to Israel His people on earth, yet He is now, in a measure, taking His distance from them. He is somewhat less with the multitude during the time of these chapters. He receives them, if sought by them; He answers them, if challenged by them. Surely. But still His mind appears to take its distance from them.

This distance, however, is not abandonment. The time for that had not yet fully come. A long and dreary time of His hidden face awaited Israel, but it had not begun in the days of Matthew 18 - 20.* We have seen Him proposed or presented to Israel as the Bethlehemite of the prophet Micah, and as the Light from Galilee of the prophet Isaiah. We have seen Him slighted and rejected, challenged and watched. We have heard His lamentations over the cities of the land, because of their unbelief. We have seen Him, for two several mystic moments, taking a place either in the world among the Gentiles, as in Matt. 13, or in the kingdom with the glorified, as in Matt. 17. But He has not yet done with Israel. They had been a long-loved people. The Glory in the day of Ezekiel knew not how to leave its ancient dwelling-place in the temple; God knew not how to withdraw His prophets from Israel, still rising up early and sending them, though generations had refused them (Ezek. 8 - 11; 2 Chr. 36: 15, 16); and now Jesus, the Glory of the temple and the God of the prophets, still lingers about the threshold of the house, and rises up again and again to speak to them.

*At the opening of Matt. 19 (v. 1) the Lord begins to leave Galilee. Since the time of Matt. 4: 12, according to Matthew, He had been in

those parts, as the Light from Zebulun and Naphtali; but now He begins to put Himself in the way to Judea. For, as we shall find, it will be in Judea, and not in Galilee, that He is to make the third and last presentation of Himself to Israel.

We have, therefore, still to hear Him pleading with His people, as we are now about to do in the third part or section of our Gospel.

PART 3.

Matthew 21 - 25.

THIS portion of our Gospel opens with the third and last presentation of Christ to Israel. It is according to the voice of the prophet Zechariah. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Zech. 9: 9.

All is done in full solemnity. The test of the heart of Israel shall be applied under every advantage; the way, let me say, of our God on all such occasions.

When Adam, at the beginning, was set in the garden to keep it, all was for him; there was nothing in his whole estate then which might not have pleaded with him for his Creator. So, afterwards, when Noah was set in the new world, he was there under every advantage of honour and happiness; the bow in the cloud being a ready witness to him, if needs be, that the Lord God was mindful of him, and would be faithful. Israel in the land of Canaan wanted nothing. "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done?" was the demand of the Lord in the face of His people. The hedge was raised, the tower was built, the winepress was digged, and the choicest vine was planted. And so now, in these proposals or presentations of Messiah to Israel nothing is wanting. The Bethlehemite was born according to the prophet, and He was "great to the ends of the earth," according to the same prophet, the far Eastern Gentiles coming to Bethlehem that they might worship Him. The Light shines from Galilee, from the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, according to another prophet; and a "great Light" indeed, as he had spoken, it proves itself to be, rising as with healing in its wings upon a people that were dwelling in the land of the shadow of death. And now the King promised by a third prophet appears, according to the word which had gone before upon Him, and in full

solemnity. The harmonies of many voices from Scripture may be heard now. Psalms 8, 24, and 118, as well as Zechariah 9, are in our hearing on this great occasion.

The moment was indeed full of wonders. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," is heard; for the owner of the ass acknowledged the lordship of Jesus, and set His title paramount to his own. The ass itself, as well as its owner, was in the power of the moment; for the foal accompanied the mother, or the mother her foal; we can scarcely tell which, and it matters not; both were brought, and brought together to Jesus; for there was to be then no trespass on the sympathies of nature. The kid could not, at such a moment, be seethed in its mother's milk. That moment was as the dawn of the millennial day, and the creation must take its part in the joy and power of it. The people, by their hosannas and their palm-branches, were telling of a happy day, a feast of tabernacles for the tribes of the Lord; and if the multitude thus exult in their hosannas, the beasts shall exult in their burdens. In the day of His temptation the wild beasts were with the Lord, to witness that Eden had not been forfeited by Him (Mark 1: 13); so here, the beasts of burden rejoice in their service, as though the kingdom were now entered by Him, and creation were delivered from its groaning.

Surely, again I may say, it was a moment full of wonders, a bright and festive hour indeed. This had not been so in the day of Samuel. The King loved then, as they went, for their calves were left behind, while they, the mothers, bore the ark to Beth-shemesh. 1 Sam. 6. Nature might receive a wound then, and continue in her groaning; but now, in the presence of the Lord of the millennial world, nature must rejoice.

How simple, yet how grand and brilliant, all this is! It is, however, but for a moment. All this is so, that, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, Israel should know that the shout of a King had been *near* them. The question was, Would they have it *among* them? But no; again they "would not." If the Bethlehemite

were exiled, and the Light from Zebulun shone in darkness which comprehended it not, the King shall be a disallowed, rejected King. He enters the city amid the wonder of the multitude. "Who is this?" they say. He fulfils the zeal of Messiah according to the psalmist. Psalm 69: 9. He heals, as doing the acknowledged works of the Son of David. But speedily, instead of shouts and rejoicings, insults and challenges await Him in the royal city. The enmity of the heads and representatives of Israel soon declares itself; they disallow the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel; they are sore displeased in the Son of David; and think only how they may kill the Heir of the vineyard.

What remains to Him now? What has He to do now? This is the rejection of the King Who brought salvation with Him, after the rejection of the Child of Bethlehem and the Light of Galilee. What remains? "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider." These voices may be heard now. "An end, the end is come," may be heard likewise. The barren fig-tree is therefore cursed according to the parable, it is now cut down. It had been spared for three long years, and it had known the patience of the husbandman digging about it and dunging it; but it was barren still. "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," is now said to it. The curse is pronounced, for the time of long-suffering is past; "and," as we read, "presently the fig-tree withered away."

Such was the solemn issue of this third and last presentation of Himself by their Messiah, Jehovah-Messiah, to Israel, and Israel's refusal of Him.

The disciples marvel at the fig-tree, which the Lord had cursed, so speedily withering away; and He then delivers the oracle about the removal of the mountain; a symbol of something still more strange and terrible than the withering of the fig-tree. "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be

thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done." All must give place. The mighty barriers which men have raised against the establishing of the Lord's power in the earth shall be set aside, and then men shall learn "that Thou, Whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the Most High over all the earth;" and "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills."

Bethany was His retreat at this time. Rejected, and therefore as a stranger here, He finds His place in the family of faith that loved Him in the midst of the world's enmity. And when He comes back again, as He does, from the village to the city, from Bethany to Jerusalem, it is not, as it had hitherto been, to renew and pursue His service of love and power, but to expose and convict Israel, and leave them under condemnation. This we now further see in the course of these Matt. 21 - 23.

In the parables of the Two Sons, the Wicked Husbandmen, and the Marriage of the King's Son, which He delivers in the midst of the heads of the people, on His return to them from Bethany, He convicts Israel of disobedience to all the ways of God, whether *the law*, by the *ministry of the Baptist*, or by the *grace of Jews*. He is then in full, direct collision with the great representatives of the nation, Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees; answering them and questioning them. And having gone through all this, having exposed them and silenced them, He sums up the evidence of their guilt, and delivers the sentence of righteousness. Israel is judged and left. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

He then goes out with His apostles to the Mount of Olives. In the language of the prophet Zechariah, He takes His staff "Beauty" and cuts it asunder; that is, He withdraws Himself from Israel; for He is,

whether they know it or not, their beauty, their glory, their perfection.

The time had fully come for this. The Stone had been disallowed by the builders, according to the psalmist; the three shepherds, Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees, had been cut off as in one month, according to the prophet; the flock, therefore, the Lord would now no longer feed, according to the same prophet. Zech. 11; Psalm 118.

It was also at this moment, at the close of Matt. 23, that the Lord may be seen and heard as looking back upon Israel, and His late ministry in the midst of them, as with the language of Isaiah upon His lips: "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering" Isaiah 50.

What an anticipation! The Spirit in the prophet seems to breathe this very moment of Matt. 23. Jerusalem is now as a divorced wife, put away for her transgressions. Her Maker had been her Husband, the Lord of hosts. In the days before these of the Gospel by Matthew, in the days of the judges, the kings, and the prophets, she had been as a woman loved of her friend, but an adulteress. The gods of the nations had been her confidence. Now her own God was refused. He had come and called, but there was none to answer. And yet, surely, He might ask, "Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?" Had He lost the power or forgotten the love which had delivered them in other days? Had He not been to Israel now, through their cities and villages, what of old He had been to them in Egypt, when

He dried up its sea, and clothed its heavens with blackness? His healings and feedings, all His doings of grace and power, could answer for Him. It was their iniquity and unbelief that had now separated between them and their Redeemer. And He turns from them now, as this wondrous chapter of Isaiah goes on to tell us, first to speak a word in season to His elect, and then to give His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair.

Wondrous indeed is this Isaiah 50. So is Zechariah 11. Each of them anticipates the Gospel by Matthew in its outline and structure. And now, at the opening of our Matt. 24, the Lord retires, according to Isaiah, to speak a word in season to those that are weary, His poor followers who had continued with Him in His temptations; or, according to Zechariah, as the Word of the Lord to be waited upon by the poor of the flock.*

*I may observe that there is, generally, through this Gospel, a great care and diligence to link with the voices of the prophets what is transpiring at the time; and this is a mark of the strong Jewish character of the whole action.

The disciples follow Him to the Mount of Olives. They will accompany Him to the same place again, ere long; and that, too, on a more solemn occasion. Now they wait on Him there, as "the poor of the flock," and He, as "the Word of the Lord," instructs them. Matt. 24, 25.

He discloses to them secrets of coming days, such secrets as concerned Israel. He tells them of the beginning of sorrows, of the troubles that should come on the earth, through wars, earthquakes, and pestilences. He tells them of the trials and perils of the faithful ones in Israel, whom He warns and advises and encourages, according to their circumstances. He forewarns them of the great tribulation, of the carcase and of the eagles, of the ordinances of heaven giving fearful notes of preparation; and then of the sign in heaven, the mourning of the tribes of the earth and of the coming of the Son of man. He tells them, moreover, of the gathering of the

elect from the four ends of heaven, and of the settlement of the kingdom under the throne of glory. And, by the way, He delivers, in the parables of the Ten Virgins and of the Talents, judgment upon those who had, during His absence, professed either to wait for Him or to serve Him; distinguishing between those with whom this waiting and this service had been a reality, and those with whom such things had been profession merely

Very full indeed this prophetic word is. It carries us, in thought or in faith, through the days of the trouble and the judgment of Israel, to the settlement of the nations under the throne of the millennial kingdom where the Son of man sits.*

*I read Matt. 25: 31 as a continuation of the history (which was interrupted by moral or parenthetical matter) from Matt. 24: 31.

Among all this I would specify one thing not, I believe, of such common observation as many others, but helping to maintain that character of our Gospel which we have seen it to bear from the beginning. I mean this.

The leaves on the fig-tree, the Lord tells us in Matt. 24: 32, give notice of summer being near; and so, He says, the things which He had been detailing would give notice, when they came to pass, that the kingdom was near.

Now, the things which He had been detailing were *judgments on Israel*, the sorrows and visitations of that people under the hand of God.

This is solemn. In the days of Joshua and of David, *victories* gave notice that the inheritance and the reign of peace were at hand. One conquest after another by the sword of Joshua told the tribes that the land would soon be divided among them; and one conquest after another by the sword of David, in like manner, gave notice to the people that, shortly, no evil or enemy would be occurrent, but that peaceful glory would fill the land. But now it is not such signs that

Israel is to look for. *Judgments*, and not victories, must now precede the kingdom or the inheritance; judgments or sorrows upon themselves, and not conquests of their enemies. For Israel has been untrue. Israel has now rejected her Lord; and, therefore, "these things," sorrows and judgments, must come to pass, ere the kingdom be theirs. Summer days are to come. The sunny season, the age of millennial brightness, will be for Israel and the earth; but sorrows and visitations are the leaves of the fig-tree which are, as its harbingers, to announce that age of glory.

The valley of Achor is now to be the door of hope Israel has sinned, as in the day of Jericho, and cannot go forward to the inheritance, save through the purging judgments of God. All the prophets join with the Lord in pointing to these same leaves of the fig-tree as ushering in the summer. Read Moses in Deut. 32; read Isaiah throughout; read Ezekiel in his twentieth chapter; Daniel at the close of his ninth; and Hosea in his first and second. These are just at present before me, as telling us the same mystery; that sorrows and judgments are Israel's way to the kingdom.

In looking back from this point of our Gospel we see, indeed, a ministry of patient, long-suffering grace. It was a ministry, however, well known in the ways of God with Israel. The Book of Judges, yea, the earlier books of the wilderness, Exodus and Numbers, the Books also of Kings and Chronicles, show us the same ministry. All this was the dresser of the vineyard saying again and again Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it." It was the Lord Himself saying, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing." But Israel "would not." This has been likewise seen again and again.

The sign from heaven, sought as it was at His hands by Sadducees and Pharisees together — for enmity to Him was strong enough to blend elements even so mutually repulsive as these — the Lord did not and could not give. He could not make Himself acceptable to the

world, or accredit Himself on the world's principles. And the uncircumcised shall rebuke the generation that sought this. The men of Nineveh asked for no sign from heaven, neither did the queen of Sheba. They took heart and conscience to God and His word. The preaching of Jonah and the wisdom of Solomon reached them, without any thing to satisfy the pride of man, or the course and spirit of the world; and they would rise in judgment with this generation, and condemn it. But in due time, though in a way they looked not for, a sign from heaven shall be given to them. They asked for it (Matt. 16: 1), and they shall have it (Matt. 24: 29, 30); but it shall be a sign of coming judgment a sign that the Son of man is on His way from heaven in the clouds to execute the vengeance written. "The sun shall 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."

As yet, however, and through this long, unmeasured age of His absence, it is the Lamentations of Jeremiah that are heard by the ear of faith, amid the desolations of Zion. The weeping of Rachel, heard in the second chapter of our Gospel, rises still more full of woe and mourning upon the ear in Matt. 23. And if that be grief which, as we read of it, refuses to be comforted, was grief, I ask, ever so eloquent, ever so full of the passions of nature, as on the lips of Jeremiah? Listen to him telling out, as in the person of the daughter of Zion, the secret of a broken heart. And yet, in the deepest utterance of that heart, how is God vindicated!

What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin-daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee? Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered *thine iniquity*,

to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment." Lamentations 2: 13, 14.

This is indeed the utterance of a broken heart vindicating God. According to Jeremiah, Jerusalem must account to herself for her captivity and banishment. Her iniquity has been her ruin. And so with the lamentation of Jesus over her. She had killed the prophets, and stoned the messengers of God, and after all, she "would not." Her wound is incurable, but herself has done it. Her iniquity has been her captivity, says the prophet. Because she would not, therefore she is not gathered, says the Lord.

PART 4.

Matthew 26 - 28.

THESE chapters give us necessary matter, the closing scenes of the life of our Lord here; His death and resurrection; such, therefore, as is common to all the Gospels, and such also as, to a general intent, is the same in all. There are, however, even in these common narratives, marks which are characteristic; such as I have noticed in my meditations on Luke and John, already referred to.

In Matthew we need not these marks in detached pieces of the narrative: it is the whole of this Gospel, as I observed before, which bespeaks its purpose, letting us know that it is Messiah's question with the Israel of His day that we are reading. It takes a well-formed character thence, as we have now seen; its structure and its parts leaving us without doubt as to its intent and object. Still we should find characteristic marks of a minuter kind, did we look for them: and many such I have had occasion to exhibit, while meditating on the Gospel by Luke. And I would now notice some further things which are peculiar to Matthew, and characteristic of him, in these last chapters.

I think we may observe that in neither Matthew nor Mark is the Lord presented so much in thoughts of His own personal elevation and glory as in Luke or John. He is seen rather as One that is consciously in *man's* hand, yielding Himself to that enmity which, according to this Gospel, had been at work against Him from the beginning. For the cross, needfully fulfilling the counsel of God, in the accomplishing of redemption, in another light was the fruit of Jewish enmity, the fruit of man's reprobate, revolted heart. In the slaying of the Lord Jesus man was doing, through his own wickedness, what God, in His own riches of grace, had determined before should be done. Acts 4: 28. And Matthew and Mark rather put that character upon this deed.

In Matthew and Mark, consequently, we get this scene much the same. And yet Matthew has some things which distinguish him.

For instance, he is the only evangelist who notices the word of the prophet about the potter's field. That field was bought with the price of the Lord's blood, and it was made the place to bury strangers in. And this had a meaning for Israel, with whom Matthew has to do. Judas's act was Israel's act. He was guide to those who took Jesus. Acts 1: 16. It was they who with wicked hands crucified and slew Him, as the apostle tells them, and their land is "Aceldama" to this day. Joel 3: 21. It is the field of blood, and the grave of aliens. It is a defiled land, and Gentiles have it in possession.

So the answer of the multitude to Pilate, in order that they might quiet every scruple of his mind, and that he might be led on to do with Jesus as they desired - this is likewise peculiar to Matthew. The people seem to have perceived the hesitation of the governor; and, to make sure of their prey, they say to him, "His blood be on us and on our children." And, I ask, can any thing be more characteristic? Does not this solemnly tell us that the death of the Lord, as looked at in Matthew, was the death of a Martyr at the hands of the Jews?

This is very significant. Surely we know it was the death or immolation of the Lamb of God, under the hand of God; but surely also, it was the death or martyrdom of the Righteous, at the hands of wicked men.

And, as still maintaining its peculiarity to the very end, this is the only Gospel which tells us of Jewish enmity pursuing the Lord beyond the cross. It is Matthew, and Matthew only, who tells us of the sealing of the stone, and of the setting of the watch, at the door of the sepulchre. This was permitted by the Roman governor, at the request and suggestion of the elders and priests of Israel. Pilate cared nothing about it; it was the settled purpose and bitter hatred of the Jewish mind; following the Lord beyond the grave; proving itself unconquerable. No coals of fire, though heaped on the head

again and again, reduce it, nor does death quiet it. His sepulchre must witness it, as His life and death have done. Our evangelist does not let us lose sight of it for a moment. It is that enmity which opens his Gospel, in the attempt of Herod against the young Child's life, and it is the same which nosy closes it, at the tomb of their martyred Messiah. Nay, His resurrection shall likewise witness it; for when the sepulchre has disappointed it, and, in spite of the seal and the soldiers, the Lord has risen, the chief priests and the elders are at the same work again. They had procured the guard of Roman soldiers to watch the sepulchre, and now they corrupt the Roman soldiers with large money, to tell a lie about the sepulchre. Matt. 27: 69; Matt. 28: 12.

Strikingly indeed does the Spirit keep the pen of the evangelist true to his subject throughout. Christ has been presented again and again to Israel, and that, too, according to their own prophets, and in the marvellous healing, blessing grace of His own ministry; but He has only drawn forth Israel's hatred again and again from the beginning even to the end.

This enmity of man to God is to be seen all along man's history; but, indeed, we get it exhibiting itself here to the full. "The carnal mind is enmity against God." No attractions soften it, no threats subdue it. At the beginning, Cain sins in spite of the Lord's personal pleading with him; Nimrod defies God's judgments; Pharaoh is proof against the solemn visitations of Jehovah's hand upon his land; Amalek insults the unfurled banner of the Lord; and Balaam hardens himself against the checks of God's Spirit. Absalom, and Haman, and Herod may stand forth as further witnesses of man; and so may the fierce multitude that ran madly upon Stephen, though his face, at the moment, shone like that of an angel. And, by-and-by, the apostates of the Apocalypse, at the close of the history, will be bold to withstand the white-horsed Rider and His army, descending in glory and power from heaven. Is not all this the witness of something incorrigible and incurable, which no attractions can soften, and no threats control? And a sample equal to any of these we get in these

priests of Israel, and in these soldiers of Rome. The veil had just been rent as in the presence of the one, and the tomb in the presence of the other, but they consent together to invent a lie, and falsify it all.

Man is desperate in his stiff-neckedness and enmity. Who will trust a heart which has been thus exposed?

And further still, as to this enmity of Israel. We read here, in our twenty-eighth chapter, that this lie of the confederate priests and soldiers (that the disciples came and stole away the body of Jesus while the watch were asleep), is commonly reported to this day; a fair token of the old enmity, and of its being continued through all generations of the nation, to this day.

It will not, however, do to kick against the pricks. It is but self-destruction. Jesus rises on the third, the appointed, day; and His resurrection is judgment on His enemies. It tells us this, that He with Whom are the issues of life and death, has put Himself on the side of the world's Victim, on the side of Him Whom man has cast out and refused. It tells us that there is a question between God and the world about Jesus; and the end of that question must be *judgment*, the judgment of that which has arrayed itself against God. Therefore it is written, "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; *whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.*" Acts 17.

This is the power and fruit of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus which we get in our Gospel. A pledge of this is given in the opening of Matt. 28. The angel rolls back the sealed stone. It bore the official signet, that the purpose might not be changed; and who will dare to touch it? It would be death to any man. But He that sat in the heavens laughed it to scorn. The angel sits in triumph upon it, and puts the sentence of death into the keepers of it. Israel had set God's sure Stone, His elect, tried Stone, at naught, and had chosen for themselves one which bore another seal; but this in which they

trusted is now set at naught by God; for it is not the Rock of God's people, as they may now themselves be judges. And the full fruit of this pledge shall be brought forth in that day, when the enemies of Jesus shall be made His footstool, and the falling of the disallowed stone shall grind to powder. Matt. 21: 42-44; Matt. 22: 44.

This is the voice of the resurrection, as we read it in Matthew. Of course I need not say how it has other voices which faith listens to; how it tells of remission of sins, and how it pledges, like a first-fruits, the harvest in the day of the rising and ascending heavenly family. But here, in Matthew, it speaks of *judgment*. It is as the budding rod of Numbers 17, which was brought forth, as a living thing, from the presence of God, to silence the murmuring, rebellious camp of Israel.

It is only in Matthew that we get this scene at the sealed stone; but that, of course, because it is only in Matthew that we get the sealed stone itself, as we saw before.

But how perfect in the unity of the whole Gospel this is! It is the Gospel of Israel's enmity to Messiah, and their rejection of Him; and here that enmity receives the full pledge of its coming judgment in the day of the power of Him Whom they had rejected.

But further. Judgment of His enemies is to be followed by the seating of Himself in the place of power and dominion. The judgment is to make way for the glory. Accordingly, the resurrection of the Lord in this Gospel closes by showing Him to us in that place; and this is the only Gospel that does so. Here only do we hear the risen Lord using these words, when speaking to His apostles: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

This is the exaltation and lordship of the risen Jesus. The conversion of the nations, and the gathering of the whole earth, the whole

Gentile world, in obedience to Him, is here assumed; and this, too, as the fruit of that apostleship which the Lord had already ordained; an apostleship *Jewish* in its character; for it is to His *Twelve* that He commits this ministry.

This, therefore, is a gathering of the nations to the risen Jesus, as the Lord of Israel. And thus, in this last chapter, the Lord in resurrection "resumes His Jewish relations," and, through those relations, His connection with the whole earth.

He witnesses universal lordship as in His hand, power both in heaven and in earth; and thereupon He makes His claim to the discipleship and obedience of all nations. We have nothing of the effect of the resurrection upon heavenly places here, nothing of the mystery of the glorified family. It is only Jesus exalted, and exalted as Messiah; and, upon that, the discipling of the whole earth, on the testimony and teaching of the Jewish apostleship. It is the Lord returned to the earth, for the ends of forming a people for His name there, and there displaying His kingdom. The ascension is not seen here. It is only the *risen*, not the *ascended*, Christ we get here; and therefore the women may hold Him, and worship Him, though, in John's Gospel, Mary must not so much as touch Him (John 20: 17); for there He was on His way to the Father. His resurrection led only to His ascension there; the earth was only a stage to heaven. Here it is *the end* of His glorious, triumphant journey.

How consistent with the purpose of the Spirit of God in our evangelist all this is! Jewish enmity and unbelief still work, and keep this condition of things, this headship of the nations in Jesus their Messiah, unrealized. But the promises of all the prophets who have spoken in God's name from the beginning shall be made good; the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established, and all nations shall flow unto it; and the rights of Jesus-Messiah be vindicated in sovereign power. The "mercies of David" are "sure," made sure by the resurrection which we are contemplating (Acts 13: 34); and He

shall reappear, and claim them, and enjoy them, and exercise them, through the everlasting, millennial age.

The Seed of David, all faithfulness and truth as He is, shall have His rights, and His people, all wretched and unbelieving as they have been, and still are, shall be made willing. As yet, as it is written of them, they "would not;" but, by-and-by, as it is again written of them, they shall be made "willing." Matt. 23: 37; Psalm 110: 3. And then shall the promises all be established.

But we have a still further and very wondrous pledge of this blessing that is to be the portion of Israel and of Jerusalem in coming days of Messiah's glory and power. And Matthew, in full consistency with his whole Gospel, is the only evangelist that gives it to us.

He records the following great fact in these closing chapters; that after the Lord had yielded up His life on the cross, "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

This was a marvellous event, and as significant as it was marvellous.

Graves were opened as the fruit of the triumph of the Lord's death; and then these opened graves yielded up bodies of saints after His resurrection; and then these risen saints went and showed themselves in the holy city.

What glory for Jesus! What a publishing of the full victory of His death! If the veil of the temple yielded then, so did the graves of the saints. Heaven delighted to own that victory, and hell was forced to own it!

But, if this were glory to Jesus, what grace was it to Jerusalem!

A special message was sent to Peter, by the angel of the same risen Lord: "Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth

before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him." And tender and considerate that was; for Peter needed a special pledge at the hand of his denied Master. And so a special, a very special and marvellous pledge, in like grace, is here given to Jerusalem, when these first-fruits of the Lord's resurrection, of His triumph over sin and death, are thus borne to her.

And she is called "The Holy City." Still excellent wonders of grace indeed! Jerusalem takes from the pen of our evangelist her title of honour. This is the city over which, a day or two since, the Lord had wept, the city out of which (He had lately testified) a prophet could not perish. He had withdrawn Himself from it leaving it in guilty desolation. He had, a few hours before, been crucified there; and by its own doings, it had earned for itself the title of Sodom and Egypt.

Rev. 11: 8. But now it is "the holy city." In the counsel of grace, and in the language of the Spirit, Jerusalem is "The Holy City."

What a pledge of the cleansing of that fountain which had now been opened, as prophets speak, even for Jerusalem! What an earnest was this of that day when the captivity of Zion shall be brought again, and this speech shall be used in the land of Judah, "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness." Jer. 31: 23.

The grace of those words, "Beginning at Jerusalem," has been commonly admired, and properly so; that when the risen Lord was sending forth to all the world the tidings of salvation in the remission of sins, He would have it first declared in the guilty city, the bloody Jerusalem. But we need scarcely wonder at that, since we have before it this wondrous and glorious pledge of grace — the very first-fruits of our Lord's triumphant resurrection sent to Jerusalem as "the holy city"!

But all the prophets tell us of this grace that aboundeth, and of Israel's final blessing through it.

The glory, in Ezekiel, has to leave the city at the beginning, because of the abominations that were done there; but, at the last, it returns. And now, as we see, the glory in the Gospel by Matthew does exactly the same. Jesus is the glory. He leaves the city; but He leaves sure, infallible tokens of His return in due season. Thus Ezekiel and Matthew are together; so Isaiah and Matthew are together. The divorced wife of Isaiah became, in due time, a joyful mother of children. And here, in Matthew, we hear the same. Jerusalem is left by the Lord, as one put away and desolate, in Matt. 23; but at the last, in Matt. 28, her apostleship of twelve will disciple all nations. See Isa. 50 and 54. What harmonies! In the ways of the Lord is continuance, and Israel shall be saved. Isa. 54: 5.

The light; of the prophets rises and shines again, after so long a time, in the evangelists. The glory in Ezekiel, and Jesus in Matthew, take the same journeys; the Jerusalem of Isaiah is the Jerusalem of our evangelist. We might not have expected this, but so we find it. And as we thus listen to the voices of prophets and evangelists, as in concert, we may remember those two happy lines

"In vetere Testamento novum latet,
In novo Testamento vetus patet."

The lights of God which sweetly dawn
In earliest books divine,
As morning hours to noonday lead,
Along the volume shine.
'Tis but the same, tho' bright'ning sun,
Which clearer, warmer glows;
The clouds which veiled his rising beam,
Fly ere the evening close.

So consistent, as well as rich; so changeless, as well as full, is the grace of God in all His purposes, and those oracles of God which record those purposes. "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour," utters the prophet; and the Jesus of our evangelist is the God of Israel thus hiding Himself, turning His back

on Jerusalem for a time, and saying, "Ye shall not see Me." Isaiah 45: 15; Matt. 23: 39.

Such, I doubt not, is the bearing of our Gospel generally, and of the closing part of it, which I have now been looking at, particularly.

I may say it is a very complete and needful and wondrous lesson in the way of our God that we sit down to read in this Gospel. Jewish enmity we have watched and tracked from the beginning of it to the end of it. It proved to be unwearied, relentless, true to itself, refusing to yield to any entreaty, or to surrender itself on any terms. It pursued the Lord at His birth, throughout His life, up to His death, in His grave, after His death, and, as our evangelist further shows us, "until this day."

It rejected Him in every form in which He could present Himself. He was again and again introduced to His Israel by their own prophets, but they would not know Him.

In the course of all this fearful exhibition of unbelief in Israel, the Spirit, by our evangelist, takes occasion, by reason of this enmity, to glance, for a moment, at the dealing of God with the Gentiles (as we saw in Matt. 13); and then, for another moment (as we saw in Matt. 17), to anticipate the kingdom in its heavenly glory; for these things are the results, settled surely in divine grace and sovereignty, of this enmity.

And then, at the close, our evangelist is led, by the same Spirit, to give intimations of the judgment which is to come upon this enmity, and also of that abounding grace which is to gather and to bless Israel in the last days of the glorious millennial kingdom.

May I not, therefore, say of it, that it is a complete and wondrous scripture? Marvellous indeed, that such treasures of wisdom and knowledge should be found in one short book! But it is God's, and who teacheth like Him? "What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." And sure I am, "if we wait patiently on the Lord, all

difficulties of Scripture are inlets to light and blessing." This has been said by another, and I think I can say, I have found it so though the waiting upon Him has been cold and feeble. And the heart further bows to another saying: "Spiritual conceptions dazzle and illuminate and cheer the mind, before they guide and content it; and we can never teach with the same vigour those truths which we only see and enjoy, as we do those by which we are guided and controlled."

MARK

Introduction.

IN the various and fruitful light of Scripture what fresh wonders do, at times, cast themselves forth under the eye of the soul! Its seed is in itself, like the trees of Eden. Its witness is in itself, like all the works of God. Its honours and its virtues are all its own — made ours, indeed, only by the power of the Holy Ghost. But such it is. Its worth and its excellency proceed from itself; and we want only the faith that walks in the light of it, apprehending and enjoying Him Whose wisdom and grace it reveals to us.

That each of the four Gospels has its own character and purpose, under the Spirit of God, is now sufficiently familiar to us. And, indeed, this was a judgment among the people of God from the earliest days of Christianity. They perceived then, as we do now, variety in unity; so that some of them said, "It is not so properly four Gospels that we have, as a four-sided Gospel." The one life is seen in different relations — the same Jesus passes through the same scenes and circumstances, in divers characters.

This is variety in unity. And this leads me to suggest that, in like manner, the Book of God has also unity in variety. We see our world in all the parts of it, and ourselves in all the persons of it. We listen, for instance, to the grace which addresses us as sinners, and learn ruin and redemption now, as Adam learnt them in the day of Genesis 3. When putting on the righteousness of God by faith we find ourselves in the family and fellowship of Abraham, as in Genesis 15. At the table of the Lord, spread in the midst of the redeemed every resurrection-day, we sit in one spirit with the congregation of

God, as in Exodus 12. In the conflict of flesh and spirit we not only see what manner of people the saints in Paul's day were: but we read our own well known every-day experience.

Thus we are at home throughout the whole Volume, tracing our own world in all the scenes of it, and ourselves in the actors. And this is unity in variety. Such is the wondrous character of the Book.

Thousands of years are but one and the same day. The Book is one, though Moses and John, the earliest and the latest writers in it, were separated by centuries and centuries; and though kings and fishermen, scribes and herdmen, prophets and publicans, separated by all the habits of human life and human circumstances, were called to put their hand to it.

It is a Book of wonders, but the Book itself is a principal wonder, as this may show us. Its naturalness and its beauty are, with all this, admirable beyond expression. This quality of the Book of God once reminded another of a striking analogy in the kingdom of nature. "It is," he said, as "a noble tree, of which the inward energy, the freedom of the sovereign vital power, produces a variety of forms, in which the details of human order may appear to be wanting, but in which there is a beauty which no human art can imitate."

True indeed; and true also is what he adds after contemplating the materials which form and furnish this Book. "All combine to crown with divine glory the demonstration of the origin and authorship of the Book which contains these things."

May meditation on it be mixed with faith, that the soul may be profited while the heart is charmed!

On the Gospel by Mark.

This Gospel, which succeeds that by Matthew, would, as a history of events, seem, at first sight, to be only a shorter account of the same circumstances; but, if the wakefulness of the eye be a little strengthened, the distinctness that attaches to it, and gives it its character, *will* not fail to be perceived.

The opening of it would seem to give it the last place in the series or succession of the four Gospels. But again, on a closer inspection of it, it *will* be deemed very properly to hold, as it does, the *second* place.

We have in it no genealogy of the Lord Jesus at all, either divine, human, or Jewish. We are introduced to Him at once in His manhood. We have no account of His birth, nor of the precursors of His birth; neither is mention made of His early days passed in subjection to His parents, or under the law; much less of His incarnation. All this, glorious and precious as it is, is left with the other evangelists.

John tells us of the incarnation. "The Word became flesh." This is the first and highest thought. This gives the Lord to us as He was divinely, or from everlasting.

Luke then gives us the fact of His coming into this world, and relates the manner of that coming. He tells us of the birth by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. And then he leaves us in sight of Him, for a little while, growing in wisdom and stature, as in the midst of family circumstances, or at home at Nazareth in Galilee.

Matthew, taking up the wondrous tale in his turn, shows us this Child born, and this Son given, in His solemn presentation to His people Israel. Being come, Immanuel, God and man in one Person,

He is presented in His rights and claims as the promised Governor out of Bethlehem-Judah.

Mark then, passing all this by, shows Him to us in manhood at once. His eternal glory; His incarnation; the manner of His entering into the flesh and the world; the claims which were made for Him by voices of prophets and sights from heaven, as soon as He got here; all is passed. He Who was in the beginning; He Who was, in due time, born in Bethlehem; He Who, as a Child, had to be taken by flight into Egypt; Who afterwards grew up in grace and in years at Nazareth, and, at the age of twelve, talked with scribes and doctors in the temple; such a One is passed by, and, at the very first moment of our Gospel, He is seen by us as girded in full strength and manhood for service. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" are Mark's first words.

So then, as I observed, this Gospel might seem to occupy the last place in the order of the four. But this is only a first impression.

Characteristically, this Gospel is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus as a *Servant*, or as in ministry. As such it opens, as such it maintains itself throughout, and as such it closes.

But we are not to say of our Lord that He is *our* Servant. He is ever serving us, it is true; nevertheless, He is not our Servant, but God's. To speak of Him as our Servant, as one once hinted to me, would be to make Him subject to our command, which could not be. So that, though in infinite grace He serves us, He is, all the while, God's Servant, and not ours.

And hence it is that we can trace, in this Gospel, so many minuter strokes and touches, such as adorn and perfect a life of service, which has its ornaments as well as its substance, its tenderness and considerateness as well as its devotedness and self-sacrifice.

I have already observed that, generally, the materials of Mark are the same as those of Matthew. The Lord is doing the same things, and is

seen in the same circumstances. There is, however, this difference in purpose — in Matthew He is *testing* Israel; here He *is serving* Israel.

Accordingly, in Matthew, the Lord is introduced in all due form, again and again, that every advantage might be given them, while it was under proof whether Israel would accept Messiah or not.

In Mark there is the absence of all form and ceremony. There is no solemn introduction of the Lord, as the Gospel opens, beyond the things that were needed in order to set Him at His work; and, as soon as He is at His work, He passes from one service to another with all diligence. And these distinctions have real beauty in them. For service, in its very nature or genius, is informal and desultory. It answers occasions as they rise. It does its work, rather than sets itself to do it. But, in testing Israel, the Lord in Matthew carefully and duly sets Himself forth in forms foretold by their prophets; assuming, in the midst of them, all those characters which realized before them the words of their own Scriptures.

This variety is, surely, a part of the perfection that attaches to this Book. The One Whom we get in each of the Gospels is carried through the same scenes and circumstances, because the history is true; but the Spirit lets Him pass before us, through those scenes, in different characters, all consistent, but one as well as another is needed, in order to present Him in His fulness. Here, in Mark, He is the Jesus Who, having come not to be ministered unto but to minister, "went about doing good."

The penman of this Gospel is, personally, as I may say, in company with his Gospel. It is Mark, or Mark-John, whom Paul and Barnabas had "to their minister;" and of whom Paul, on another occasion, said, "He is profitable unto me for the ministry." And as the apostle John was a fit penman to tell us of Him Who lay in the Father's bosom, because he himself lay in the Lord's bosom, so we may observe here a like fitness in the *penman* to the *subject*.

I would now take up this Gospel, distinguishing the parts in which it naturally presents itself, and then noticing what is characteristic.

FIRST PART. - Mark 1 - 10.

These chapters give us the Lord's services in the midst of His people Israel.

SECOND PART. — Mark 11 - 13.

These chapters give us the Lord's presentation of Himself, as their King, to His people,; the immediate results of this; and then His prophetic word upon the times and fortunes of Israel, who had now rejected Him.

THIRD PART. - Mark 14, 15.

This portion of our Gospel gives us the scene of our Lord's last sufferings.

FOURTH PART. — Mark 16.

This last chapter shows our Lord to us in resurrection.

PART 1.

Mark 1 - 10.

"THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

Nothing can be simpler, more thoroughly divested of all ceremoniousness and form, than this; and fully does it suit One Who was coming forth in service.

The whole Person is verified. But this is done without solemnity of any kind. For it is not the Lord's person that is about to be before us, nor is it His rights, but His ministry. The introduction which He is to receive here is, therefore, only that which is necessary to set Him at His gracious and blessed task.

John the Baptist announces Him as He Who was coming to baptize; that is, coming forth in ministry. But Mark does not add, as Matthew and Luke do, "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor" — because that action belongs to the Lord in His *judicial*, rather than His *ministerial*, place, and was, therefore, not within the purpose of this Gospel.

We then read of the Lord's own baptism at the hand of John; and then of His temptation; each of these things being a needful part of His introduction to ministry.

In our evangelist's account of the temptation there is one circumstance that is peculiar to him. He tells us, speaking of the Lord in that scene, that "He . . . was with the wild beasts."

This is full of interest and very fitting it is to put this mark of dignity, personal dignity, at once (ere the course of services began) upon the One Who, however He might humble Himself to the form of a servant, was none less than *Jehovah*, and the *unspotted, stainless Son of man*. He "was with the wild beasts." It was a dreary spot in itself, a wilderness. But, at this time, there was a Man there

Who had never forfeited Eden. Jesus had man's original place in the creation of God. He was in the midst of the creatures of God's hand, as Adam had been in the days of his uprightness. In His presence the wild beasts were as though they were not wild, as they had been in Genesis 2.

There was no forfeiture of Eden in the person of this Son of man. The temptation now comes, as in Genesis 3, to let it be known that He will keep His first estate, as Adam did not.

The serpent enters upon the scene a second time, and the temptation takes its course. We need not say how "the last Adam" answered the serpent. When the devil left Him, angels came and ministered to Him as the Victorious One; angels, who had withstood the first Adam as the defeated one, keeping every way the way of the tree of life. Eden, as far as *title* went, was never lost to Jesus. These august witnesses, as I may call them, the beasts of the wilderness and the angels of heaven, in their several way, seal this truth to us — therefore, all which He went through, after this, in borrow and weariness and hunger, as in a world of thorns and thistles, was in obedience to God, and in grace to sinners. It was a *willing* entrance into the forfeiture of all things. He exposed Himself to all of it; He was liable to none of it.

This is, after this manner, impressed on the person and condition of our blessed Lord, as He practically enters on His life of service. Deeply welcome it is to us, but it is quickly disposed of; and all is soon left behind. His baptism, with its attending voice from heaven and descent of the Spirit, as well as this scene in the wilderness, and the notice of John's imprisonment, all is quickly disposed of, and, after thirteen or fourteen short verses, we find Him in actual service.

Rapidity or diligence marks this service at once, and that, too, very advisedly — for a servant is to be known by his diligence — "not slothful in business" — and thus we find the word "straightway," or "anon," or "forthwith," or "immediately," so common in the first chapter.

And from this onward, through these chapters, it is in service we see the Lord engaged. To be passing from one action to another, and still doing good, is His way. And He is rather *doing* than *teaching*; for doing is the humbler work. We have few parables, and no lengthened discourses, as in Matthew and Luke; while several of His acts of grace and power are more detailed by Mark than by either of them — as in the case of Legion, and of the woman with the issue of blood, of the deaf man at Decapolis, and of the blind man at Bethsaida.

And, in all these records, there are touches and strokes that beautifully manifest the design of the Spirit. The human tones of the mind of Christ are vivid here.

Thus, in the healing of Peter's wife's mother, Mark is the only one who tells us that the Lord "took her by the hand" when He was raising her up, after the fever had left her.

So it is Mark only who tells us that, in like grace, the Lord took up the little children in His arms.

But such actions not only express the tenderness and the grace of One Who was perfect in service; they are also beautiful from their significancy. Take, for instance, this action respecting the little children, just alluded to.

On this occasion, in Mark 10, it is *in His arms* the Lord takes the little children; on another, in Matt. 18, He sets one in *the midst of the disciples*; or, as we see it in Luke 9, *by Himself*, or at His own side.

There is beautiful significancy in these different actions.

It was when the disciples were rebuking those who brought the children to Him, that He took them up in His arms. He would fain give the place of nearest and fondest affection to those whom ignorance of Him, and the mistakes of the poor, foolish heart of man, would have kept at a distance.

But when the disciples were disputing among themselves who should be the greatest, He takes a little child, and either sets it in their midst, or at His own side; for, whether conspicuously in the centre of the group, or distinguishingly at His own right hand, He was giving the little child the place of *honour*, rebuking the pride of life or love of distinction which was then working among them.

Beautiful, therefore, again I say, in their significancy, are these different actions of the Lord touching the little children. He takes them into the place of endearment, when unbelief would have kept them at a distance; He puts them in the place of honour, when pride or worldliness would have sought such a place for itself.

And again. Though we read of His looking round in anger, yet we soon learn that this was not the anger of one who has taken the seat of judgment, but of Him Who was grieved at heart for the hardness and unbelief of men. It was the sensitiveness of the spirit of holiness.

His sympathies are much noticed by our evangelist, as He is doing His deeds of mercy. And so His sensibilities. At the sight of sorrow He sighed — at the sight of sin He sighed deeply. Mark 7: 34; 8: 12.

In Mark's account of the rich young ruler we read that Jesus beholding him loved him; but neither Matthew nor Luke mention this emotion of the Lord's heart.

So, on two occasions, where the healing was very similar, one recorded by John, and the other by Mark, we still find the sympathy of Jesus noticed only in Mark. In the ninth chapter of John the Lord employs His spittle, and applies His hand; and then, as in the sense of authority and power, He says to the blind man, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." In Mark, 7, He again employs His spittle, and applies His hand; but, with that, He enters personally and intensely into the occasion. He looks up to heaven, as owning the Father there; He sighs, as sensible of the sorrow here; and then, but not till then, He speaks the word, and the healing comes.

These were some of His sympathies with us, and with our infirmities. They were among His ways of service; and by them He was learning to fill, in like infinite grace, His present service in heaven, as the compassionating High Priest. "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."

Nor is there the same authority in His way of vindicating His glory in the face of the unbelief and scorn of man, nor the same tone of severity in His rebukes, in this Gospel, as in the others.

The ordination of the Twelve is not given so fully here as in Matthew. And it is very significant of our evangelist that he tells us that Jesus ordained the apostles, not merely that He might send them forth, as Matthew speaks, but that also they *might be with Him, His companions*, as it were, as well as His apostles; as though He were, which truly He was, their Fellow-labourer in the gospel.

These and such like touches and strokes may be faint, and pass notice at times; but they give character. They show Jesus as the Servant — they point out the girdle wherewith He was girded. They form the ways of One Who was skilful in showing kindness, and knew the art of serving others to perfection.

"He is beside Himself," was the language of some, as recorded by Mark. And it was true, in a sense which they thought not of. He was wanting to Himself in that prudence which man has learnt to value — for "men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself."

Consistent with all this He is seen here rather in the valley — a self-emptied, hidden One, as becomes a servant. Phil. 2: 7. He is, at times, called "Master" here, where in Matthew He is called by the higher title, "Lord." And it is only in Mark that we read that the people called Him "the Carpenter." Nor do we trace His spirit in the same conscious elevation at times — we have no Matthew 11: 25, nor Luke 10: 19, in Mark.

His miracles verified Him as the Son of David in the thoughts of the people, as Matthew tells us. Matt. 12: 23. But they are not so spoken of in our Gospel. Nor do we find the same carefulness in the Spirit here to identify Jesus of Nazareth with the promised Messiah, by constant reference to the prophets, applying their words to Him and His doings. For it is not so much His claims on the world that the Lord is here vindicating, as man's call on His power and grace that He is ever waiting to answer.

His retirements, too, are but recruitings for fresh service. Therefore He suffered such retirement to be intruded on, if people and their necessities would have it so; for He did not claim His time for Himself.

We have an instance of this in chapter 1. After labouring in various toils from morning till evening in Capernaum, we see Him, the next morning rising a great while before day, for prayer; but His retirement being interrupted by the demands of the people, and by the word of Peter, He at once allows it, and comes forth.

So, in Mark 4, He is teaching by the seaside. He begins this day's work there, on the banks of the lake of Galilee. It proves to be a toilsome day, and in the evening of it He would fain retire. Accordingly, His disciples take Him as He was, a wearied Working-man, in the ship, and, in the care of their love for Him, they provide Him a pillow, and He falls asleep. Was it ever said with such emphasis as now, "For so He giveth His beloved sleep"? They put off from the shore; and the wind shortly rises to a storm, and the waves beat into the ship. The interruption again comes, for the fears of the disciples awake Him, and awake Him rudely. But He would know no measure of His sleep and refreshment but such as the need of others would prescribe; and therefore He at once rises to quiet the winds and the waves and the fears of His people.

So again in Mark 6. The apostles had returned from their mission, and, providing for their comfort, He takes them to a desert place, that they might rest and eat. But the multitude, who had watched

them, surprise them in their retreat. It would have been a valued moment to Him, thus to have been alone with the companions of His labours, hearing from them both what they had done and what they had taught. But at the intrusion of the multitude He at once turns, and begins to teach them many things. The deeper necessity of the people calls Him off from that of the apostles. It was but one service giving place to another; but the scene does not close till He has provided for both, teaching the people, and feeding all so full were His hands, so continuously girded His loins.

And this Servant, as we have now seen, was weary betimes. There is, however, a difference to be observed in the two instances of this; I mean that in our fourth chapter, at which I have just been looking, and that in the fourth chapter of John. He finds sleep for His relief in Mark; He was independent of all refreshment in John. Here was a striking difference. But the common sensibilities of our nature will, when we inspect the two occasions a little, easily account for this.

In Mark 4 He had gone through a day of toil, and in the evening He was tired, as nature will be after labour. Sleep is then provided for Him, to restore Him to His work when the morning came. In John 4. He is weary again, hungry and thirsty also. He sits thus on the well at Sychar, waiting till the disciples return from the neighbouring village with food. But when they come back they find Him feasted and rested already. He had had a different refreshment from any which they could have brought Him, or sleep have provided Him. He had been happy in the fruit of His labour. He had known the joy of harvest, as well as the toil of sowing. A poor, careless sinner had been made happy by Him.

How simple! How intelligible, again I say, on the principles of our common humanity! There had been no woman of Samaria in Mark 4, no sinner sent away in the joy of salvation. He therefore needed sleep to restore Him. But in John 4 His Spirit is refreshed by the fruit of His labour, and He can do without food or sleep. "I have

meat to eat that ye know not of," is His word here, in the stead of His using the pillow which they had provided.

We can all understand all this. Our common human sensibilities are in the secret.

But with all this nearness to us, this fellowship in these ways and experiences and sympathies of the nature He had assumed, He was still and ever a Stranger in the world. He takes His distance as He shows us His intimacy. Perfect in moral glory this is! And this is seen in Mark 6, just referred to.

The disciples return to Him, as we saw, after a day's labour. He cares for them He brings their weariness very near to Him. He takes account of it just as it is, and provides for it at once, saying to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." But, the multitude following Him, He turns with the same readiness to them, taking knowledge of them as sheep not having a shepherd; and He begins to teach them.

In all this we see Him *near* - for some human need or another had demanded Him.

But the disciples, resenting His attention to the multitude, and moving Him to send them away, He lets them learn how *distant* He was, in the spirit of His mind, from them. He acts altogether contrary to their suggestion, and, at last, tells them to get alone into the boat, while He sent the multitude away.

The *need* of men shall bring Him *near*, the *spirit* of man shall keep Him *distant*.

But again, when the disciples in the boat get into fresh trouble, then is He again at their side to succour and deliver them.

How consistent in the combinations of holiness and grace all this is! His holiness ever kept Him apart in such a polluted, selfish world;

His grace ever kept Him at hand and active in such a needy world. And these were shinings of that full moral glory that was in Him. Surely, we may say, His life was a lamp in the sanctuary of God, which needed no golden tongues or snuff-dishes. No dimness ever soiled it.

The Lord meets the same hindrances and contradictions here, in Mark, as He met with in the other Gospels. Pharisees and scribes resent Him, and challenge Him, and watch to ensnare Him. The fickleness of the multitude is the same, and the slow-heartedness and unbelief of His disciples. But onward He passes from one service to another, "doing good" being His purpose and His business.

Here, however, I would turn aside for a little, and observe that in the midst of all His services and humiliations, whether we find them here or in the other Gospels, personal, divine glory will at times brightly shine out. For this Serving-man is Jehovah. In the form of a servant, obedient to the deepest, most perfect point of self-emptying, yet was He in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

He deals with leprosy as the Jehovah of Israel alone could deal with it. He feeds the thousands of His people as Jehovah of old had fed them. The elements bowed to His word. Devils trembled at the majesty of His presence, and men felt it at times. He imparted the power to work miracles, to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to raise the dead, to cast out devils; and, as another has said, while any man, if empowered by God may work a wonder, none but God can impart the power to do so. Elijah's mantle fell on Elisha; but, in using it, Elisha says, "Where is *the Lord God* of Elijah?" But it was in *His* name, the name of Jesus, that the disciples whom He had sent cast out devils. They used in *His name* the power that He had imparted to them. "The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us *through Thy name.*"

What were all these but tokens of a hidden glory that was divine!

He may hide that glory which was His, and hide it deeply under thick veils of humiliation and weakness and service; but it was His, and it can assert itself. And let me say, though He hide it Himself, yet if unbelief obscure or mistake it, He gives no place to unbelief in such wise. He may rest for the present under the scorn and rejection of men, but He leaves not the slow-heartedness of His saints unanswered. Martha said, "I know that . . . whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee;" and again, "I know that he shall rise again . . . at the last day." But the Lord gives no place to all this. He rebukes such thoughts, clouding His glory as they do. "I am the resurrection and the life," He says; "he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." And He adds, as with intense meaning addressing Himself to Martha's condition, "Believest thou *this*?" It was neither God giving an answer to the asking of Jesus, nor was it the virtue of the last day, that He could allow the mind of Martha to rest in; He must have her, in thought and faith, reach Him in His place of full, personal glory.

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" is of the same spirit. And deeply welcome to faith all this is. It sees the veil, and approves it for the present; but it will not, it dare not, it cannot, be careless about the glory that is under it.

This, however, only for a moment by the way, lest we might be less mindful of Who He is that is thus in service before us.

And now (to return to our own Gospel) I may further observe, that there is an unobtrusiveness in the midst of these activities that further adorns or perfects the character of this blessed Servant of God. At Decapolis He takes the poor deaf man aside; and when He has got him by himself He opens his ear, charging him to say nothing about it. Mark 7.

In the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the necessities of sinners may discover Him there, as everywhere else, yet He "would have no

man know it." Mark tells us this, but Matthew passes over the same occasion without an allusion to it.

And again, at Bethsaida, He takes a blind man by the hand, and leads him out of the town, and there in secret gives him sight — and sending him away, healed as he was, charges him not to go into the town, neither to tell it to any in the town. Mark 8.

For though, as the *Witness* of God, He had to be aggressive, and thus to encounter the hatred of the world, as we read in John (John 7: 7), yet, as the *Servant* of God, here in Mark, He was, after the manner we have now seen, hiding Himself, as far as His service admitted it. Service is never perfect without that. A servant is not to know himself. He is to know only his master, and to be very willing that others likewise should not know him, but only his master. And it is thus with the Lord. He goes on with His work; and, if that gather notice, His way is still to go on, and, under fresh services, still to hide Himself. This is seen in chapter 1. Simon and other disciples follow Him into His privacy, Saying, "All men seek for Thee," as though the multitude would make Him public, make Him an object — but He only hides Himself under fresh labours, answering Peter, and saying, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for therefore came I forth."

And, according to this character of His walk, we find Him, on certain occasions, more carefully veiling His glory in this Gospel than in others.

In reasoning with the Pharisees about the Sabbath He speaks of Himself, in Matthew, as "One greater than the temple." This is passed by here. And on the same occasion, both in Matthew and Luke, His lordship of the Sabbath is pleaded in a style of conscious authority. But here it is grounded simply on this, that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

So, though, in this Gospel, we have the vision on the holy mount, still there is something even there of this veiling of Himself.

This was the one ray of the heavenly glory that illumined the dreary path of this rejected Son of man on earth. His *spirit*, it is true, was ever in the light of His Father's countenance during these years of service through the cities and villages of the land; but His *circumstances* among men were lonely and uncheered. But this scene of the transfiguration was a visitation of the glory that crossed His path for a moment, and it was full of the kingdom of heaven.* But our evangelist has some notice of it which is peculiar to him. He tells us that, on the Lord's coming down from the hill, "all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him." I suppose that, in some measure, the glory was still lingering about Him, as Moses' face shone when he got down to the foot of Mount Sinai, and stood among the people again. This might have brought the Lord into a place of honour and notice; but it only shows Him forth in the more perfect form of a Servant, Who would empty Himself, or make Himself of no reputation. The robe is speedily put off, and the girdle as speedily put on. The Lord turns from the salutation of the multitude to the sorrow of the poor dumb child, whose father had brought him with a cry for mercy — so perfect was He in the spirit of service, that neither the glory at the top of the mount, nor the salutations at the foot of it, could weaken or interrupt it.

*It is the *kingdom in power* which is seen in the transfiguration; its heavenly department being principal.

And so, on the same occasion, it is when He sees the crowd running together, as to a sight, that He at once heals the poor child, avoiding, all He can, the publicity of the miracle — and when the child is healed He takes him by the hand, and lifts him up. All this is peculiar to Mark.

I have already observed that, in this Gospel, the Lord is more the *Doer* than the Teacher. There is, however, one piece of teaching, one parable, which is found only here. I mean the parable of the Seed that grew Secretly, in Mark 4. It occupies the same place in

Mark that the parable of the Wheat and the Tares does in Matthew — each of these, in its several Gospel, following the parable of the Sower.

Now in this, small as it is, the character of Mark's Gospel is still preserved. The parable of the Wheat and the Tares gives us a sight of the Lord in the place of authority — for He has both servants and angels at command, and He orders the harvest as He pleases. The parable of the Seed that grew Secretly, on the contrary, exhibits Him in the place of *service*, and not of authority; for it is He Himself Who, at the first, is the Sower, and, at the end, the Reaper.

This is full of character. What at first might seem to be an exception to the general bearing of the Gospel (which does not, as we said, present our Lord so much as a teacher), is found to be in perfect keeping with it; thus introducing one witness of its unities, or its divine consistency with itself, of a very interesting kind.

And now, in closing this portion of our Gospel, and leaving our Lord in these scenes of His service, let me notice here (what indeed I have already noticed in another place), that He *never claimed the person whom He healed*.

This is to be seen alike in all the evangelists; but it is a very striking and beautiful feature in His ministry.

He never made a claim for Himself to the one that He had healed, as though the blessing He had conferred should create a title in His own favour. It is to one, "Go in peace;" to another, "Go thy way;" to another, "Take up thy bed, and walk;" to another, "Go into thine house" — or words of like spirit.

He would not let the poor Gadarene be with Him, though he sought it. Jairus's daughter He left in the bosom of her family. The child whom He healed at the foot of the holy mount He delivered to his father. The widow of Nain's son, whom He restored to life, He delivered to his mother. He claims nothing on the ground of what He

did in the way of service. Grace, I may say, would not so dishonour itself. Its nature is to give, and not to receive; to impart to others, and not to enrich itself. The time for healing must not be the time for demanding. The spirit of Elisha resented the thought of receiving money, and garments, and sheep, and oxen, after he had been cleansing a leper. And the spirit of the prophet was but the faint breathing of the spirit of the Son. Jesus did good, and lent, hoping for nothing again. Grace would have been wanting in one of its finest expressions had it been otherwise; but we know that He came in order that in Him and His ways it might shine, full of the exceeding riches and glory that belong to it.

He found servants in this world, it is true, but they were the fruit of His call, and of the energy of His Spirit — the fruit, too, of affections kindled in hearts constrained by His love. He called Levi, and Levi followed; Andrew and Simon, likewise, and James and John; and they followed. But He did not heal them, and then claim them. Mary clung to Him with fervent, grateful love, for He had cast out seven devils from her. But He had not claimed her. The love of a kindled heart constrained her; but that was quite another thing.

I know not that we can sufficiently admire this. It has great excellency in it. And the first duty of faith, as well as its highest privilege and sublimest acting, is to stand before Him and His ways, adoring. We should charge our hearts to know this secret. Instead of painfully inquiring of ourselves whether we are making suited returns to the saving, life-giving grace of the Son of God, we should awake to the enjoyment of Him in His exercises of this grace. Our first business with the light that shines in Him is to learn from it what He is — calmly, thankfully, joyfully learn that, and not begin by anxiously measuring ourselves by it, or seeking to imitate it.

PART 2.

Mark 11 - 13.

THE Lord is here seen presenting the kingdom to His people Israel. Of necessity, therefore, we get the same display of royalty here, on this occasion, as in other Gospels — for that was the material, the circumstance, which constituted the occasion. Still, however, there is a chastened style in Mark's account which distinguishes it.

Thus we learn that, on His entrance into the city, and on His going up to the temple, though He was there as the King, and in the zeal of God's house was casting out those who made it a house of merchandise, yet, ere He did so, "He looked round about upon all things." In Matthew He is seen as acting *at once* upon the defiled scene - but here, as this little action shows us, He is in the calmness and reserve of One who would give time to the scene to affect His eye and His heart, ere His hand lay hold on judgment. And this is another instance of the sympathies or sensibilities of Jesus in this Gospel. He entered *personally* into the scene under His eye, and did not merely deal judicially. There was something of the divine patience in this, something of God's slowness to believe evil — as He had said in other days, concerning Sodom, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know."

This, surely, gives a subdued, a chastened expression to the act of judging the temple; distinguishing it, under Mark's delineations of it, from the tone of prompt authority and decisiveness with which Matthew conveys it to us. And this is characteristic.

And again, in the course of these chapters, there is something peculiar in the notice which our evangelist takes of the scribe who questions the Lord about the first commandment. He lets us learn the exercise of that man's soul. Matthew tells us merely that he came to tempt the Lord, as one of the representatives of the revolted

nation; but Mark shows him to us *morally* or *personally*, expressing what was going on within him — and then shows us, also, how the Lord took him up in the same way, morally and personally, saying to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

How grateful it is to the heart to read this! How acceptable to us this commentary of the Lord Himself on one of the aspects or phases of the soul! It tells us (and the secret is deeply welcome to us), that the lights and shades of the inner kingdom are all under His eye, and that He knows how to appreciate them. There appears to have been some sudden visitation of this man's spirit. He came to tempt the Lord, but ere he went away he was not far from the kingdom of God. Surely in spirit he had taken a journey; a deeply interesting passage his soul had made. It may remind us of the repentant dying thief; for he, according to Matthew, seems to have joined his companion in reviling Jesus, and then, according to Luke, he ended by trusting in and calling upon Jesus.

And in closing this scene of the royal visitation, as we may call it, the Lord, I perceive, does not occupy the seat of judgment in Mark, as He does in Matthew. He goes through all the act of judicial righteousness very rapidly. He does not read out against the nation the crimes of which they then stood guilty and convicted, and upon this pass the sentence of the law. This is done elaborately in Matthew. Here it is all disposed of in a verse or two; and quickly does He turn from it all, and look beyond it, to see a poor widow casting her two mites, which was her whole fortune, into the treasury of God. He has not so much an eye for the evil as for the good, though, at that moment, He was looking on a temple full of the one, and only, as it were, two mites of the other. The touches are all in the distinctive way of our evangelist - and surely, when their sense and bearing are perceived, we deeply welcome them.

Mark 13 corresponds with Matthew 24, 25. It is the Lord's great prophetic word concerning Israel — Israel having now fully, solemnly rejected Him. They had seen the King. but He was not, in

their eye, the Kin" in His beauty. The arm of the Lord had been revealed to them; but in their esteem it was a root out of the dry ground. Judgment has now to enter, and take its course, ere the kingdom can be restored to Israel.

In this chapter, as in all the rest, the style of Mark is preserved. There is one very strong expression of the Lord's emptied, humble, servant-character here, which we do not get elsewhere. I allude to the Lord's words in verse 32, "Neither the Son."

He was speaking of knowledge of times and seasons, and He disclaims such knowledge Himself. And this quite became Him as a Servant. To a servant the confidence or committal of secrets does not belong. The Lord Himself tells us so in another place (John 15: 15); and, accordingly, He here disclaims the knowledge of such secrets.

He had taken on Him the form of a servant, and, with that form, the qualities and attributes that attached to it; and among them, this disclaimer of the knowledge of details and counsels, such as the Father would put in His own power.

And beside, the kingdom to which He was referring while He thus spoke, He is to receive by-and-by *as a Servant*. It is not to be His simply by divine right; it is the reward of the toil of Him Who was obedient even unto death. Hence all the circumstances of it wait, not on His, but on the Father's pleasure. The right hand and the left hand honours of it thus wait, as He tells us in another place (Matt. 20: 23); and the time of its manifestation waits, in like manner, as He tells us in this place: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels, which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Christ takes the kingdom as the Son and Heir of David, the Kinsman of men, and the Servant of God; not by divine but by human title; and therefore most fitly does He say, "Neither the Son," words which do not qualify *the person of the Son* but *the character of the kingdom*, as indeed we ought to apprehend at once; because it is not about

Himself the Lord is speaking at the time, but about the introduction or beginning of the kingdom.

The kingdom is to be His as Son of man. It is to *man* that "the world to come" is to be subject (Heb. 2); and it is God Who is to make it so. Every tongue shall confess Jesus Lord, but this is to be to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2. So that these words, "Neither the Son, but the Father," while they hold the distinctness of our Gospel in view, intimate likewise a profound and interesting mystery.

And we may notice also what the Lord calls Himself, in verse 35, "the Master of the house." It is "your Lord" in the corresponding place in Matthew, a title of a higher bearing.

So, at the close, He addresses the apostles in the place of *service*, more distinctly than He does in the same place in either Matthew or Luke. To each of them there is given work, the porter being commanded to watch; and this is peculiar to Mark. But we may observe, on the other hand, that the apostles are not set in their dignities in Mark, as they are in Matthew. We have not the special honour conferred on Peter in the midst of them, nor the thrones of the Twelve themselves over the tribes of Israel. And all this, the presence of what we do get, the absence of what we do not get, minute as the touches and strokes of the Spirit's penman may be, still all are characteristic, and beautiful in their place and season.

And as the Lord here, in a very brief way (as we noticed), arraigns and sentences the Jewish nation, though such is given fully and solemnly in Matthew, so all those parables, the Ten Virgins, the Talents, and the King from His throne separating the sheep and the goats, which are pictures of great judicial acts of Christ, are passed by here.

Humble His ways in this Gospel are; gracious and serving; the ways of One Who had laid aside His robes of state, and put on His girdle. All bespeaks His various grace in its perfections; and, next to the simple, happy, earnest assurance of His personal love to ourselves,

nothing more helps the heart to the desire of being with Him than this discovery of His moral glory which the four Gospels afford us. I have heard of one who, tracing it there, was heard to cry out, with tears and affections, "Oh that I was with Him!"

This is what we need, and what we may well covet, beloved.

PART 3.

Mark 14, 15.

HERE we see the patient, spotless Lamb of God in His sufferings, passing from the night of the last passover to the deadly sorrow of the three hours of darkness.

His path here is generally what it is in Matt. 26, 27. Still there are some features which distinguish it.

He seems to be left more alone here. The account is less interrupted by the acts or feelings of others. We have neither the repentance of Judas, nor the purchase of the potter's field, nor the dream of Pilate's wife. And we have not the communication between Herod and Pilate, nor the lamentations of the daughters of Jerusalem; both mentioned by Luke. There is no healing of Malchus's ear here, nor any mention of the Lord's right, had He pleased it, to use the armies of heaven in His service. Neither do we hear the Lord on the cross owning the Father, nor pledging Paradise to the dying thief. Nor, when the death is all accomplished, have we the same full and glorious testimony to the value of it, from the earth, and the rocks, and the graves of the saints, as we get in Matthew. Expressions of conscious dignity, and seals of power and authority put upon Him and His work, are less noticed.

There is however, introduced, by Mark into this solemn scene, one object which we do not see elsewhere. I mean the young man who had the linen cloth tied round his naked body, and who fled away naked, as he was, leaving his linen cloth behind him, as the officers were laying hold on Jesus. But this object rather deepens on our spirit the sense of dreariness and loneliness. It is in keeping with the sight which we are here given of that ever blessed One, Who, during this hour, was forlorn and forsaken, exposed and humbled, as the Servant of the glory of God in the redemption of sinners.

All this, what we get here and not elsewhere, and what we do not get here but get elsewhere, is characteristic; all bespeaks the skill of the "ready writer" Who guided the pen of our evangelist. In John, Jesus, during this same hour, is the lonely One, I know. But His loneliness there is the elevation and distance of the Son of God. Here He is the lonely One, as we have now seen; but it is the loneliness of the willing and self-emptied Servant Who had taken the lowest place.

And, look we at Him in what light or character we may, it is but the various shining of that moral glory which was just as pure and unspotted in its kind as the personal glory which He had ere the world was, and from eternity, was perfect in its kind, and as the glories in which He will be known in the eternity to come will be perfect in their kind.

PART 4.

Mark 16.

THIS chapter gives us the fourth and closing part of our Gospel.

It shows us Jesus in resurrection. It is as Matthew 28, as Luke 24, and as John 20, 21; having, however, like all the rest, its own characteristic features.

The descent of the angel to roll away the stone, putting the sentence of death in the keepers of it, is peculiar to Matthew and, in the preceding meditation on that Gospel, I have considered why this is so.

We get, however, the words of the same angel to the women who had come to the sepulchre; for that was an expression of grace, and was suited matter for our evangelist. And this same company of women receive from the same angel the same message which they received as recorded in Matthew, but with this addition, that Peter is expressed by name. "Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him." The words, "and Peter," are added in Mark — and this was quite in keeping with the considerate, compassionating grace of this Gospel; for Peter might well have needed that thoughtful, special kindness at that moment. He had signalized himself sadly in the midst of his brethren; and his Lord now signalizes him graciously in the midst of the same brethren.

This is full of character.

The corrupting of the keepers of the sepulchre by the chief priests and elders of the people is passed by here. Properly so. It was matter for the notice of Matthew, as the rolling away of the stone had been; for it led to what "is commonly reported among the Jews to this

day," and therefore lay within the scope of the Spirit in that evangelist rather than in Mark.

We have here some general notices of the visits which the risen Lord paid to His disciples, and, likewise, of their slowness of heart to credit the resurrection. And here let me ask, Does this slowness surprise us? I would say, It need not. True, indeed, we may challenge ourselves, and say, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with us that God should raise the dead?" But, by nature, we have not the knowledge of God, as the apostle speaks, on this very matter. 1 Cor. 15: 34. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" No; but our hearts are hardened. In earlier days the apostles had not considered the miracle of the loaves and of the fragments gathered up, just because their hearts were hardened (Mark 6: 52); and here it is hardness of heart that has to account for this unbelief. And as we do not by nature think worthily of His *power*, neither do we think worthily of His *grace*. We are all astray. We are indisposed to receive any good news from God. The resurrection of Jesus, the full fruit of divine grace, is published and carried abroad; but it is not believed, just because our hearts are hard. The flesh may be unclean, as indeed it is, vicious and violent too. But withal, to give it its full revolted place and character, we must further say of it, that it refuses the message of grace and salvation from God. And one of the sure and sweet fruits of a renewed mind is its faculty to think well and happily of the Blessed One, seeing His glory in the face of Jesus. The homage of a soul that has turned from the dark and hardened and erring ways of nature is then rendered to God. And it is eternal life in us.

The risen Lord has here, in Mark, as in all the Gospels, to rebuke this unbelief of the apostles. But He removes it as well as rebukes it — pardoning it by the way; nay, sealing that pardon by the hand of a witness of great dignity — for He puts them into the ministry, committing the honour and power of His name to them in the face of every creature.

But further; it is only in this Gospel that the women who came to the sepulchre wonder how they are to get the stone removed from the mouth of it; for they knew not as yet that, let but the third day arrive, the Lord could not be holden of death. As it is likewise only in this same Gospel that Pilate marvelled that He should be so soon dead, when Joseph came to crave His body; for he knew not that, let all Scripture be but fulfilled, the Lord would give up the ghost. See John 19: 28-30; Acts 2: 24.

The natural thoughts of saints put them in close company with the thoughts and reasonings of the children of men. As in these instances. Pilate and the godly women are in like ignorance. But grace ever abounds. The women at the sepulchre are instructed and comforted; and the disciples are commissioned to bear the name of their Lord abroad to every creature.

The commission here, however, has its own character, with all the rest. It simply gives the apostles work to do. "Go ye into all the world," says their Lord to them, "and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

It is not the discipling of all nations that is here contemplated, as in Matthew, for the glory of Him Who has now accomplished all things, and is exalted; it is universal testimony with partial acceptance — the common result of *service* in *the gospel*. As is said of Paul's ministry at the close of the Acts of the Apostles — "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Therefore the form that the commission to the apostles by their risen Lord takes here simply contemplates service and its results, and is thus in full keeping with the whole of the Gospel.

And, still more strikingly, the Lord Himself, though about to be glorified in the highest will be found, as the closing words tell us, in service also. For it is here, and here only, we read this — "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and

preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following."

Thus our Gospel closes in the character with which it had opened, and which it had preserved throughout. It opened with the Lord in service — "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" — it closes by revealing Him to us, though hid and glorified in heaven, as still "working." Jesus is in ministry, whether He be the rejected One among men on earth, or the accepted One at the right hand of God in heaven, where all principalities and authorities and powers are made subject to Him. He "went about doing good." He approved Himself, indeed, to have come among us, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. As such a One, the Holy Ghost in Mark first looked at Him, and as such does He keep Him in view to the end.

Very duly does his Gospel take its place after that of Matthew, and before those by Luke and John; though, as I observed at the beginning, it might be judged to come as the last. It comes after Matthew; because there Jesus as Messiah is *testing* Israel — and that was the first thing the Lord had to do, on His coming into the world, and entering on His holy, wondrous course. We have seen this in the preceding paper on Matthew. It comes before Luke and John; for the Lord Jesus is here in Mark, the Servant of the Father's grace and pleasure in Israel; in Luke He takes a larger and higher scene of action, as a Teacher and an anointed Man, rather dealing morally with men; and at last in John He rises to the highest, as in divine grace, in solitariness and in sovereignty, dealing with sinners.

We will, therefore, leave each of the Gospels just *where* we find them put by the hand of God; and we accept them just what we find them to be under the Spirit of God. The candle has been lighted, and set in the candlestick. We have only by faith to know it to be the candle of the Lord, to walk by the light of it through the darkness of this present world, waiting for that world to come, of which it is the bright, infallible witness.

The Characters of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospels.

A meditation on the Lord Jesus Christ, in His varied characters in
the four Gospels.

I have now passed the time of my meditations on the four Evangelists, noticing the different service committed to each of them by the Spirit of God, in presenting to us the Lord Jesus. The ease with which they fulfil their task bespeaks the inspiration under which they wrote, and the consciousness they had of the truth of all they were recording. It is like the ease with which He about Whom they wrote did His works and delivered His lessons, and which ease, in like manner, bespoke the presence of that divine light and power that filled Him. But whether we consider the Son Who was the Actor in all these blessed scenes, or the Spirit Who is the Recorder of them, our souls may well be sure of this, that God has brought Himself very near to us.

The Lord Jesus has been variously before us in these Gospels. We see Him God and man in one Person, and yet without confusion of the natures, One in eternal glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and yet, as truly, the Son of Mary, born of a woman, His body formed in the virgin's womb. We see Him the Son in the bosom of the Father; the Word become flesh declaring God; the Son of God, the Christ, the Son of man, the Son of David, Jesus of Nazareth, the Servant, the sent One, the sanctified One, the given One, the sealed One, the Lamb; and then the risen, the ascended, the glorified One. In such titles and characters we read of Him.

Variouly also in conditions and circumstances is He seen by us. Very chequered, surely, was His daily life. He was always a

Stranger, a solitary One; and yet none so accessible. He was in continual collision with the rulers; teaching the people; counselling, warning, enlightening the disciples that followed Him; in nearer fellowship with the Twelve; or dealing still more closely and livingly with individual souls. He knew the tempers of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, and had words in season for each. All manner of persons He had to answer, all manner of diseases to heal, all kinds of need and infirmity to relieve; cases of all sorts made demands on Him continually, and, as we say, unexpectedly. His whole life was ever holding out an invitation to the burdened, afflicted world around Him. In these different connections we see the Lord.

At times, likewise, He is scorned and slighted, watched and hated; retiring, as if to save His life from the attempts of the enemy.

At times He is weak, followed only by the poorest of the people; wearied and hungry, ministered to by some loving women who knew themselves to be His debtors.

At times He is, in all gentleness, compassionating the multitudes, or accompanying with His disciples.

At times He is in strength, doing wonders, or letting out some rays of glory; the realms of death, and the powers of unseen worlds, being subject to Him.

Thus and thus is He again before us, as we read the Evangelists. "He that descended is the same also that ascended," surely we may say, in this sense. He will ask for a cup of water at the hand of a stranger, because He is weary with His journey, though He will turn water into wine for the use of others. He will ask the loan of a boat from a fisherman when the people press on Him, and throng Him. He will pass on as a traveller, that would go further, and not enter, unbidden, the dwelling of others. And yet, when occasions demanded it, He would claim a beast from the *owner* of it, as having the title of the

Lord over it; or let it be known that the right hand of power in the highest was His seat, and the clouds His chariot.

The world would not contain the books that would be written, if all were told; but what is told is told for our blessing, that we may know Him, and live by that knowledge, and love Him, and trust Him.

His glories are threefold: personal, official, and moral. His personal glory He veiled, save when faith discovered it, or an occasion demanded it. His official glory He veiled likewise. He did not walk through the land as either the divine Son in the bosom of the Father, or as the authoritative Son of David. Such glories were commonly hid as He passed on through the circumstances of life day by day. But His moral glory could not be hid. He could not be less than perfect as He acted, or as He was seen and heard. Moral glory belonged to Him — it was Himself. From its intense excellency it was too bright for the eye of man, and man was under constant exposure and rebuke from it - but there it shone, whether man could bear it or not. It now illuminates every page of the four Evangelists, as it once illuminated every path which He Himself trod on this earth of ours.

But beside this moral glory which ever shone in Him, we see Him going from glory to glory along the whole way from the womb to the heavens. Our evangelists enable us thus to track Him

At His birth He comes forth in the glory of untainted humanity. He was born of a woman, born in the world. He was, however, "that Holy Thing." And thus, in His person, the full glory of the nature which He had assumed is seen.

During His childhood and youth, and the whole term of His subjection to His parents at Nazareth, it was the glory of the law that He was reflecting. Perfect under Moses, He grew in favour with God and man. Moses, in his day, bore on his face the glory of the law; but he bore it only officially or representatively. 2 Cor. 2: 7. He could not reflect it essentially or personally, for he was not himself

keeping it. He could not do that. Like the feeblest in the camp, he quaked as he heard it. But Jesus kept it, and thus, personally or essentially, bore the reflection of it. Of course, I mean in spirit. He was the living type of the perfection which the law demanded.

In due time, however, He has to leave the solitudes of Nazareth. He is baptized; taking the new place to which the voice of God had called Israel. He was thus fulfilling *all* righteousness; that demanded by one call of God, as well as that demanded by another.

Here, however, we may stand for a moment, and notice something peculiar. He passed away *at once* from under John. His baptism was rather *accompanied* than *succeeded* by His anointing by His ordination (as we may call it), His commission from the Father, and endowment by the Holy Ghost; for we read, "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up *straightway* out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

This is peculiar. Jesus was not kept one moment under John's baptism. He could not stay there. No fruit of repentance could be looked for from One Who had been already perfect under the law. He *went* under this baptism because He would fulfil all righteousness; He was not *kept* under it, because no fruit of it, no "fruits meet for repentance, could be demanded of Him. As He came up out of the water the heavens opened upon Him, the Spirit descended, and the voice said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." This was His glory, as I may say, under *John* - peculiar indeed, and perfect in its generation.

Then, as anointed and commissioned, Jesus comes forth into action. It is no longer Nazareth merely, but the whole land. And He comes forth to manifest the divine character. The perfectly obedient One still, honouring the law in every jot and tittle, His business now is to manifest the Father and divine goodness, amid the miseries and need

of a self-ruined world. The glory of the *Image of the Father* now shone in Him, in the ministry He had come forth to fulfil.

It was not merely as perfect under the law that He showed Himself to the world. He kept the law Himself, but He did not bring it forth to others. Had He done that, He would have been a lawgiver, as Moses had been. But, while the law was given by Moses, it was "grace and truth" that came by Jesus Christ. In retirement at Nazareth, He bore on Him the glory of the law; abroad, amid the ruins of man, He bore the glory of the Father, displaying the divine character in the behalf of need and wretchedness, though still the obedient One, and as perfect under the law as before. But he that saw Him saw Him that sent Him. Such was the living, active, ministering Jesus.

As the dead, risen, and ascended Jesus we next see Him. By His death, all that could maintain God's righteousness, while He was making the sinner righteous, or justifying him, was itself maintained. The cross reflects the assembled glories of mercy and truth, of righteousness and peace. Glory to God, peace to sinners, is the language of it. Full moral glory shines there, while God is accepting and pardoning the vilest. The veil of the temple was rent by it, and so were the graves of the saints. It is but just for God (fruit too, I know, of boundless, eternal riches of grace) to justify the sinner that pleads the cross. And thus, the glory of *God* now shines in the face of Him that was dead and is alive again, in the face of the Crucified seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

Surely, I may therefore say, it is as from glory to glory that we see the Lord going all the way, the wondrous, various way, from the womb to the heavens. The glory of *human nature* shone in His person as He was born of the virgin; the glory of the *law* shone in His behaviour and ways as He grew up and lived for thirty years in solitude, or in subjection to His parents at Nazareth; the glory of the *Fulfiller of all righteousness* shone in His momentary passage through John's baptism; the glory of *the Father* shone in His

ministry through the cities and villages of Israel; and the glory of *God* now shines in "the face of Jesus Christ," risen, and ascended, and seated in the heavens, after His crucifixion and death.

And tracing thus His glories from the womb to the heavens, I may remember what another has said upon His ascension. "In the translation of Elijah the lineaments of the ascension of Christ appear, the ascension of Him Who, not rapt in a chariot of fire, nor needing the cleansing of that fiery baptism, nor requiring a commissioned chariot to bear Him up, did, in the far sublimer calmness of His own indwelling power, rise from the earth, and, with His human body, pass into the heavenly places."* Very true and beautiful.

* Trench's Hulsean Lectures.

But beside this, the evangelists give us samples of the glories which await Him in the coming day of His power. The transfiguration, the entry into Jerusalem, and the desire of the Greeks at the feast show us "the kingdom" in certain departments of it. For these several occasions set His glories before us for a moment. The heavens and the earth, the places round the throne on high, Israel and their Jerusalem, with all the Gentiles from the four winds. of heaven, are here seen entertaining Him suitably, according to their different estate and capacity.

At the transfiguration we see Him accepted in the heavenly places, receiving there those honours which such places in their highest department well knew were His, and such honours as those places alone could confer on Him. He is here glorified with the glory of the celestial. His garments, too, are baptized in the heavenly light. The personages that belong to those realms come forth to attend Him. Moses is on one side, and Elias on the other; but Jesus, as the sun, is in the centre or fountain of the glory which then enshrined them all.

This was His completeness and honour in heaven. He was personally glorified there, and His train filled the temple.

At the entry into Jerusalem, we see Him accepted in Israel, receiving, in like manner, such honours as Israel could confer on Him. The owner of the ass acknowledges His higher claim as Lord. The multitude, it is true, cannot baptize His garments in glory, as the heavens afore had done, but they can spread their own garments under His feet, and surround Him with the joys of a feast of tabernacles. There are no glorified ones to wait on Him, to come forth from their homes of glory to greet and honour Him; but His citizens will hail Him as their King.

And the Greeks, representatives of the nations, are ready to wait at the feast, to wait on Him as the Lord of the feast — as Zechariah both anticipates and requires. Zech. 8: 20-23; Zech. 14: 17. The Lord refused this at that time, it is true. John 12. His hour had not come. He would for the present be the *Seed under the ground*, rather than the *Sheaf in the day of harvest*. All that is so; but still, the Greeks were ready in their place, as the heavens were ready in the day of the Son of David.

But all these were but for a moment. We know that, in spite of this passing exultation of the multitude, they and their rulers quickly denied Him; yea, and the enmity of the nations is shown us at the cross, in company with the unbelief of Israel. Still, His glories did thus shine across these spots and these occasions, that we might gather them up as pledge-fragments or earnest of what awaits Him in the day when heaven and earth and the whole creation of God in their several ways shall tell of Him, and own His presence in a world worthy of Him. And what a hope it is, had we but hearts for Him, to see Him in a world that will be worthy of Him.

But we do not know these glories as we ought, and to which the pages of the Evangelists introduce us. Above all, we do not use this Image of God with that simple faith which it claims. We have our own thoughts about God; and they prove, more or less, to be the loss and sorrow of our souls. But the apostle could tell us the value of this Image. He could testify how this glory of God in the face of

Jesus Christ rises on the heart; as, of old, the word which commanded light to shine out of darkness rose on the creation. 2 Cor. 4: 6. And we should charge our hearts no longer to take up with their own religious thoughts and devotions, but to be occupied with this Image of God, and find our object and our rest in it.

What is the Holy Ghost's work in the apostles whether speaking to sinners by preaching, or teaching saints by epistles, but unfolding the Jesus Whom the evangelists have, under Him, already given to us? Surely Jesus is every thing. "Christ is all." And by different persuasives and reasonings we are challenged to make every thing of Him. Nothing is left for our own speculations — absolutely nothing.

We have God Himself revealed in our own nature, in our own world, in our own circumstances. Well might kings and prophets have longed for such a privilege. But they had it not. It is ours, and it is beyond all price. We are not left to gather our knowledge of God from description; we see and hear and learn for ourselves, through personal manifestation, Who and what He is. We sit before His Image, His Likeness, in the Lord Jesus. The gospel is "the gospel of Christ, Who is the Image of God." Scripture, as I may speak, lets God show Himself by His acts, and does not take the method of describing Him. He has not committed the revelation of Himself to the pen of even inspired description. He has graciously chosen to be His own Revealer, in personal, living action, by His own sayings and doings — that simplest and surest way of making Himself known, the way in which the wayfaring man may not err, and in which the child need not mistake his lesson.

And, in accordance with this, we see the Lord, during His life, in constant activity. For there is deep meaning in that activity. He was by it ever pressing God or the Father upon the notice of sinners; and this constant diligence in doing and in speaking tells us that He would have us learn *much* of God. It seems to tell us that we are to acquaint ourselves *largely* with Him; in all that, at least, in which

such knowledge is good and sweet and profitable, suited to us in our necessities and for our blessing.

It is not by treatises or discourses, but by personal activities in our own ordinary circumstances, that we learn Him; and, therefore, the simpler we are, the more like children (who learn their lesson rather than discuss it) we carry ourselves, the more surely shall we find Him, and reach Him, and know Him.

The divine nature was found in His person, the divine character in His life. And this gives us an interest in every passage of His life, however small and occasional or ordinary it may be. For he who traces the life and death of Jesus reads God, or the characteristics of the divine moral glory.

And I ask, beloved, Did this image, this glory, as it shone in the face of Jesus, alarm? Had sinners to treat it as Israel treated the glory which shone in the face of Moses? Did the poor, convicted one need that the Lord should put a veil on His face, as Aaron and the children of Israel required Moses to do? The Samaritan was convicted as deeply and as thoroughly as ever Sinai would have convicted her. Jesus had *all* the secrets of her conscience out. But did she withdraw herself? The sinner in the temple is before Jesus as one whom the law would have stoned. But does she hide herself? Does she find that light oppressive or overpowering, which was then filling the place, and which had emptied it of her accusers?

And I ask again, Did disciples, who walked with Him every day, tremble before Him? Did they wish Him away, as though they felt His presence too much for them? Nothing of this, They had sorrow when He talked of leaving them; and when they had indeed lost Him, as they judged, they were found by the angels weeping. They never walked with Him as though they wished a veil had been on His face. And His rebukes made no difference. To their spirits such rebukes, though they were sharp at times, were never the thunders of Mount Sinai. They felt the holiness of His presence, and were

ashamed to let out the secret of their heart; but they never desired His absence. What privilege! what consolation!

We can well understand the greater ease with which we could receive a person of distinction at our house, than go and visit him at his. But a visit *from* him would be the surest way of preparing us to pay a visit to him, and see him in those conditions and circumstances which are properly his, and superior to ours. And after this manner is it between the Lord and us. Who can tell it in its blessedness! He has been here, in the midst of our circumstances, as the Son of man Who came eating and drinking, showing Himself in the gracious freedom of one that would gain our confidence. He walked and talked with us as a man would with his friend. He knew us face to face. He was in our house. And, after He rose, He returned to us, if not to our house, to our world — for the resurrection-scenes were all laid here. He was then on His way to His own place; but again He tarried in ours, that the links between us might be strengthened. For then, after He had risen, He was the same to us as He had been before. Change of condition had no effect upon Him — blessed to tell it. Kindred instances of grace and character, before He suffered and after He rose, show us this abundantly. Late events had put the Lord and His disciples at a greater distance than companions had ever known. They had betrayed their unfaithful hearts, forsaking Him, and fleeing in the hour of His weakness and danger; while He, for their sake, had gone through death, tasting the judgment of God upon sin. And they were still poor Galileans, and He was glorified with all power in heaven and on earth. But all this wrought no change in Him. "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," as an apostle says, could do that. He returns to them the very Jesus they had known before. He showed them His hands and His side, that they might know that it was He Himself. Yea, we may add, He showed them His heart, and His thoughts, and His ways; His sympathies, and considerateness, and all His affections; that in another sense they might know that it was He Himself.

I would not stop to offer the evidence of this from the Evangelists; it so abounds, addressing us on every occasion in which we see the Lord in resurrection, if we do but duly heed it. But if I might for a moment pass the bounds of the Evangelists, and look at the ascended Jesus in the Book of Acts, there we find the same identity. Jesus here in ministry, Jesus in resurrection, Jesus in heaven, is the same Jesus. For from the heavens He seems to delight in knowing Himself by the name that He had acquired among us and for us, the name which makes Him ours by the bond of a common nature, and by the bond of accomplished grace and salvation. "I am Jesus," was His answer as from the highest place in heaven, when Saul, on the road to Damascus, demanded of Him, "Who art Thou, Lord?"

What shall we say, beloved, of the condescendings, the faithfulness, the greatness, the simplicity, the glory and the grace together, that form and mark His path before us! We know what He is this moment, and what He will be for ever from what He has already been, as we see Him in the four Gospels. And we may pass into His world in all ease and naturalness, when we think of this.

"There no stranger-God shall meet thee,

Stranger thou in courts above."

He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever," in His own proper glory. With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," according to His essential, divine nature. But so in His knowledge of us, His relationship to us, His affections for us, and His way with us.

After He had risen, and was returned to His disciples, He never once reminded them of their late desertion of Him. This tells us of Him. "I know no one," says another, "so kind, so condescending who is come down to poor sinners, as He. I trust His love more than I do any saint; not merely His power as God, but the tenderness of His heart as man. None ever showed such, or had such, or proved it so

well. None have inspired me with such confidence. Let others go to saints or angels if they will, I trust Jesus more."

But this is but one ray of the moral glory that shone in Him. What a sight it is to see, if we could but look at it in its full measure! Who could have *conceived* such an object? It must have been exhibited ere it could have been described. But such was Jesus, Who once walked here in the unclouded fulness of that glory, and Whose reflections have been left by the Holy Ghost on the sacred pages of the Evangelists.

What attractiveness there must have been in Him for the eye and the heart that had been opened by the Spirit! This is witnessed to us in the apostles. Doctrinally they knew but little about Him, and as to their worldly interests, they gained nothing by remaining with Him. And yet they clung to Him. It cannot be said that they availed themselves of His power to work miracles. Indeed, they rather questioned it than used it. And we have reason to judge that, ordinarily, He would not have exercised that power for them. And yet there they were with Him; and for His sake had left their place and kindred on the earth.

What influence His *person* must have had with souls drawn of the Father!

And this influence, this attractiveness, were alike felt by men of very opposite temperaments. The slow-hearted, reasoning Thomas, and the ardent, uncalculating Peter, were together kept near and around Him.

May we not healthfully dwell on these samples of His nearness to us, and of His preciousness to hearts like our own; and accept them, too, as pledges of what remains for us all, when, gathered out of every clime, redeemed ones of every colour, character, and phase of the human family, we shall be with Him for ever?

We need to know Him *personally* better than we do. It was this knowledge that the apostles, in those days of the Gospels, had of Him — it was the force and authority of such knowledge that their souls felt. And we need more of it. We may be busy in acquainting ourselves with truths about Him, and we may make proficiency that way; but with all our knowledge, and all the disciples' ignorance, they may leave us far behind in the power of a commanding affection toward Himself. And I will not refuse to say, that it is well when the heart is drawn by Him beyond the knowledge that we have of Him (I mean knowledge in a doctrinal form) may account for. There are simple souls that exhibit this; but, generally, it is otherwise.

"The prerogative of our Christian faith," says one (and his words are good and seasonable), "the secret of its strength is this — that all which it has, and all which it offers, is laid up in a *Person*. This is what has made it strong, while so much else has proved weak. It has not merely deliverance, but a Deliverer; not redemption only, but a Redeemer as well. This is what makes it sunlight, and all else, when compared with it, as moonlight; fair it may be, but cold and ineffectual; while here the life and the light are one. And oh, how great the difference between submitting ourselves to a complex of rules, and casting ourselves upon a beating heart; between accepting a system, and cleaving to a person! Our blessedness (and let us not miss it) is this — that our treasures are treasured in a Person, Who is not, for one generation, a present Teacher and a living Lord, and then for all succeeding generations a past and a dead One, but Who is present and living for all."

Yes, indeed — and this ever present and living One in the Gospels, is constantly Himself either seen or heard. He is the Teacher or the Doer on every occasion. and the evangelists have little or nothing left for them in the way of explanation or comment. And this gives to their narratives simplicity and palpable truthfulness, a truthfulness that may be felt.

But further. In His relationships to the *world* which was around Him, we see Him at once a *Conqueror*, a *Sufferer*, and a *Benefactor*. What moral glories shine in such an assemblage! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions; He suffered from it, bearing witness against its whole course; He blest it, dispensing the fruit of His grace and power incessantly. Its temptations only made Him a Conqueror — its pollutions and enmities a Sufferer — its miseries only a Benefactor! What a combination!

It is not, however, *only* thus that we see our Lord Jesus in the Gospels. We have His *person*, His *virtues*, and His *ministry* in teaching and in doing — but without His *death* all to us would be nothing.

In "the place that is called Calvary," or onward to that place from the garden of Gethsemane, we see the great crisis (as we may surely call it) where *all* are engaged in their several characters, and all disposed of, answered or satisfied, exposed or revealed and glorified, according to their several deserving. What a place, what a moment, presented to us and recorded for us by each of the evangelists in his different way

Man is seen there, taking, his place and acting his part, wretched and worthless as he is. He is there in all variety of conditions; in the Jew and in the Gentile; as rude and as cultivated; in the civil place and in the ecclesiastical; as brought nigh or as left in the distance; as privileged, I mean, or as left to himself. But, whatever this variety may be, all are exposed to their shame.

The Gentile Pilate is there, occupying the seat of civil authority. But if we look there for righteousness, it is oppression we find. Pilate bore the sword not merely in vain, but for the punishment of those who did well. He condemned the One Whom he owned to be "just," and of Whom he had said, "I find no fault in Him;" and the soldiers who served under him shared or exceeded his iniquity.

The Jewish scribes and priests, the ecclesiastical thing of that hour, seek for false witness; and the multitude who wait on them are one with them, and cry out against the One Who had been ministering to their need and sorrow.

Those who passed by, mere travellers along the road, men left in the distance, or as to themselves, revile, venting impotent hatred, as so many Shimeis in the day of David. And disciples, a people brought nigh and privileged, betray the common corruption, and take part in this scene of shame to man, heartlessly forsaking their Lord in the hour of danger, and when He had looked for some to stand by Him.

All is thus worthless. Exposed to all this variety, man is put to shame as in the face of creation; at this crisis, this solemn moment of weighing him and testing him, as for the last time. The woman with her box of ointment makes no exception. Her faith was of the operation of God; and beautiful as it was to be had in remembrance through the whole world, it is God's praise, and His alone, through the Spirit.

Satan, as well as men, shows himself in this great crisis. He deceives and then destroys. He makes his captive his victim, destroying by the very snare by which he had tempted. The bait becomes the hook, as it always does in his hand. The sin we perpetrate loses its charm the moment it is accomplished, and then becomes the worm that dies not. The gold and silver is cankered, and its rust eats the flesh as if it were fire. The thirty pieces of silver does this with Judas, the captive and the victim of Satan.

Jesus is here in His virtues and in His victories; virtues in all relationships, and victories over all that stood in His way. What patience in bearing with His weak, selfish disciples! What dignity and calmness in answering His adversaries! What self-consecration and surrender to the will of His Father! These were His virtues, as we track Him on this path, from His sitting at the table to His expiring on the cross. And then His victories! The Captive is the

Conqueror, like the irk in the land of the Philistines. He came to put away sin and abolish death.

"His be the Victor's name

Who fought the fight alone."

God is here, God Himself, and in the highest. He enters the scene, as I may express it, when darkness covers all the land. That was His acceptance of the *offer* of the Lamb Who said, "Lo, I come." And such offer being accepted, God would show no mercy. If Jesus is made sin for us, it is unrelieved, unmitigated judgment He must have to sustain. The darkness was the expression of this. God was accepting the offer, and dealing with the Victim accordingly, abating nothing of the demands of righteousness.

And then, when the offer has been fulfilled, and the sacrifice rendered, and Jesus has given up His life, when the blood of the Victim has flowed, and all is finished, God, by another figure, owns the accomplishment of every thing, the fulness of the atonement, and the perfection of the reconciliation. The veil of the temple is rent from the top to the bottom. He that sits on the throne, that judges aright, and weighs all claims and their answers, sin and its judgment, peace and its price and its purchase, gives out that wondrous witness of the deep, ineffable satisfaction that He took in the deed that was then perfected in "the place that is called Calvary."

What a part for the blessed God Himself to take in this great crisis, this greatest of all solemnities, when every thing was taking its place for eternity!

And further still. Angels are here also, and heaven, earth, and hell; sin, also, and death, yea, and the world too.

Angels are here, witnessing these things, and learning new wonders. Christ is seen of them.

Heaven, earth, and hell are here, waiting on this moment; rocks and graves, the earthquake, and the darkness of the sky, bespeaking this.

Sin and death are disposed of, set aside and overthrown; the rent veil and the empty sepulchre publishing these mysteries.

The world learns its judgment in the sealed stone being rolled away, and the keepers of it forced to take the sentence of death in themselves.

Surely we may call this the Great Crisis — the most solemn moment in the history of God's dealings with His creatures. Wondrous assemblage of actors and of actings; God and Jesus, man and Satan, angels, heaven, earth and hell, sin and death, and the world, all occupy their place, whether of shame or of defeat, or of judgment, of virtues and of triumphs, of manifestations and of glory. This is the record of each of the evangelists in his several way, or according to his own method, under the Spirit. Our speculations can find no place. We have but to take up the lessons which they teach us, lessons for an ascertained and well-understood eternity.

And as I have thus looked a little carefully at the cross, so would I a little further at the empty sepulchre.

Victorious death, or resurrection from the dead, is the great secret. It was intimated in the very first promise: for the word to the serpent in Genesis 3 told of the death of Christ, and then of His victory; that is, of His victory by dying. The bruised One was to be a Bruiser.

Abel's sacrifice, and every sacrifice in either patriarchal or Mosaic times, bespoke death, and virtue in death — victorious, meritorious, expiating death.

Abraham's faith was in the same mystery. It was in the Quickener of the dead. It was the *pattern* faith; for he is called "the father of all them that believe."

Among the many voices of the prophets, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, that well known scripture, announces the same mystery; for it tells of the *glories* of the *bruised* One; and that bespeaks or intimates victorious death.

The Lord, in His teaching, anticipates His death as a victorious One, speaking at times of His resurrection from the dead, and of His raising up on the third day the temple of His body. John 2.

The woman who anointed Him for His burial gives us an expression of faith in the same mystery. She believed that He would die and be buried, but that He would pass through death and the grave as a Conqueror, and by that very process be introduced to His anointing or His glories. She understood the mystery of victorious death, or of resurrection from the dead, on which great fact the gospel hangs. Therefore it is that the Lord says of her, that wheresoever the *gospel* should be preached, her deed, her faith, should be had in remembrance. He made it a *pattern* faith, as Abraham's had been.

Then the epistles, in their day, abundantly open this same mystery, interpreting the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus as being the secret of the gospel.

Thus, all through, the victorious death of Jesus has been set forth. Without this great fact, redemption could not be — with it, redemption could not but be.

Sin and Christ meet, as I may express it, on the plains of death. Sin is death's sting, or inflicter; Christ is death's Conqueror, or Destroyer. They meet; and for certainty the result is the putting away of sin, and the redemption of its captive.

Resurrection *of* the dead simply, or the grave giving up the dead that are in it, would not be victory. The dead might be summoned from their graves, just to abide judgment; as those not written in the Lamb's book of life will be. It is resurrection *from* the dead that is victorious; and it insures redemption, and this great result, that

"whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"; for "the Lord" is Jesus in resurrection, the Purger of sins, and the Abolisher of death. See Romans 10: 13.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is a *great fact*. Whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear, there it is, and cannot be gainsayed. Neither can we escape from its application to ourselves. It has to do with us, with each of us, again I say, whether we will or not. It has its different virtue, its twofold force and meaning; and — each one should know how it addresses itself to him. Still, there it is, and none can elude it. Jesus risen and glorified is set above us and before us, as the sun is set in the heavens, and the creation of God has to do with it.

And who could pluck the sun out of the sky?

The glory seated itself in the cloud, as Israel went through the wilderness; and Israel must know it to be there, and have to do with it there, be they in what condition they may. It may conduct them cheerfully, if they walk obediently; it will rebuke and judge them, if otherwise. But there it is, as over them and before them; and they cannot elude its application to them, again I say, be they in what condition they may.

So again. Prophets come forth from God among the people. There they are; and whether the people will hear, or whether they will forbear, they shall know that prophets have been among them. They cannot gainsay the fact, or elude its application.

And so again. Christ in the world, in the days of His flesh, was a kindred fact. Satan had to know that as a fact, and as applying to him; and man had his blessing brought to him by it, or his guilt and judgment aggravated. The kingdom of God had come nigh; and of this, and of the force of it, they had to assure themselves.

And just according to all this is the present great fact of the resurrection. Jesus is risen and exalted. He is ascended and glorified.

We might as well attempt to pluck the sun out of the sky, as try to escape from the application of this great fact to our condition. It speaks of "judgment" and of "mercy," as we either look at the cross of Christ with convicted, interested hearts, or as we despise it and slight it. It has a voice in the ear of all. It speaks, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. There is, however, this distinction to be observed, and it is serious — to enjoy it as God's salvation we must, personally, livingly, by faith, be brought into connection with it now. If we slight it all our days it will bring itself into connection with us by-and-by.

This, surely I may say, is serious. It brings to mind Mark 5. In spite of Satan, whether he would or not, the Lord Jesus brings Himself into connection with him in the person of the poor Legion of Gadara, in order to judge him, and destroy his work. But He does not put Himself and the virtue that He carried in Him into connection with the poor diseased woman in the crowd, till she, by faith, had brought herself and her necessity to Him.

This distinction has a deeply serious truth in it. If we, by faith, use not a risen Jesus now, and get the *virtue* that is in Him, He will visit us by-and-by with the *judgment* which will then be with Him. No deprecation will *then* avail — no seeking *now* can but avail.

The sequel is well weighed. It is vain for man, or the world, or the god and prince of it, to resist the risen Christ; it will be found to be but kicking against the pricks — self-destruction. It is vain for the sinner who trusts in the risen Christ to be doubting, for God has justified him. The righteousness of God is his who pleads redemption and ransom by the blood - the God-glorifying atonement of Jesus. His death was the vindication of God in full, glorious righteousness. Let God now pardon the vilest — the cross entitles Him to do so, and yet maintains His righteousness and moral glory in all perfectness. Yea, it is the righteousness of God which accepts the sinner who pleads the cross; for as the cross *maintains*

God's righteousness, that righteousness is *displayed* in making righteous the sinner who pleads it.

And here I may add, we are ignorant of God — we have not the knowledge of Him, as the apostle speaks (1 Cor. 15: 34) — if we do not receive the fact or doctrine of resurrection. It is by that that God, in such a world as this, shows Himself in His proper glory. The enemy, through sin, has brought in death, and the Blessed One is displayed in victory over him — but this is only done by that great transaction which puts away sin and abolishes death. And resurrection is the witness of that.

The disciples were quite unbelieving as to this great fact, even after it had taken place. They were, at that time, exhibiting some very gracious and earnest affection, but they were betraying full unbelief as to this fact. But this is natural. More readily would we occupy ourselves for Him than believe that He has occupied Himself, fought and conquered, suffered and triumphed, for us.

With earnest affection the Galilean women visited the sepulchre. With boldness Joseph and Nicodemus claimed the body. It was something more than spices and ointments that embalmed it — it was love and zeal, and earnestness and tears. Magdalene lingers about the tomb, and Peter and John go to it as with rival haste. The two on the road to Emmaus, while they talk of Jesus, are sad; and godly kindlings stir in their hearts, as their fellow-Traveller makes Him His subject. All this was *gracious affection*; but with all this they were *unbelieving*. With this occupation of heart about Him, they did not receive the great fact of His victory for them

The Lord is not satisfied with this. How could He be? Sinners must know Him in the grace and strength that has met them in their need. The disciples come to the sepulchre diligently and lovingly, but still this will not do. By faith we must see Him coming to us as in our graves, and not think of going to Him in His grave. We are the *dead* ones, and not He; He is the *living* One, and not we. The Son of God entered this scene of ruin as a Redeemer of the lost, and as a

Quickener of the dead. It is *that* which we must know. He was tender, knowing how to appreciate the affection; but He rebuked the unbelief, and stayed not till He carried the light of this great mystery to their hearts and consciences. "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" — thus, in spirit, as I may say, offering their meat-offering and their drink-offering, as on the bringing of "the sheaf of the first fruits" out of the field, in the beginning of harvest. Lev. 23: 9-13.

Angels, however, were before them in this. They had learnt this mystery; they rejoiced in it; and in their way celebrated it. And we may, with comfort, when we think of this, say, What an interest is taken in heaven in the things that are transacted on earth! What intimacy of angels with sinners!

"Seen of angels" is part of "the mystery of godliness." The Christ of God is *the Object* with angels, while He is *going through His wondrous work and way for sinners!* Very blessed this is.

"The sons of God," the angels, shouted for joy when earth's *foundations* were laid; and the Book of the Apocalypse shows them taking their place and part in the great action when earth's career is *closing*.

They join in the joy that is known on high when a sinner first repents, and they minister to him all through his journey as an heir of salvation. We may therefore say again, What interested witnesses are they of all that concerns us! Hebrews 1: 14.

And what were they doing when Jesus was born? And what were they doing when Jesus had died? They are still present. They filled the plains of Bethlehem at the birth, they sit in the empty sepulchre after the resurrection. Is not this intimacy?

It has been said, and beautifully said, "The angels broke bounds that morning," when they appeared in crowds, and with exultation, to the shepherds. True; but they have been always "breaking bounds,"

always leaving their native heaven to interest themselves in the earth. That action in Luke 2 was but one chapter in their history.

Surely this intimacy of heaven with earth, this interest which the creatures of God there take in the objects of His grace here, tells us of the harmonies which are destined to fill the whole scene by-and-by. God is a God of order. The spheres which He forms and animates will be witnesses of these harmonies; and all will tell of the *skill of the hand* that has disposed them, and of the *love of the bosom* that has linked them.

And indeed, had it struck me before, I might have further added as to *man*, that his incorrigible, incurable condition is deeply, unanswerably proved. The rending of the veil leaves the scribes and priests as hardened and as wicked as ever, and the rending of the tomb leaves the soldiers that kept it in just the same state in which it found them. The one give money, and the other take it, to circulate a lie in the face of these awful and astounding facts. And surely we may say, the heart that can refuse fear and repentance and softening at the bidding of such visitations as these, such solemn doings of the hand of God as these, must stand convicted before us of being irrecoverably ruined. It is nothing less than the word "lost" that we have to inscribe on the human soul.

What moments, I may again say, are we contemplating thus at the close of each of the Gospels! We may say that, surely. The work accomplished has, however, given sinners, lost indeed in themselves, the very highest interests in God, and that for ever. It has given us a place in the *righteousness* of God it has given us likewise a place in the *family* of God. We are in relationship as well as in righteousness. We are sons — adopted as well as justified. By the cross God is revealed, as man is exposed. Man's condition of utter moral ruin was seen at Calvary, and there also is seen the glorious perfectness of God in goodness. The blood met the spear. The veil of the temple was rent in twain when the life of Jesus was yielded up — Jesus of Whom man had said, "Crucify Him, crucify

Him." God is revealed, as man is exposed; and the revelation is perfect to His glory, as man's exposure was perfect to his shame.

It is indeed nothing less than a perfect, bright, and wondrous display of itself that grace is making. God's presence to the sinner is restored in righteousness. He puts the sinner before Himself in a way and character worthy of the place. But not only righteousness before God, but, as we have said, adoption with the Father is ours also. And further — acceptance in the Beloved, conformity with the image of the Son, heirship of all things with Him, a glorious body, and the Father's house, and Christ's own throne in the world to come: all these are the sinner's who by faith enters the veil which God's own hand, through the blood of Christ, has rent from top to bottom. To wealthy places indeed grace introduces us, as God is thus manifesting Himself. But into these wealthy places we must make our passage, *each one for himself*. This is an *individual* thing. Each one of us for himself must take this journey, and pass from the condition in which nature leaves us into these wealthy places. We are, beloved, to be individualized before Him; afterwards we may know our fellow-saints, recognize our alliance with them, learn our place in a body, or exercise ourselves and fill our part and our duties in the congregation of God.

A needed recollection this is for the soul at all times — a happy, comforting recollection for it, in days of confusion and breach and separation like the present. We must be individualized before God.

In other days the people of God were thus before Him on two very solemn occasions — at the giving of the law in Exodus 19, 20, and at the consecration of Aaron in Leviticus 8, 9.

While the Lord was delivering the law of the Ten Commandments, Moses brought the people to the foot of the hill, and kept them there till the words were ended. While Aaron was being put into office, and went through his priestly services in the presence of God, Moses again brought the people forth, and set them at the door of the tabernacle till the solemnity was accomplished.

This was not the ordinary thing. Commonly the people heard what concerned them, and were instructed in their duties, through Moses, or through Moses and Aaron. But on these two great occasions, the giving of the law, and the institution of the priesthood, all the congregation of Israel had to be present, that each one for himself, in seeing and hearing, might witness these things, and know them.

But not only so. They went through an exercise of soul suited to each occasion. They were not only spectators, but they were instructed and affected spectators.

At Sinai they cry out and tremble. And this was as it should be. Moses, as on the part of the Lord, approves this cry and terror. We cannot properly think of God in judgment without being as men listening to a sentence of death upon them.

At the door of the tabernacle, when the fire and the glory came down from heaven to attest the sufficiency of Aaron's services, and to pledge their results, the congregation shout, and fall on their faces, as worshipping and happy. And this, again, was as it should be. God was there, not as a Legislator amid the terrors of judgment, but as a Saviour amid the rich provisions of grace. And we cannot receive God in grace and salvation without an answer of thankfulness and joy (poor with some of us, indeed, as we know) in our spirits.

Thus was it of old with Israel. Thus were they all, each one for himself, individualized in the divine presence on these two great and solemn occasions, and they felt the authority of each according to its different virtue. They were all there. The living God and each individual soul were engaged there, God with them, and they, each of them, with God. It is well to mark this.

When a man has to be convicted he must himself be in God's presence. When, as a convicted sinner, he would be relieved and set free, he must be again, in God's presence. Such moments must be intensely personal. We must, each of us, be born again — born again

(may I say?) for himself — and pass, through the new birth, into the light and kingdom of God. "I know Whom I have believed," says one. "I am crucified with Christ," he says again; "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."

There is, surely, the sense of individual, personal possession of Christ breathed in such passages. And this is to be ours now. It was also the utterance in fainter accents, if you please, of a far distant voice. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," says a patriarch; "and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

Surely, beloved, we should seek intimacy of heart with Him. The first duty, as well the highest privilege, yea, and the sublimest acting of faith, is just to take our place before the Lord, acquainting ourselves with Him, and being at peace. Instead of painfully inquiring of ourselves whether we are making suited returns to Him, we should charge our hearts to enjoy Him in these wondrous manifestations of Himself. Our first duty to the light that shines in Him is to learn *what He is* — calmly, and thankfully, and joyfully to learn that; and not anxiously and painfully to begin by measuring ourselves by it, or seeking to imitate it. His presence should be our home; so that, in the twinkling of an eye, whether at morning, at noonday, or at eventide, we might pass in there with ease and naturalness, with an abundant entrance; as one expressed it years ago, "like those who have nothing to lose, but all to gain." Amen.

"The Lamb of God."

BLESSED the Jesus Whom we know
In love's unwearied paths below,
Tracked by evangelists when here,
Is He Who is ascended there;

And faith still knows Him as the same,
And reads with confidence His name.
God's glory shone in that blest face,
In power, dignity, and grace.

'Twas not the light of Sinai's brow,
Which made all Israel to withdraw;
There was not there a single beam,
However dazzling it might seem,

Which told the heart to get a veil
To hide it, lest it faint and fail.
"Master, where dwellest Thou?" they say,
And, gladly bidden, there they stay;

And in that new, though holy ground,
A dwelling-place their spirits found.
Conscience another set apart
In converse with his wakened heart;

But for the fig-tree's shade is given
Jesus, and then an opened heaven.
"Come see a Man that told me all,"
Was a convicted sinner's call;

And those who at her bidding come,
Like her, with Him soon find their home.
E'en she for whom the angry hill
Would yield its stones to stone and kill,

The accursed, condemned, and guilty one,
Remains at ease with Him alone.
Thus 'mid our ruins once it shone,
'Mid its own glories now 't is known;

But we can bear *it brightest* there,
Since we have learnt it *dearly* here.
Lord, I desire to trace Thee more
Than e'er mine eye has done before;

Each passage of Thy life to be
A link between my soul and Thee!
For we shall see Thee as Thou *wert*,
When every utterance of Thine heart,

Through all Thy works of love divine,
Made all our need and sorrow Thine.
And we shall see Thee as Thou art,
And in Thine image bear our part,

In glory Thou, in glory we,
Bright in the heavenly majesty!
No part of Thy blest life below
But in its fulness I shall know,

Retouched by Thee, regained by me,
In realms of immortality!
With burning hearts we'll then rejoice
In echoes of that well known voice,

Which to two burning hearts of old
Did mysteries of grace unfold:
The voice that stilled bold nature's strife,
The voice that called the dead to life,

Which said in sympathy, "I will,"
And spake in power, "Peace, be still."
The hand that touched disease away,
And proved the sinking Peter's stay;

That raised the widow's child, and then

To her fond arms gave back again;
The hand that washed the feet all clean,
Speaking the heart that beat within;

The lifted hand that blessed them here
When parting, but to bless them there.
The arms which still are what they were
When little children's home was there.

The bosom, too, the same as when
John the beloved leaned thereon.
Here changes wrought no change in Thee,
The same from first to last we see;

In life and resurrection Thou,
Jesus! wert one both then and now.
In sweetest, gentlest forms of grace,
Amid Thine own Thou took'st Thy place;

The draught of fishes on the shore
Bespoke Thee risen as before;
And the spread table told of One,
The same, past, present, and to come.

Fed in the wilderness of old,
The camp of God nor bought nor sold,
But stores of heaven were oped each morn,
And angels' food, or heaven's corn,

Conveyed on dew, supplied the place -
Grand, gorgeous miracle of grace!
And Thou, Lord Jesus, in Thy day,
Again didst food in deserts lay;

Yet not in grandeur of the past,
But dearer — what shall ever last —

'T was Thine own heart that felt the need,
'T was Thine own hand the bread supplied.

'T was Thine own lips the blessing breathed –
Heart, hand, and lips the service weaved.
These were Thy sympathies with us,
And we shall ever know Thee. thus.

'Twas joy to Thee, while here on earth,
To mark the progress of that birth
Which leads poor sinners into light,
Forth from the gloom of nature's night.

'Twas joy to Thee while here on earth,
To hail the bold approach of faith,
The faith that reached Thee through the crowd,
Or, though forbidden, cried aloud.

For love delighteth to be used.
Faith's earnest thoughts are ne'er refused.
And this same joy and love in Thee,
We know unchanged eternally.

The look, the sigh, the groan, the tear,
Which marked Thy spirit's pathway here,
We own them still, O Lord, in Thee,
Thy mind, Thy heart, Thy sympathy!

Of Calvary I speak not here;
Blood sealed our only title there:
It has its own peculiar place
Amid the mysteries of grace.

But the loved home at Bethany,
And neighbouring, lone Gethsemane,
Poor Nazareth and Bethlehem,

And faithless, proud Jerusalem,

The mount, the wilderness, the sea,
The villages of Galilee,
The gate of Nain, and Sychar's well,
The coasts of Sidon, all will tell

The One Who travelled here before,
And tell us we need ask no more,
But stand, with welcome, soon to be
At home for ever, Lord, with Thee!

Thus, memory knows Thee, through the Word,
In all Thy ways and doings, Lord!
And memory no fiction weaves,
But turns to truthful, living leaves,

The footprints of a real past,
Which shine, and hold for ever fast.
'Tis not descriptive words of Thee,
But illustrations clear we see.

God's glory in Thy face portrayed -
Bright, living likeness without shade.
Those who see Thee the Father see -
Wondrous and priceless mystery!

The heavens Creator-glory tell,
His power and Godhead they reveal;
But these are hints by which we frame
Some of the secrets of His name:

But all He is, by sinners known,
In one blest Image He has shown.
We have not there to guess and spell,
We read in lines, fair, bright, and full;

We read it in our Saviour's face,
And, now, all doubts and searchings cease.
The sinner looks, wayfaring men,
The poor, and babes and sucklings then;

All learn Thee as Thou art and wert,
And thus Thou art for ever learnt.
Whate'er of Thine has once been shown,
That same is, sure, for ever known

Thy virtues, like Thyself, all fair,
No seed of change or loss is there:
Each feature of Thy heart and mind
For ever shineth, in its kind:

"Because 'tis Thine," makes this all plain,
It must be still, for it has been:
"Jesus the same, and ours for ever" -
No strength of hell this bond can sever.

But *this* we pray — for know we well
The world's and nature's dangerous spell, -
"Let no fair hope of human joy
The fond, desirous heart employ!

Let not the creature now repair
The breaches of each passing year!
With lamps still trimmed, and virgin love,
Teach us to wait Thee from above;

As bridal children, fasting here,
Till Thou, the Morning Star, appear,
To share with us that earliest light,
Day's harbinger, so lone and bright;

Pledging, ere long a world new-born,
Times of refreshing, like the morn."
Thus may our hopes and fears be past,
And with Thyself our lot be cast!

Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard,
What Thou in glory hast prepared
For him who loves and waits for Thee
In thine own world with Thee to be;

With Thee, Who art no stranger here
Though we as yet be strangers, there.

**The Moral Glory
of the
Lord Jesus Christ.**

by

J G Bellett.

Introduction.

It is the Moral Glory, or, as we speak, the character of the Lord Jesus, on which I meditate in these pages. All went up to God as a sacrifice of sweet savour. Every expression of Himself in every measure, however small, and in whatever relationship it was rendered, was incense. In His Person (but surely there only) *man* was reconciled to God. In Him God recovered His complacency in man, and that too with unspeakable gain; for in Jesus, man is more to God than He would have been in an eternity of Adam innocency.

But in this Meditation on the Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus, it is most surely but a small part of that wondrous subject I affect to have reached. I may give occasion to fruitful thoughts in the souls of others, and that will be good.

The Lord's *Person* I assume — God and man in one Christ. His *Work* I also assume; that suffering service, or blood-shedding, accomplished on the Cross, whereby reconciliation is perfected, and wherein it is preached for the acceptance and joy of faith.

**A Short Meditation on the Moral Glory
of
the Lord Jesus Christ.**

"And when any will offer a meat-offering, his offering shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon; and he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests; and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." — Lev. 2: 1, 2.

The glories of the Lord Jesus are threefold — personal, official, and moral. His personal glory He veiled, save where faith discovered it, or an occasion demanded it. His official glory He veiled likewise; He did not walk through the land as either the Divine Son from the bosom of the Father, or as the authoritative Son of David. Such glories were commonly hid, as He passed on in the circumstances of life day by day. But His moral glory could not be hid. He could not be less than perfect in every thing — it belonged to Him, it was Himself. From its intense excellency, it was too bright for the eye of man; and man was under constant exposure and rebuke from it. But there it shone, whether man could bear it or not. It now illuminates every page of the four evangelists, as it once did every path which the Lord himself trod on this path of ours.

It has been said of the Lord — "His humanity was perfectly natural in its development." This is very beautiful and true. Luke 2: 52 would verify this. There was nothing of unnatural progress in Him: all was orderly increase. His wisdom kept pace with His stature, or age. He was the child first, then the man. By-and-by, as a man (God's Man in the world), He will testify of the world that its works are evil, and be hated by it; but as a child (a child after God's heart, as 1 may say), He will be subject to His parents, and under the law, and as one perfect. In such conditions He grew in favour with God and man.

But though there was *progress* in Him, as we thus see, there was no cloud, or perversion, or mistake; in this He distinguished Himself from all. His mother pondered things in her heart; but cloud and indistinctness, nay, darkness itself, beset her mind, and the Lord had to say to her, "How is it that ye sought Me?" But with Him, progress was but one form of moral beauty — His growth was orderly and was seasonable; and, I may add, that as "His humanity was perfectly natural in its development," so was His character entirely human in its expressions: all that displayed it was common to man, as I may say.

He was the tree planted by the rivers of waters that bringeth forth his fruit in his season (Psalm 1); and all things are only beautiful in their season. The moral glory of the child Jesus "shines in its season and generation; and when He becomes a man, the same glory only gets other seasonable expressions. He knew when to own the claims of His mother, when she made them; when to resist them, though she made them; when to recognize them unsought (Luke 2: 51; Luke 8: 21; John 19: 27). And, as we afterwards track Him, He knew Gethsemane in season, or according to its character; and the Holy Mount in its season, winter and summer, to His spirit. He knew the well of Sychar, and the road which led Him to Jerusalem for the last time. He trod each path, or filled each spot, in that mind that was according to the character it bore under God's eye. And so on occasions which called for still more energy. If it be the defilement of His Father's house, He will let zeal consume Him; if it be His own wrong at the hand of some Samaritan villagers, He will suffer it, and pass on.

And all was perfect in its *combinations*, as well as in its *season*. He wept as He was reaching the grave of Lazarus, though He knew that He carried life for the dead. He who had just said, "I am the resurrection and the life," wept. Divine power would leave human sympathies free to take their full course.

And it is assemblage, or combination of virtues, which forms moral glory. He knew, as the apostle speaks, "how to abound and how to be abased;" how to use moments of prosperity, so to call them, and also times of depression. For, in His passage through life, He was introduced to each of these.

Thus, He was introduced for a moment to His glory; and a very bright moment it was. I allude to the transfiguration. He was high in His honours there. As the sun, the source of all brightness, there He shone; and such eminent ones as Moses and Elias are there, taking of His glory from Him, and in it shining with Him. But as He descended the hill, He charged those who had been with Him, "the eye-witnesses of His majesty," not to speak of it. And when the people, on His reaching the foot of the hill, ran to salute Him (Mark 9: 15), — His person still reflecting, I believe, though faintly, the glory which it had lately borne, — He does not linger among them to receive their homage, but at once addresses Himself to His common service; for He knew "how to abound." He was not exalted by His prosperity. He sought not a place among men, but emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation, quickly veiled the glory that He might be the servant; the *girded*, not the *arrayed* One.

And it was thus with Him a second time, after He had become the risen Jesus, as we may see in John 20. He is there in the midst of His disciples, in such a glorious character as man had never borne or witnessed, and never could. He is there as the Conqueror of death, and the Spoiler of the grave. But He is not there — though in such glories — to receive the congratulations of His people, as we speak, and as one naturally would, who was finding Himself returned to the bosom of friends and kinsfolk, after toil, and danger, and victory. Not that He was indifferent to sympathy: He sought it in season, and felt the want of it when He did not get it. But He is now, risen from the dead, in the midst of His disciples, rather as a visitor for a day, than as in a triumph. He is rather teaching them *their* interest, and not displaying *His own*, in the great things which had just been accomplished.

This was using a victory indeed, as Abraham knew how to use his victory over the confederate kings, a harder thing, as some have said, than to gain it. This, again, was knowing "how to abound," how "to be full."

But He knew "how to be abased," also. Look at Him with the Samaritan villagers in Luke 9. At the outset of that action, in the sense of His personal glory, He anticipated His being "raised up," as He actually was afterwards (Mark 16: 19; 1 Tim. 3: 16; the Greek word is the same); and in the common, well-known style of one who would have it known that a person of distinction was coming that way, He sends messengers before His face. But the unbelief of the Samaritans changes the scene. They would not receive Him. They refused to cast up a highway for the feet of this glorious one, but forced Him to find out for Himself the best path He could, as the *rejected* One. But He accepts this place at once, without a murmur in His heart. He becomes again (borrowing the word from Matt. 2.) the Nazarene, seeing He was refused as the Bethlehemite, and He fills this new character on this side of the Samaritan village, as perfectly as He had filled the other character on the other side of it.

Thus He knew "how to be abased," and just so do we again see Him in Matt. 21. He enters the city as Son of David. All that could set Him off in that dignity surrounds and accompanies Him. He is in His earthly honour now, as He had been in His heavenly glory on the holy hill. It was His without robbery; and when the moment demanded it, He can wear it. But the unbelief of Jerusalem now, as the unbelief of Samaria before, changes the scene, and He who had entered the city as her king has to leave it, to seek a night's lodging, so to speak, where best He could find it. But there He is, outside Jerusalem, as before He had been outside the Samaritan village, knowing "how to be abased."

What perfection! If the darkness comprehend *not* the light of His personal or official glory, His moral glory shall only find occasion to shine the brighter. For there is nothing in morals or in human

character finer than this combination of willing degradation in the midst of men, and the consciousness of intrinsic glory before God. We see it in some of the saints beautifully. *Abraham* was a willing stranger in the midst of the Canaanites all his days, not having a foot of land, nor seeking to have it; but when occasion served, he would take headship even of kings, conscious of his dignity in God's sight, according to God's own counsel. *Jacob* would speak of his pilgrimage, of his few and evil days, making himself nothing in the reckoning of the world; but he would at the same moment bless him who at that time was the greatest man on the earth, conscious that, under God, and before him, he was "the better," the greater man of the two.

David would ask for a loaf of bread, and ask for it without shame. But, with all that, he would accept the homage due to a king, receiving the tribute of his subjects, as in the person of *Abigail*. *Paul* was bound with a chain, a prisoner in the palace, and would speak of his bonds; but at that same moment he would let the whole court and high estate of the Roman world know, that he knew himself to be the blest man, the only blest man, in the midst of them.

It is this combination of willing degradation before man, and conscious glory before God, that gets its highest, brightest, nay (when I consider who he was), its infinite illustration in our Lord.

And there is still further moral beauty in this knowing how to abound, and how to be abased, how to be full, and how to suffer need; for it tells us that the heart of him who has learnt that lesson is upon *the end* of the journey, rather upon the *journey itself*. If the heart be on the journey, we shall not like these accidents and difficulties, the rough places and the hilly places; but if it be on the end, it will in proportion overlook such things. It is surely a secret rebuke to some of us to trace all this.

But there are other combinations in the Lord's character that we must look at. Another has said of Him, "He was the most generous and accessible of men." We observe in His ways a tenderness and a

kindness never seen in man, yet we always feel that He "was a stranger." How true this is! He was "a stranger here" — a stranger as far as *revolted man* was filling the place, but intimately near as far as *misery or need demanded Him*. The distance He took, and the intimacy He expressed, were perfect. He did more than look on the misery that was around Him, He entered into it with a sympathy that was all His own; and He did more than refuse the pollution that was around Him, — He kept the very distance of holiness itself from every touch or stain of it. See Him as exhibiting this combination of distance and intimacy in Mark 6. It is an affecting scene. The disciples return to Him after a long day's service. He cares for them. He brings their weariness very near to Him. He takes account of it, and provides for it at once, saying to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." But, the multitude following Him, He turns with the same readiness to them, acquainting Himself with their condition; and having taken knowledge of them, as sheep that had no shepherd, He began to teach them. In all this we see Him very near to the rising, varied need of the scene around him, whether that need be the fatigue of the disciples, or the hunger and ignorance of the multitude. But the disciples soon resent His attention to the multitude, and move Him to send them away. This, however, will in no wise do for Him. There is immediate estrangement between Him and them, which shortly afterwards expresses itself by His telling them to get into the ship while He sent the multitude away. But this separation from Him only works fresh trouble for them. Winds and waves are against them on the lake; and then in their distress He is again near at hand to succour and secure them!

How consistent in the combination of holiness and grace is all this. He is near in our weariness, our hunger, or our danger. He is apart from our tempers and our selfishness. His holiness made Him an utter stranger in such a polluted world; His grace kept Him ever active in such a needy and afflicted world. And this sets off His life, I may say, in great moral glory; that though forced, by the quality of the scene around Him, to be a lonely One, yet was He drawn forth

by the need and sorrow of it to be the active One. And these activities were spent on all kinds of persons, and had therefore to assume all kinds of forms. Adversaries, — the people, a company of disciples who followed Him (the twelve), and individuals; these kept Him not only in constant, but in very various activity; and He had to know, as surely He did to perfection, how to answer every man. And beside all this, we see Him at times at the *table* of others; but it is only that we may still notice further various perfection. At the table of the Pharisees, as we see Him occasionally, He is not adopting or sanctioning the family scene, but being invited in the character which He had already acquired and sustained outside, He is there to act in that character. He is not a guest simply, under the courtesy and hospitality of the master, and therefore He can rebuke or teach. He is still the Light, and will act as the Light; and thus He exposes darkness within doors as He did abroad. (Luke 7: 11).

But if He thus entered the house of the Pharisee again and again, in the character of a *teacher*, and would then, acting as such, rebuke the moral condition of things which He found there, He entered the house of the publican as a Saviour. Levi made Him a feast in his own house, and set publicans and sinners in His company. That is, of course, objected to. The religious rulers find fault, and then the Lord reveals Himself as a Saviour, saying to them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; but go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Very simple, but very striking, and full of meaning, this is. Simon the Pharisee objected that a sinner should enter his house and approach the Lord Jesus; Levi the publican provided such as these to be the fellow-guests of the Lord Jesus. And accordingly, the Lord in one house acts as a reprovor, in the other, discloses Himself in the rich grace of a Saviour.

But we are to see Him at other tables still. We may visit Him in Jericho and Emmaus. (See Luke 19 and Luke 24) It was desire that received Him on each of these occasions; but desire differently

awakened — awakened, I mean, under different influences. Zaccheus had been but a sinner, a child of nature, which is, as we know, corrupt in its springs and its activities. But he had been just at that moment under the drawings of the Father, and his soul was making Jesus its object. He wished to see Him, and that desire being commanding, he had pressed his way through the crowd, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, if he might but just see Him as He passed by. The Lord looked up, and at once invited Himself into his house. This is very peculiar, — Jesus is an uninvited, self-invited guest in the house of that publican at Jericho!

The earliest strivings of life in a poor sinner, the desire which had been awakened by the drawings of the Father, were there in that house ready to welcome Him; but sweetly and significantly He anticipates the welcome, and goes in — goes in, in full, consistent, responsive character, to kindle and strengthen the freshly-quickened life, till it break forth in some of its precious virtue, and yield some of its own good fruit. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." At Emmaus, *desire* had been again quickened, but under different conditions. It was not the desire of a freshly-drawn soul, but of restored saints. These two disciples had been unbelieving. They were returning home under a sorrow that Jesus had disappointed them. The Lord rebukes them shortly after He joined them on the road, but so orders His words as to kindle their hearts. When their walk together ends at the gate of their dwelling, the Lord makes as though He would go further. He would not invite Himself as He had done at Jericho. They were not in the moral state which suggested this, as Zaccheus had been; but, when invited, He goes in — goes in just to kindle further the desire which had here invited Him — to gratify it to the full. And so He does; and they are constrained by their joy to return to the city that night, late as it was, to communicate it to their fellows.

How full of various beauty all these cases are! The guest in the house of Pharisees, the guest in the house of publicans, the guest in

the house of disciples, — the invited and the uninvited guest in the person of Jesus, sits in His place, in all perfection and beauty. I might instance Him as a guest at other tables; but, I will now look only at one more. At Bethany, we see Him adopting a family scene. Had Jesus disallowed the idea of a Christian family, He could not have been at Bethany, as we see He was. And yet, when we get Him there, it is only some new phase of moral beauty that we trace in Him. He is a friend of the family, finding, as we find to this day among ourselves, a home in the midst of them. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus," are words which bespeak this. His love to them was not that of a Saviour, or a Shepherd, though we know well He was each of these to them. It was the love of a family friend. But though a friend, an intimate friend, who might whenever He pleased find a welcome there; yet He did not interfere with the arrangements of the house. Martha was the housekeeper, the busy one of the family, useful and important in her place; and Jesus will surely leave her where He finds her. It was not for Him to alter or settle such matters. Lazarus may sit by the side of the guests at the family table, Mary may be abstracted and withdrawn as in her own kingdom, or into the kingdom of God within her, and Martha be busy and serving. Be it so. Jesus leaves all this just as He finds it. He who would not enter the house of another unbidden, when entered into the house of those sisters and brother will not meddle with its order and arrangements, and in full moral comeliness this is. But if one of the family, instead of carrying herself in her family place, step out of it to be a teacher in His presence, He must and will resume His higher character, and set things right *divinely*, though He would not interfere with or touch them *domestically*. (Luke 10: 38-42)

What various and exquisite beauty! Who can trace all His paths? The vulture will have to say, it is beyond even the reach of his eye. And if no human eye can fully see the whole of this one object, where is the human character that does not aid in setting off its light by its own shadows and imperfections? We none of us think of John, or of Peter, or of the rest of them, as hard-hearted or unkind. Quite

otherwise. We feel that we could have entrusted them with our griefs or our necessities. But this little narrative in Mark 6, to which I referred, shows us that they are all at fault, all in the distance, when the hunger of the multitude appealed to them, threatening to break up their ease; but, on the contrary, *that* was the very moment, the very occasion, when Jesus drew near. All this tells us of Him, beloved. "I know no one," says another, "so kind, so condescending, who is come down to poor sinners, as He. I trust His love more than I do Mary's, or any saint's; not merely His power as God, but the tenderness of His heart as man. No one ever showed such, or had such, or proved it so well — none has inspired one with such confidence. Let others go to saints or angels, if they will; I trust Jesus' kindness more." Surely, again I say, this is so — and this occasion in Mark 6, betraying the narrow-heartedness of the best of us, such as Peter and John, but manifesting the full, unwearied, saving grace of Jesus, verifies it. But further: there are in Him combinations of characters, as well as of virtues or graces. His relationship to the world, when He was there, exhibits this. He was at once a Conqueror, a Sufferer, and a Benefactor. What moral glories shine in such an assemblage! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions and offers; He suffered from it, witnessing for God against its whole course and spirit; He blessed it, dispensing His love and power continually, returning good for evil. Its temptations only made Him a conqueror; its pollutions and enmities only a sufferer; its miseries only a benefactor. What a combination! What moral glories shine in each other's company there!

The Lord illustrated that word that is among us, "*in* the world, but not *of* the world" — a form of words which, I suppose, has been derived from what He Himself says in John 17: 15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." He illustrates this condition all through His life; for He was ever in the world, active in the midst of its ignorance and misery, but never of it, as one that shared its hopes or projects, or breathed its spirit. But in John 7 I believe He is eminently seen in this character. It was the time of the Feast of

Tabernacles, the crowning joyous time in Israel, the antepast of the coming kingdom, the season of ingathering, when the people had only to *remember* that they had been in other days wanderers in a wilderness, and dwellers in a camp. His brethren propose to Him to take advantage of such a moment, when "all the world," as we speak, was at Jerusalem. They would have Him make Himself important, make Himself, as we again speak, "a man of the world." "If thou do these things," they say, "show thyself to the world." He refused. His time had not then come to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. He will have His kingdom in the world, and be great to the end of the earth, when His day comes; but as yet He was on His way to the altar, and not to the throne. He will not go to the feast to be *of the feast*, though He will be *in* it; therefore, when He reaches the city at this time, we see Him in *service* there, not in *honour*, not working miracles as His brethren would have had Him, that He might gain the notice of men; but teaching others, and then hiding Himself under this, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."

Very peculiar and characteristic indeed all this in And all this was some of the moral glory of the Man, the perfect Man, Jesus, in His relation to the world. He was a conqueror, a sufferer, and a benefactor — in the world, but not of it. But with equal perfectness do we see Him at times *distinguishing things*, as well as exhibiting these beautiful combinations. Thus, in dealing with sorrow, which *lay outside*, as I may express it, we see tenderness, the power that relieved; but in dealing with the power of *disciples*, we see faithfulness as well as tenderness. The leper in Matt. 8 is a stranger. He brings his sorrow to Christ, and gets healing at once. Disciples, in the same chapter, bring their sorrow also, their fears in the storm; but they get rebuke as well as relief. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" He says to them. And yet the leper had but little faith, as well as the disciples. If they said, "Lord, save us, we perish;" he said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." But they are rebuked, while he is not, just because there was a different thing before the mind of the Lord, and justly so. It was *simply sorrow* in the one case; it was *the soul as well as the sorrow* in the other.

Tenderness, unmixed tenderness, was therefore His answer to the one; faithfulness must form part of the other. The different relationship to Him, of disciples and strangers, at once accounts for this, and may show how perfectly He distinguished things that came very near each other, but still were not the same. But further, as to this perfection. Though He Himself rebuke, He will not allow others lightly to do it. As in earlier days, Moses may be humbled by the Lord, but the Lord will not allow Miriam and Aaron to reproach him. (Num. 11, 12.) Israel in the wilderness will be chastened again and again by the hand of God, but in the face of Balaam, or any other adversary, He will be as one that has not seen iniquity in His people, and will not suffer any enchantment to prevail against them. So the Lord Jesus will beautifully and strikingly step in between the two disciples and the rebuking ten (Matt. 20.), and though He sent a word of warning and admonition to John the Baptist, as in secret (such a word as John's conscience alone might understand), He turns to the multitude to speak of John only with commendation and delight. And still further, as to this grace in distinguishing things that differ. Even in dealing with His disciples, there did come a moment when faithfulness can be observed no longer, and tenderness *alone* is to be exercised. I mean in the hour of parting, as we see in John 14 & 16. It was then "too late to be faithful." The moment would not have admitted it. It was a time which the *heart* claimed as entirely belonging to itself. The education of the soul could not go on then. He opens fresh secrets to them, it is true, secrets of the dearest and most intimate relationships, as between them and the Father; but there is nothing that is to be called rebuke. There is no such word as, "O ye of little faith!" or "How is it that ye do not understand?" A word that may sound somewhat like that, is only the discharging of a wound which the heart had suffered, that they might know the love He had for them. This was the sacredness of the sorrow of a moment of parting, in the perfect mind and affection of Jesus; and we practise it ourselves in some poor manner, so that we are at least able to enjoy and admire the full expression of it in Him. "There is a time to embrace," says the preacher, "and there is a time to refrain

from embracing." This is a law in the statute-book of love, and Jesus observed it.

But again. He was not to be drawn into softness, when the occasion demanded faithfulness, and yet He passed by many circumstances which human sensibilities would have resented, and which the human moral sense would have judged it well to resent. He would not gain His disciples after the poor way of amiable nature. Honey was excluded from the offering made by fire, as well as leaven. The meat offering had none of it (Lev. 2: 11); neither had Jesus, the true meat offering. It was not the merely civil, amiable thing, that the disciples got from their Master. It was not the courtesy that consults for the ease of another. He did not gratify, and yet He bound them to Him very closely; and this is power. There is always moral power when the confidence of another is gained without its being sought; for the heart has then become conscious of the reality of love. "We all know," writes one, "how to distinguish between love and attention, and that there may be a great deal of the latter without any of the former. Some might say, attention must win our confidence; but we know ourselves that nothing but love does." This is so true. Attention, if it be mere attention, is honey, and how much of this poor material is found with us! and we are disposed to think that it is all well, and perhaps we aim no higher than to purge out leaven, and fill the lump with honey. Let us be amiable, perform our part well in the courteous, well-ordered social scene, pleasing others, and doing what we can to keep people on good terms with themselves, then we are satisfied with ourselves and others with us also. But is this service to God? Is this a meat offering? Is this found as part of the moral glory of perfect man? Indeed, indeed it is not. We may naturally judge, I grant, that nothing could do it better or more effectually; but still it is one of the secrets of the sanctuary, that *honey was not used to give a sweet savour to the offering*

Thus, in progress, in reasonableness, in combinations, and in distinctions, how perfect in moral glory and beauty were all the ways of this Son of Man!

The life of Jesus was the bright shining of a candle. It was such a lamp in the house of God as needed no golden tongs or snuff-dishes. It was ordered before the Lord continually, burning as from pure beaten oil. It was making manifest all that was around, exposing and improving; but it ever held its own place uncondemned.

Whether challenged by disciples or adversaries, as the Lord was again and again, there is never an excusing of Himself. On one occasion disciples complain, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" But He does not think of vindicating the sleep out of which this challenge awakes Him. On another occasion they object to Him, "The multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But He does not need this inquiry, but acts upon the satisfaction of it. At another time Martha says to Him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But He does not excuse His not having been there, nor His delaying for two days in the place where He was; but instructs Martha in the *wondrous character which His delay had given to that hour*.

What a glorious vindication of His delay that was! And thus it was on every like occasion; whether challenged or rebuked, there is never the recalling of a word, nor the retracing of a step. Every tongue that rises in judgement against Him, He condemns. The mother rebukes Him in Luke 2; but instead of making good her charge, she has to listen to Him convicting the darkness and error of her thoughts. Peter takes upon him to admonish Him: "This be far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Peter has to learn, that it was Satan himself that in Peter prompted the admonition. The officer in the palace of the High Priest goes still further, correcting Him, and smiting Him on the cheek. But he is convicted of breaking the rules of judgment, in the very face and place of judgment.

All this tells us of the way of the perfect Master. Appearances might have been against Him at times. Why did He sleep in the boat when winds and waves were raging? Why did He loiter on the road when Jairus's daughter was dying? or why did He tarry where He was

when His friend Lazarus was sick in the distant village of Bethany? But all this is but *appearance*, and that for a moment. We have heard of these ways of Jesus, this sleep, this loitering, and this tarrying, but we also see the end of Jesus, that all is perfect. Appearances were against the God of Job in patriarchal days. Messenger after messenger seemed too much, unrelenting, and inexorable; but the God of Job had not to excuse Himself, nor has the Jesus of the evangelists.

Therefore, when we look at the Lord Jesus as the lamp of the sanctuary, the light in the house of God, we find at once that the tongs and snuff-dishes cannot be used. They are discovered to have no counterpart in Him. Consequently, they who undertook to challenge or rebuke Him when He was here, had to go back rebuked and put to shame themselves. They were using the tongs or snuffers with a lamp which did not need them, and they only betrayed their folly; and the light of the lamp shone the brighter, not because the tongs had been used, but because it was able to give forth some fresh witness (which it did on every occasion) that it did not need them.

And from all these instances we have the happy lesson, that we had better stand by, and let Jesus go on with His business. We may look and worship, but not meddle or interrupt, as all these were wrong in their day — enemies, kinsfolk, and even disciples. They could not improve the light that was shining; they had only to be gladdened by it, and walk in it, and not attempt to trim or order it. Let our eye be single, and we may be sure the candle of the Lord, set on the candlestick, will make the whole body full of light.

But I pass on. And I may further observe, that as He did not excuse Himself to the judgment of man in the course of His ministry, as we have now seen, so in the hour of His weakness, when the powers of darkness were all against Him. He did not cast Himself on the pity of man. When He became the prisoner of the Jews and of the Gentiles, He did not entreat them or sue to them. No appeal to

compassion, no pleading for life is heard. He had prayed to the Father in Gethsemane, but there is no seeking to move the Jewish high priest or the Roman governor. All that He says to man in that hour, is to expose the sin with which man, whether Jew or Gentile, was going through that hour.

What a picture! Who could have conceived such an object! It must have been exhibited ere it was described, as has been long since observed by others. It was the perfect Man, who once walked here in the fulness of moral glory, and whose reflections have been left by the Holy Ghost on the pages of the evangelists. And next to the simple, happy, earnest assurance of His personal love to ourselves (the Lord increase it in our hearts!) nothing more helps us to desire to be with Him, than this discovery of *Himself*. I have heard of one who, observing His bright and blessed ways in the Four Gospels, was filled with tears and affections, and was heard to cry out, "O that I were with Him! "

If one may speak for others, beloved, it is this we want, and it is this we *covet*. We know our need, but we can say, the Lord knows our desire.

The same preacher whom we quoted before, says, "There is a time to keep, and a time to cast away." (Ecc. 3: 6.) The Lord Jesus both kept and cast away, in the due season.

There is no waste in the services of the heart or the hand that worships God, be they as prodigal as they may. "All things come of thee," says David to the Lord, "and of thine own have we given thee."

The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and the fulness of the earth. But Pharaoh treated Israel's proposal to worship God as "idleness," and the disciples challenge the spending of three hundred pence on the body of Jesus as "waste." But to give the Lord His own, the honour or the sacrifice, the love of the heart, the labour of the hands,

or the substance of the house, is neither idleness nor waste. It is chief work to render to God.

But here I would linger for a moment or two.

Renouncing Egypt is not idleness, nor is the breaking of a box of ointment on the head of Christ waste; though we thus see, that a certain kind of reckoning among the children of men, and even at times (and that too frequent) among the saints of God, would charge these things as such. Advantages in life are surrendered, opportunities of worldly promise are not used, because the heart has understood the path of companionship with a rejected Lord.

But this is "idleness" and "waste," many will say: the advantages might have been retained by the possessor, or the opportunities might have been sought and reached, and then used for the Lord. But such persons know not. Station, and the human, earthly influence that attaches to it, is commended by them, and treated almost as "a gift to be used for profit, and edification and blessing." But a rejected Christ, a Christ cast out by men, if known spiritually by the soul, would teach another lesson.

This station in life, these worldly advantages, these opportunities so commended, are the very Egypt which Moses renounced. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

The treasures of Egypt were not riches in his esteem, because he could not use them for the Lord. And he went outside of them, and the Lord met him there, and used him afterwards, not to accredit Egypt and its treasures, but to deliver His people out of it.

I follow this a little here, for it is, I feel, important to us.

All this renunciation, however, must be made in the understanding and faith of a rejected Lord; it will otherwise want all its fine, and genuine, and proper character. If it be made on a mere *religious* principle, as that of working out a righteousness or a title for

ourselves, it may well be said to be something worse than idleness or waste. It then betrays an advantage which Satan has got over us, rather than any advantage we have got over the world. But if it be indeed made in the faith and love of a rejected Master, and in the sense and intelligence of His relation to this present evil world, it is worship.

To serve man at the expense of God's truth and principles is not Christianity, though persons who do so will be called "benefactors." Christianity considers the glory of God, as well as the blessing of man; but as far as we lose sight of this, so far shall we be tempted to call many things waste and idleness which are really holy, intelligent, consistent, and devoted service to Jesus. Indeed, it is so. The Lord's vindication of the woman who poured her treasure on the head of Jesus tells me so (Matt. 26.). We are to own God's glory in what we do, though men may refuse to sanction what does not advance the good order of the world, or provide for the good of our neighbour. But Jesus would know God's claims in this self-seeking world, while He recognized (very surely, as we may know), His neighbour's claim upon Himself.

He knew when to cast away, and when to keep. "Let her alone," He said of the woman who had been upbraided for breaking the box of spikenard on Him; "she hath wrought a good work on me." But after feeding the multitudes He would say, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

This was observing the Divine rule, "There is a time to keep, and a time to cast away." If the prodigal service of the heart or hand in worship be no waste, the very crumbs of human food are sacred, and must not be cast away. He who vindicated the spending of 300 pence on one of these occasions, on the other would not let the fragments of three loaves be left on the ground. In His eyes, such fragments were sacred. They were the food of life, the herb of the field, which God had given to man for his life. And life is a sacred thing. God is the God of the living. "To you it shall be for meat,"

God has said of it, and therefore Jesus would hallow it. "The tree of the field is man's life," the law had said, and accordingly had thus prescribed to them that were under the law — "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down to employ them in the siege: only the trees that thou knowest are not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down" (Deut. 20). It would have been waste, it would have been profanity, to have thus abused the food of life, which was God's gift. And Jesus in like purity, in the perfectness of God's living ordinance, would not let the fragments lie on the ground. "Gather up the fragments that remain," He said, "that nothing be lost."

These are but small incidents; but all the circumstances of human life, as He passes through them, change as they may, or be they as minute as they may, are thus adorned by something of the moral glory that was ever brightening the path of His sacred, wearied feet. The eye of man was incapable of tracking it; but to God it was all incense, a sacrifice of sweet savour, a sacrifice of rest, the meat offering of the sanctuary.

But again. The Lord did not judge of persons in relation to Himself, — a common fault with us all. We naturally judge of others according as they treat ourselves, and we make our interest in them the measure of their character and worth. But this was not the Lord. God is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. He understands every action *fully*. In all its moral meaning He understands it, and according to that He weighs it. And, as the image of the God of knowledge, we see our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of His ministry here, again and again. I may refer to Luke 11. There was the air of courtesy and good feeling towards Him in the Pharisee that invited Him to dine. But the Lord was "the God of knowledge" and as such He weighed this action in its full moral character.

The honey of courtesy, which is the best ingredient in social life in this world, should not pervert His taste or judgment. He approved things that are excellent. The civility which invited Him to dinner was not to determine the judgment of Him who carried the weights and measures of the sanctuary of God. It is the God of knowledge that this civility has on this occasion to confront, and it does not stand, it will not do. O how the tracing of this may rebuke us! The invitation covered a purpose. As soon as the Lord entered the house, the host acts the Pharisee, and not the host. He marvels that his guest had not washed before dinner. And the character he thus assumes at the beginning shows itself in full force at the end. And the Lord deals with the whole scene accordingly; for He weighed it as the God of knowledge. Some may say, that the courtesy He had received might have kept Him silent. But He could not look on this man simply as in relation to Himself. He was not to be *flattered* out of a just judgement. He exposes and rebukes, and the end of the scene justifies Him. "And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things, laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him."

Very different, however, was His way in the house of another Pharisee, who in like manner had asked Him to dine. (Luke 7) For Simon had no covered purpose in the invitation. Quite otherwise. He seemed to act the Pharisee too, silently accusing the poor sinner of the city, and his guest for admitting her approach. But appearances are not the ground of righteous judgments. Often the very same words, on different lips, have a different mind in them. And therefore the Lord, the perfect weighmaster according to God, though He may rebuke Simon, and expose him to himself, knows him by name, and leaves his house as a guest should leave it. He distinguishes the Pharisee of Luke 7 from the Pharisee of Luke 11, though He dined with both of them. So we may look at the Lord with Peter in Matthew 16. Peter expresses fond and considerate attachment to his Master: "This be far from thee, Lord; this shall not

be unto thee." But Jesus judged Peter's words only in their *moral* place. Hard indeed we find it to do this when we are personally gratified. "Get thee behind me, Satan," was not the answer which a merely amiable nature would have suggested to such words. But again, I say, our Lord did not listen to Peter's words simply as they expressed personal kindness and goodwill to Himself. He *judged* them, he weighed them, as in the presence of God, and at once found that the enemy had moved them; for He that can transform Himself into an angel of light is very often lurking in words of courtesy and kindness. And in the same way the Lord dealt with Thomas in John 20. Thomas had just worshipped Him. "My Lord and my God," he had said. But Jesus was not to be drawn from the high moral elevation that He filled, and from whence He heard and saw everything, even by words like these. They were genuine words, words of a mind which, enlightened of God, had repented toward the risen Saviour, and, instead of doubting any longer, worshipped. But Thomas had stood out as long as he could. He had exceeded. They had all been unbelieving as to the resurrection, but he had insisted that he would be still in unbelief till sense and sight came to deliver him. All this had been his moral condition; and Jesus has this before Him, and puts Thomas in his right moral place, as He had put Peter. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Our hearts in such cases as these would have been taken by surprise. They could not have kept their ground in the face of these assaults, which the good will of Peter and the worship of Thomas would have made upon them. But our perfect Master stood for God and His truth, and not for Himself. The ark of old was not to be flattered. Israel may honour it, and bring it down to the battle, telling it, as it were, that now in its presence all *must* be well with them. But this will not do for the God of Israel. Israel falls before the Philistines, though the ark be thus in the battle; and Peter and Thomas shall be rebuked, though Jesus, still the God of Israel, be honoured by them.

Angels have their joy over the repentance of sinners. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It

is happy to have this secret of heaven disclosed to us, and to read one illustration of it after another, as we do in Luke 15.

But there is something beyond this. The joy there, though in heaven, is *public*. It utters itself, and has companionship. Very proper that it should be so; very proper that the whole house should share it, and find it a common joy. But there is something beyond this. There is the joy of the *Divine bosom*, as well as this joy of heaven. John 4: 27-32 gives it to us, as Luke 15 gives us the public joy of heaven. And this joy of the Divine bosom, I need not say, is the deeper thing. It is full, silent, and personal. It asks not to be raised or sustained by others. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," is the language of the heart of Christ, as He tasted this joy. The glory was filling the house, so that the ministers of the house must stand by for a time. The Shepherd had but just brought home the stray one of the flock, having laid it on His shoulders rejoicing, and as yet the joy was all His own. The household had not been called to rejoice with Him, when the woman left Him a saved and happy sinner. Disciples felt the character of the moment. They would not trespass. The fat reserved for the altar, the richest portion of the feast, "the food of God," was spread, and the disciples were silent, and stood apart. This was a wondrous moment — not many like it. The deep, unuttered joy of the Divine bosom is known here, as the public ecstatic joy of heaven is known in Luke 15.

But He that could be thus feasted was weary betimes, and hungry, and thirsting. This is seen in the same chapter, John 4; as again in Mark 4. But there is this difference in the two cases: He finds sleep for His relief and restoration in Mark 4. He is independent of it in John 4. And why was this? In Mark 4. He had gone through a day of toil, and in the evening He was weary, as nature will be after labour. "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." (Ps. 104) Sleep is then provided for him, to restore him to his service when morning returns. Jesus proved all this. He was asleep on the pillow in the boat. In John 4 He is weary again, hungry and thirsty too He sits at the well, like a tired traveller, waiting till the disciples

came from the neighbouring village with food. But when they come, they find Him feasted and rested, and that too without food, or drink, or sleep. His weariness had had another refreshment than what sleep would have brought Him. He had been made happy by fruit to His labour in the soul of a poor sinner. The woman had been sent away in the liberty of the salvation of God. But there had been no woman of Samaria in Mark 4, and He has therefore to use the pillow in His weariness.

But how true all this is to the sensibilities of our common humanity! We all understand it. The Lord's heart was merry, as I may say, in John 4; but there was nothing to make it merry in Mark 4. And we are taught to know (and our experience sets to its seal that the word is true) "that a merry heart doeth good like medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones." (Prov. 17: 22.) So that the Master can say in the one case, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," while in the other, He will use the pillow which care for His weariness had provided.

How perfect in all its sympathies was the humanity the Son had assumed! Surely, indeed, it was the common humanity, apart from sin.

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame."

But again. There is a temptation in the time of confusion to cast up all as hopeless and gone; and to say, it is endless and needless to be still distinguishing. All is in disorder and apostacy; why then attempt to distinguish?

But this was not the Lord. He was *in* the confusion, but not *of* it, as He was in the world, but not of it, as we said before of Him. He met all sorts of people, in all sorts of conditions, heaps upon heaps, where all should have been compact together; but He held His even, narrow, unsoiled and undistracted way through it all. The pretensions of the Pharisee, the worldliness of the Herodian, the

philosophy of the Sadducee, the fickleness of the multitude, the attempts of adversaries, and the ignorance and infirmities of disciples, were moral materials which He had to meet and answer every day.

And then the condition of things, as well as the characters of persons, exercised Him; the coin of Caesar circulating in Immanuel's land; partition walls all but in ruins; Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean, confounded, save as religious arrogance might still retain them after its own manner. But His one golden rule expressed the perfectness of His passage through all — "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The remnant in the day of captivity, a like day of confusion, carried themselves beautifully, distinguishing things that differed, and not hopelessly casting all up. Daniel would advise the king, but not eat his meat: Nehemiah would serve in the palace, but not suffer the Moabite or the Ammonite in the house of the Lord: Mordecai would guard the king's life, but would not bow to the Amalekite: Ezra and Zerubbabel would accept favours from the Persian, but not Samaritan help nor Gentile marriages: and the captives would pray for the peace of Babylon, but would not sing Zion's songs there. All this was beautiful; and the Lord, in His day, was *perfect in this remnant character*. And all this has a voice for us; for ours is a day, in its character of confusion, not inferior to these days of the captives, or of Jesus. And we, like them, are not to act on the hopelessness of the scene, but know still how to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

All His moral beauty becomes a pattern to us. But then we see Him stand in God's relationship to evil also, and that is a place which, of course, we never could fill. He touched the leper, and He touched the bier, and yet He was undefiled. He had God's relationship to sin. He knew good and evil, but was in Divine supremacy over it; knowing such things as God knows them. Had He been other than He was, these touches of the bier and of the leper would have defiled Him. He must have been put outside the camp, and gone

through the cleansing which the law prescribed. But nothing of this kind do we see in Him. He was not an unclean Jew; He was not merely undefiled, He was undefileable; and yet, such was the mystery of His person, such the perfection of the Manhood in company with the Godhead in Him, that the temptation was as real in Him as was the undefileableness.

But we pause. Our place towards much of this needed, though mysterious and deeply precious truth, is to receive it and worship, rather than to discuss and analyse it. [His death, I may here take occasion to say, was the perfecting of His moral glory, of which I speak. (Phil. 2.) Of course, I know it was a great deal more than that also. But, among other things, it was that.] It is happy, however, to one's own spirit, to mark the yearnings of some souls, who give you the impression that it is *Himself* that is before them. We oftentimes traffic with truths in such wise as in the end leaves with us a rebuking conviction that we did not reach Himself, though so occupied. We find out that we had been loitering in the avenue.

The Lord was "poor, yet making rich," — "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." These high and wondrous conditions were exhibited in Him, in ways that were and must have been peculiar — altogether His own. He would receive ministry from some godly women out of their substance, and yet minister to the need of all around Him out of the treasures of the fulness of the earth. He would feed thousands in desert places, and yet be Himself an hungered, waiting for the return of His disciples with victuals from a neighbouring village. This is "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." But while thus poor, both needy and exposed *nothing that in the least savoured of meanness is* ever seen attaching to His condition. He never begs, though He have not a penny; for when He wanted to see one (not to use it for Himself) He had to ask to be shown it. He never runs away, though exposed, and His life jeopardated, as we speak, in the place where He was. He withdraws Himself, or passes by as hidden. And thus, again, I may say, nothing

mean, nothing unbecoming, full personal dignity attaches to Him, though poverty and exposure were His lot every day.

Blessed and beautiful! Who could preserve under our eye such an Object, so perfect, so unblemished, so exquisitely, delicately pure, in all the minute and most ordinary details of human life! Paul does not give us this. None could give it to us but Jesus, the God-Man. The peculiarities of His virtues in the midst of the ordinariness of His circumstances tell us of His Person. It must be a peculiar Person, it must be the divine Man, if I may so express Him, that could give us such peculiarities in such common-place conditions. Paul does not give us anything like it, again I say. There was great dignity and moral elevation about him, I know. If any one may be received as exhibiting that, let us agree that it was he. But his path is not that of Jesus. He is in danger of his life, and he uses his nephew to protect him. Again, his friends let him down the wall of the town in a basket. I do not say he begs or asks for it, but he acknowledges money sent to him. I say not how Paul avowed himself a Pharisee in the mixed assembly, in order to shelter himself; or how he spake evil of the high priest that was judging him. Such conduct was morally wrong; and I am speaking here only of such cases as were, though not morally wrong, below the full personal and moral dignity that marks the way of Christ. Nor is the flight into Egypt, as it is called, an exception in this characteristic of the Lord; for that journey was taken to fulfil prophecy, and under the authority of a divine oracle.

But all this is really, not only moral glory, but it is a moral wonder — marvellous how the pen that was held by a human hand could ever have delineated such beauties. We are to account for it, as has been observed before and by others, only by its being a truth, a living reality. We are shut up to that blessed necessity. Still further, as we go on with this blessed truth, it is written: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Our words should prove themselves as thus, always with grace, by ministering good to others, "grace to the hearers." This, however, will often be in the pungency of admonition

or rebuke; and at times with decision or severity, even with indignation and zeal; and thus they will be "seasoned with salt," as the Scripture speaks. And having these fine qualities, being gracious and yet salted, they will bear witness that we know how to answer every man.

Among all other forms of it, the Lord Jesus illustrated this form of moral perfectness. He knew how to answer every man, as with words which were always to his soul's profit, whether men would hear, or whether they would forbear, but at times seasoned, nay, seasoned highly with salt.

Thus, in answering inquiries, He did not so much purpose to satisfy *them*, as to reach the *conscience or the condition of the inquirer*.

In His silence, or refusal to answer at all, when He stood before the Jew or the Gentile at the end, before either the priests, or Pilate, or Herod, we can trace the same perfect fitness as we do in His words or answers; witnessing to God, that at least One among the sons of men knew "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak."

Great variety in His very tone and manner also presents itself in all this; and all this variety, minute as it was as well as great, was part of this fragrance before God. Sometimes His word was gentle, sometimes peremptory; sometimes He reasons; sometimes He rebukes at once; and sometimes conducts calm reasoning up to the heated point of solemn condemnation; for it is the *moral* of the occasion He always weighs.

Matthew 15 has struck me as a chapter in which this perfection, in much of its various beauty and excellency may be seen. In the course of it, the Lord is called to answer the Pharisees, the multitude, the poor afflicted stranger from the coasts of Tyre, and His own disciples, again and again, in their different exposure of either their stupidity or their selfishness; and we may notice His different style of rebuke and of reasoning, of calm, patient teaching, and of faithful, wise, and gracious training of the soul: and we

cannot but feel how fitting all this variety was to the place or occasion that called it forth. And such was the beauty and the fitness of His neither *teaching* nor *learning*, in Luke 2, but only hearing and asking questions. To have *taught* then would not have been in season, a child as He was in the midst of His elders. To have learnt would not have been in full fidelity to the light, the eminent and bright light, which He knew He carried in Himself; for we may surely say of Him, "He was wiser than the ancients, and had more understanding than His teachers." I do not mean as God, but as One "filled with wisdom," as was then said of Him. But He knew in the perfection of grace how to use this fulness of wisdom, and He is, therefore, not presented to us by the evangelist in the midst of the doctors in the temple at the age of twelve, either *teaching* or *learning*; but it is simply said of Him, that He was "hearing and asking questions." "Strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God upon Him," is the description of Him then, as He grew up in tender years; and when a Man, conversing in the world, His speech was always with grace, seasoned with salt, as of one who knew how to answer every man. What perfection and beauty suited to the different seasons of childhood and manhood!

And further. We find Him, besides this, also in various other conditions. At times He is *slighted and scorned*, watched and hated by adversaries, retiring, as it were, to save His life from their attempts and purposes. At times He is *weak*, followed only by the poorest of the people; wearied, too, and hungry and athirst, debtor to the service of some loving women, who felt as though they owed Him everything. At times He is *compassionating the multitude* in all gentleness, or companying with His disciples in their repasts or in their journeying, conversing with them as a man would with his friends. At times He is *in strength and honour* before us, doing wonders, letting out some rays of glory; and though in His person and circumstances nothing and nobody in the world, a carpenter's son, without learning or fortune, yet making a greater stir among men, and that, too, at times in the thoughts of the ruling ones on earth, than man ever made.

Childhood, and manhood, and human life in all its variousness, thus gives Him to us. Would that the heart could hold Him! There is a perfection in some of the minute features that tell of the Divine hand that was delineating them. Awkward work would any penman, unkept, unguided by the Spirit, have made of certain occasions where these strokes and touches are seen. As when the Lord wanted to comment on the current money of the land, He asked to be shown it, and does not find it about Himself. Indeed, we may be sure He carried none of it. Thus, the moral beauties of the action, flowed from the moral perfection of His condition within.

He asked His disciples in the hour of Gethsemane, to *watch with Him*; but He did not ask them to *pray for Him*. He would claim sympathy. He prized it in the hour of weakness and pressure, and would have the hearts of His companions bound to Him then. Such a desire was of the moral glory that formed the human perfection that was in Him; but while He felt this and did this, He could not ask them to stand as in the Divine presence on His behalf. He would have them give themselves to Him, but He could not seek them to give themselves to God for Him. Thus, He asked them again, I say, to watch with Him, but He did not ask them to pray for Him. When shortly or immediately afterwards, He linked praying and watching together, it was of themselves and for themselves He spoke, saying, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Paul could say to his fellow-saints, "Ye also helping together by prayer to God for us: pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience." But such was not the language of Jesus. I need not say, it could not have been; but the pen that writes for us such a life, and delineates for us such a character, is held by the Spirit of God. None other than the Spirit could write thus.

He did good, and lent, hoping for nothing again. He gave, and His left hand did not know what His right hand was doing. Never in one single instance, as I believe, did He claim either the person or the service of those whom He restored and delivered. He never made the deliverance He wrought a title to service. Jesus loved, and

healed, and saved, looking for nothing again. He would not let Legion, the Gadarene, be with Him. The child at the foot of the mount, He delivered back to his father. The daughter of Jairus He left in the bosom of her family. The widow's son at Nain He restores to his mother. He claims none of them. Does Christ give, in order that He may receive again? Does He not (perfect Master!) illustrate His own principle — "Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again"? The nature of grace is to impart to others, not to enrich itself: and He came, that in Him and His ways, it might shine in all the exceeding riches and glory that belong to it. He found servants in this world; but He did not first heal them, and then claim them. He called them, and endowed them. They were the fruit of the energy of His Spirit, and of affections kindled in hearts constrained by His love. And sending them forth, He said to them, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Surely there is something beyond human conception in the delineation of such a character. One repeats that thought again and again. And very happy it is to add, that it is in the very simplest forms this moral glory of the Lord shines forth at times — such forms as are at once intelligible to all the perceptions and sympathies of the heart. Thus He never refused the feeblest faith, though He accepted and answered, and that too with delight, the approaches and demands of the boldest.

The strong faith, which drew upon Him without ceremony or apology, in full immediate assurance, was ever welcome to Him; while the timid soul, that approached Him, as one that was ashamed and would excuse itself, was encouraged and blessed. His lips at once bore away from the heart of the poor leper the one only thing that hung over that heart as a cloud. "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," said he. "I will; be thou clean," said Jesus. But immediately afterwards the same lips uttered the fulness of the heart, when the clear, unquestioning faith of the Gentile centurion was witnessed, and when the bold, earnest faith of a family in Israel broke up the roof of the house where He was, that they might let down their sick one before Him.

When a weak faith appealed to the Lord, He granted the blessing it sought, but He rebuked the seeker. But even this rebuke is full of comfort to us; for it seems to say, "Why did you not make freer, fuller, happier use of me?" Did we value the Giver, as we do the gift, — the heart of Christ as well as His hand, this *rebuke* of weak faith would be just as welcome as the *answer* to it.

And if little faith be thus reproved, strong faith must be grateful. And therefore we have reason to know what a fine sight was under the eye of the Lord, when, in that case already looked at, they broke up the roof of the house in order to reach Him. It was indeed, right sure I am, a grand spectacle for the eye of the Divine and bounteous Jesus. *His heart* was entered by that action, as surely as *the house in Capernaum* was entered by it.

We see glories and humilities in our Redeemer; we do indeed; for we need each.

The One who sat on the well in Sychar, is He who now sits on high in heaven. He that ascended is He that descended. Dignities and condescensions are with Him; — a seat at the right hand of God, and yet a stooping to wash the feet of His saints here. What a combination! No abatement of His honours, though suiting Himself to our poverty: nothing wanting that can serve us, though glorious, and stainless, and complete in Himself.

Selfishness is wearied by trespass and importunity. "He will not rise because he is his friend; but because of his importunity he will rise and give him as much as he needeth." Thus it is with man, or selfishness; it is otherwise with God, or love; for God, in Isaiah 7, is the contradiction of man in Luke 11.

It is the unbelief, that would not draw on Him, that refused to ask a blessing, and get it with a seal and a witness, that wearies God — not importunity, but, as I may say, the absence of it. And all this divine blessedness and excellency, which is thus seen in the Jehovah of the house of David in Isaiah 7 reappears in the Lord Jesus Christ

of the Evangelists, and in His different dealing with weak faith and full faith.

All these things that we are able to discover, bespeak His perfections; but how small a part of them do we reach!

We are aware in how many different ways our fellow-disciples try and tempt us, as, no doubt, we do them. We see, or we fancy we see, some bad quality in them, and we find it hard to go on in further company with them. And yet in all this, or in much of it, the fault may be with ourselves, mistaking a want of conformity of taste or judgment with ourselves, for something to be condemned in them.

But the Lord could not be thus mistaken; and yet He was never "overcome of evil," but was ever "overcoming evil with good," — the evil that was in them with the good that was in Himself. Vanity, ill-temper, indifference about others, and carefulness about themselves, ignorance after painstaking to instruct, were of the things in them which He had to suffer continually. His walk with them, in its ways and measure, was a day of provocation, as the forty years in the wilderness had been. Israel again tempted the Lord, I may say, but again proved Him. Blessed to tell it; they *provoked* Him, but by this they *proved* Him. He suffered, but He took it patiently. He never gave them up. He warned and taught, rebuked and condemned them, but never gave them up. Nay; at the end of their walk together, He is nearer to them than ever.

Perfect and excellent this is, and comforting to us The Lord's dealing with the conscience never touches His heart. We lose nothing by His rebukes. And He who does not withdraw His heart from us when He is dealing with our conscience, is quick to restore our souls, that the conscience, so to express it, may be enabled soon to leave His school, and the heart find its happy freedom in His presence again. As expressed in that hymn which some of us know —

"Still sweet 'tis to discover
If clouds have dimm'd my sight,

When pass'd, Eternal Lover,
Toward me, as ever, thou'rt bright."

And I would further notice, that in the characters which, in the course of His ministry, He is called to take up (it may be for only an occasion, or a passing moment), we see the same perfection, the same moral glory, as in the path He treads daily As, for instance, that of a Judge, as in Matt. 23, and that of an Advocate or Pleader in Matt 22. But I only suggest this: the theme is too abundant. Every step, word, and action, carries with it a ray of this glory; and the eye of God had more to fill it in the life of Jesus, than it would have had in all eternity of Adam's innocence It was in the midst of our moral ruin Jesus walked; and from such a region as that, He has sent up to the throne on high, a richer sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour than Eden, and the Adam of Eden, had it continued unsoiled for ever, would or could have rendered. *Time made no change in the Lord.* Kindred instances of grace and character in Him, before and after His resurrection, give us possession of this truth which is of such importance to us. We know what He is this moment, and what He will be for ever from what He has already been — in character as in nature — in relationship to us, as well as in Himself, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever." The very mention of this is blessed. Sometimes we may be grieved at changes, sometimes we may desire them. In different ways we all prove the fickle, uncertain nature of that which constitutes human life. Not only circumstances, which are changeful to a proverb, but associations, friendships, affections, characters, continually undergo variations which surprise and sadden us. We are hurried from stage to stage of life; but unchilled affections and unsullied principles are rarely borne along with us, either in ourselves or our companions. But Jesus was the same after His resurrection as He had been before, though late events had put Him and His disciples at a greater distance than companions had ever known, or could ever know. *They* had betrayed their unfaithful hearts, forsaking Him and fleeing in the hour of His weakness and need: while *He* for their sakes had gone through death — such a death as never could have been borne by another, as would have

crushed the creature itself. They were still but poor, feeble Galileans, — He was glorified with all power in heaven and on earth.

But these things worked no change; "nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature," as the apostle speaks, could do that. Love defies them all, and He returns to them the Jesus whom they had known before. He is their companion in labour after His resurrection, nay, after His ascension. as He had been in the days of His ministry and sojourn with them. This we learn in the last verse of Mark. On the sea, in the day of Matt. 14, they thought that they saw a spirit, and cried out for fear; but the Lord gave them to know that it was He Himself that was there, near to them, and in grace, though in Divine strength and sovereignty over nature. And so in Luke 24, or after He was risen, He takes the honey-comb and the fish, and eats before them, that with like certainty and ease of heart they might know it was He Himself. And He would have them handle Him, and see; telling them, that a spirit had not flesh and bones, as they might then prove that He had.

In John 3 He led a slow-hearted Rabbi into the light and way of truth, bearing with him in all patient grace. And thus did He again in Luke 24, after that He was risen, with the two slow-hearted ones who were finding their way home to Emmaus.

In Mark 4 He allayed the fears of His people ere He rebuked their unbelief. He said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still," before He said to the disciples, "How is it that ye have no faith?" And thus did He, as the risen One, in John 21. He sits and dines with Peter, in full and free fellowship, as without a breach in the spirit, ere He challenges him and awakens his conscience by the words, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

The risen Jesus, who appeared to Mary Magdalene, the evangelist takes care to tell us, was He who in other days had cast seven devils out of her — and she herself knew the voice that then called her by her name, as a voice that her ear had long been familiar with. What

identity between the humbled and the glorified One, the healer of sinners and the Lord of the world to come! How all tell us, that in character as in divine personal glory, He that descended is the same also that ascended. John, too, in company with his risen Lord, is recognized as the one who had leaned on His bosom at the supper. "I am Jesus," was the answer from the ascended place, the very highest place in heaven, the right hand of the throne of the majesty there, when Saul of Tarsus demanded, "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9.) And all this is so individual and personal in its application to us. It is our own very selves that are interested in this. Peter, for himself, knows his Master, the same to him before and after the resurrection. In Matt. 16 the Lord rebukes him; but shortly after takes him up to the hill with Him, with as full freedom of heart as if nothing had happened. And so with the same Peter, — in John 21 he is again rebuked. He had been busy, as was his way, meddling with what was beyond him. "Lord, what shall this man do?" says he, looking at John, — and his Master has again to rebuke him "What is that to thee?" But again, as in the face of this rebuke, sharp and peremptory as it was, the Lord immediately afterwards has him, together with John in His train, or in His company up to heaven. It was a *rebuked* Peter who had once gone with the Lord to the holy mount: and it is a *rebuked* Peter, the same rebuked Peter, who now goes with the Lord to heaven; or, if we please, to the hill of glory the mount of transfiguration, a second time. [Some seem to judge that it was deep love in Peter to John, that led him to ask the Lord about him. I deny that.]

Full indeed of strong consolation is all this. This is Jesus our Lord, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the same in the day of His ministry, after His resurrection, now in the ascended heavens, and so for ever. And as He sustains the same character, and approves Himself by the same grace after as before the resurrection, so does He redeem all His pledges left with His disciples.

Whether it be on His own lips, or on the lips of His angels, it is still now as then, since He rose as before He suffered, "Fear not." He had

spoken to His disciples before of giving them *His* peace; and we find He does this afterwards in the most emphatic manner. He pronounces "peace" upon them in the day of John 20; and having done so, shows them His hands and His side; where, as in symbolic language, they might read their title to a peace wrought out and purchased for them by Himself, His peace, entirely His own, as procured only by Himself, and now theirs by indefeasible, unchangeable title.

In earlier days, the Lord said to them, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" and now in risen days, in the days of the risen Man, in possession of victorious life, He imparts that life to them in the most full and perfect measure of it, breathing on them, and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

The world was not to see Him again, as He had also said to them; but they were to see Him. And so it comes to pass. He was seen of them for forty days, and He spake to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. But this was all in secret: the world has not seen Him since the hour of Calvary, nor will they, till they see Him in judgment.

As a humbler, lowlier witness of His full fidelity to all His pledges, we may observe, He meets His people in Galilee as He had promised them. As a larger expression of the same, I may also observe, He takes them to the Father in heaven, as He had also promised them, sending a message to them, that He was ascending to *His* Father and to *their* Father, to *His* God and to *their* God. And thus, whether it was in our Galilee on earth, or in His own home in heaven, that His presence had been pledged to them, both are alike made good to them. And well may we meditate on the condescendings, the faithfulness, the fulness, the simplicity, the greatness, the elevation, of all that forms and marks His path before us. The Lord had very much to do with Peter, beyond any of the disciples while He was ministering in the midst of them, and we find it the same after He rose from the dead. Peter is the one to occupy,

as I may say, the whole of the last chapter in John. There the Lord carries on with him the gracious work He had begun ere He left him, and carries it on exactly from the point where He left it. Peter had betrayed special self-confidence. Though all should be offended, yet would not he, he said; and though he should die with his Master, he would not deny Him. But his Master had told him of the vanity of such boasts, and had told him also of His prayer for him, so that his faith should not fail. And when the boast was found to have been indeed a vanity, and Peter denied his Lord, even with an oath, his Lord looked on him, and this look had its blessed operation. The prayer and the look had availed. The prayer had kept his faith from failing, but the look had broken his heart. Peter did not "go away," but Peter wept, and "wept bitterly." At the opening of this chapter, we find Peter in this condition — in the condition in which the prayer and the look had put him. That his faith had not failed, he is enabled to give very sweet proof; for as soon as he learns that it was his Lord who was on the shore, he threw himself into the water to reach Him; not, however, as a penitent, as though he had not already wept, but as one that could trust himself to His presence in full assurance of heart. And in that character his most blessed and gracious Lord accepts him, and they dine together on the shore. The prayer and the look had thus already done their work with Peter, and they are not to be repeated. The Lord simply goes on with His work thus begun, to conduct it to its perfection. Accordingly, the *prayer* and the *look* are now followed by *the word*. Restoration follows conviction and tears. Peter is put into the place of strengthening his brethren, as his Lord had once said to him; and also into the place of glorifying God by his death, a privilege he had forfeited by his unbelief and denial.

This was the word of restoration, following the prayer which had already sustained Peter's faith, and the look which had already broken his heart. He had in the day of John 13 taught this same loved Peter, that a washed man need not be washed again, save only his feet; and exactly in this way He now deals with him. He does not put him again through the process of Luke 5, when the draught of

fishes overwhelmed him, and he found out that he was a sinner; but He does wash his soiled feet. He restores him, and puts Himself in His due place again. (John 21: 15-17.)

Perfect Master! the same to us yesterday, to-day and for ever; the same in gracious, perfect skill of love, going on with the work He had already begun, resuming, as the risen Lord, the service which He had left unfinished when He was taken from them, resuming it at the very point, knitting the past to the present service, in the fullest grace and skill!

And a little further still, as to His redeeming His pledges and promises. There was a very distinguished one which He gave them after He had risen. I mean, what He calls "the promise of the Father," and "power from on high." This promise was made to them in the day of Luke 24, after He had risen, and it was fulfilled to them in the day of Acts 2, after He had ascended and was glorified .

Surely this only continues the story and the testimony of His faithfulness. All witness for Him, — His life ere He suffered, His resurrection intercourses with His disciples, and now what He has done since He ascended, — that no variableness neither shadow of turning is found in Him.

And I would not pass another instance of this, which we get again in Luke 24. The risen Lord there recognises the very place in which He had left His disciples in His earlier instructions. "These are the words," says He, "which I spake unto you when I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." He thus reminds them that He had already told them, that Scripture was the great witness of the Divine mind, that all found *written there* must surely be *accomplished here*. And now what does He do? That which is the simple, consistent following out of this His previous teaching. "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." *His power* now knits itself with His *instructions* before. He is making good in them what He had already

communicated to them. [To our comfort, I may add, that after He had risen, He never once reminded His disciples of their late desertion of Him in the hour of His sorrow]

But even further, in some sense, the very style and spirit of this intercourse with His disciples during that interval of forty days is still the same. He knows them then *by name*, as He had before. He manifests Himself to them *by the same methods*. He was the host at the table, though bidden there only as a guest, a second time, or after, as before, His resurrection (John 2; Luke 24); and in the deep sense and apprehension of their souls they treat His presence as the same. On returning to Him at the well of Sychar in John 4, they would not intrude, but tread softly. And so on their reaching Him after the draught of fishes, in John 21, they tread softly again, judging a second time, from the character of the moment, that their words must be few, though their hearts were filled with wonder and joy.

What links, tender and yet strong, are thus formed between Him who has been already known to us in the daily walks of human life, and Him who is to be known to us for ever! He came down first into our circumstances, and then He takes us unto His. But in ours we have learnt Him, and *learnt Him for ever*. This is a very happy truth. Peter witnesses it to us. I have looked at this scene already with another intent. I must now give it a second look.

At the draught of fishes in Luke 5, or before the resurrection, Peter was convicted. The *fisherman* Peter, in his own eyes, became the *sinner* Peter. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The draught of fishes (giving proof that the stranger who had asked for the loan of his boat was the Lord of the fulness of the sea) had brought Peter, in spirit, into the presence of God, and there he learnt himself. We never, indeed, learn that lesson anywhere else. But the Lord at that moment, as from the glory, spoke comfortably to him. He had said, "Fear not," and Peter was at ease. The glory or the presence of God had now a home for him as well as conviction, and

Peter is in full quietness of heart before the Lord. And accordingly, at the second draught of fishes, in John 21, after the resurrection, Peter was still at ease, and had only to practice the lesson which he had already learnt. And he does so. He experiences the presence of the Lord of glory to be a home for him. He proves in himself, and witnesses to us, that *what he had learnt of Jesus he had learnt for ever*. He did not know the Stranger on the shore to be Jesus; but when John revealed that fact to him, the Stranger was a stranger to him no more but the sooner and the nearer he could get to Him the better.

What further consolation is this! If it be joy to know that He is the same, whether here or there, — whether in our world or in His own world, — in our ruined circumstances, or in His own glorious circumstances, — what further joy is it to see one of ourselves, as Peter was, experiencing the blessedness of such a fact in his own spirit!

Jesus — the same, indeed — faithful and true! All the pledges He had given them ere He suffered, He makes good after He rose: all the character He had sustained in the midst of them then, He sustains now.

The Lord was continually *giving*, but He was rarely assenting. He made great *communications* where He found but little communion. This magnifies or illustrates His goodness. There was, as it were, nothing to draw Him forth, and yet He was ever imparting. He was as the Father in heaven, of whom He Himself spoke, making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending His rain on the just and the unjust. This tells us what He is, to His praise — what we are, to our shame.

But He was not only thus, as the Father in heaven, the reflection of such a One in His doings, but He was also in this world as "the unknown God," as Paul speaks. The darkness did not comprehend Him; the world, neither by its religion nor its wisdom, knew Him. The rich aboundings of His grace, the purity of His kingdom, the

foundation and title upon which the glory He sought in such a world as this alone could rest, were all strangers to the thoughts of the children of men. All this is seen in the deep moral mistakes they were continually making. When, for instance, the multitude was exceedingly hailing the King and the kingdom in His person, in Luke 19, "Master, rebuke thy disciples," the Pharisees say. They would not brook the thought of the throne belonging to such a One. It was presumption in Him, Jesus of Nazareth as He was, to allow the royal joy to surround Him. They knew not — they had not learnt — the secret of true honour in this false, fallen world of ours. They had not learnt the mystery of "a root out of a dry ground," nor had they in spirit perceived "the arm of the Lord." (Isa. 53.) It was where His own Spirit led, that discoveries were made of Him, and such are very sweet, and various, too, in their measure.

In Mark 1 His ministry, in its grace and power, is used by many. People under all kinds of diseases come to Him, congregations listen to Him, and own the authority with which He spake. A leper brings his leprosy to Him, thereby apprehending Him as the God of Israel. In different measures, there was then some knowledge of Him, either who He was, or what He had; but when we enter Mark 2, we get knowledge of Him expressing itself in a brighter, richer way: we get samples of the faith that *understood* Him; and this is the deeper thing.

The company at Capernaum, who bring their palsied friend to Him, understand Him, as well as use Him; understand Him, I mean, in Himself, in His character, in the habits and tastes of His mind. The very style in which they reach Him to get at Him tells us this. It was not *approaching* as though they were reserved, and doubtful, and overawed. It was more: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" — a thing more welcome to Him, more according to the way that *love* would have us take. They ask no leave, they use no ceremony, but they break up the roof of the house, that they may reach Him; all this telling us that they *knew* Him as well as *used* Him; knew that He delighted in having His grace trusted and His power used by our

necessities without reserve. So Levi, shortly afterwards, in the same chapter. He makes a feast and seats publicans and others at it, in company with Jesus. And this, in like manner, tells us that Levi *knew* Him. He knew whom he *entertained*, as Paul tells us he knew whom he *believed*.

This knowledge of the Lord is truly blessed! It is divine! Flesh and blood does not give it, His kinsfolk had it not. They said of Him, when He was spending Himself in service, "He is beside himself." But faith makes great discoveries of Him, and acts upon such discoveries. It may seem to carry us beyond due bounds at times, beyond the things that are orderly and well measured; but in God's esteem it never does. The multitude tell Bartimeus to hold his peace, but he will not; for he knows Jesus as Levi knows Him.

It is His full work that we are not prepared for, and yet therein is its glory. He meets us in all our need, but, at the same time, He brings God in. He healed the sick, but He preached the kingdom also. This, however, did not suit man, Strange this may appear, for man knows full well how to value his own advantages. He knows the joy of the restored nature. But such is the enmity of the carnal mind against God, that if blessing come in company with the presence of God, it will not receive a welcome. And from Christ, it could not come in any other way. He will glorify God as well as relieve the sinner. God has been dishonoured in this world, as man has been ruined in it — self-ruined; and the Lord, the repairer of the breach, is doing a perfect work — vindicating the Name and truth of God, declaring His kingdom and its rights, and manifesting His glory, just as much as He is redeeming and quickening the lost, dead sinner.

This will not do for man. He would be well taken care of himself, and let the glory of God fare as it may. Such is man. But when, through faith, any poor sinner is otherwise minded, and can indeed rejoice in the glory of God, very beautiful is the sight. And we see such a one in the Syro-Phoenician. The glory of the ministry of Christ addressed itself to her soul brightly and powerfully.

Apparently, in spite of her grief, the Lord Jesus asserts God's principles, and, as a stranger, He passes her by. "I am not sent," He says, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel . . . It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." But she bows, she owns the Lord as the steward of the truth of God, and would not for a moment suppose that He would surrender that trust (the truth and principles of God) to her and her necessities. She would have God be glorified according to His own counsels, and the servant of the divine good pleasure, be it to herself as it may. "Truth, Lord," she answers, vindicating all that He had said; but, in full consistency with it, she adds, "yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

All this is lovely — the fruit of divine light in her soul. The mother in Luke 2 is quite below this Gentile woman in Mark 7. She did not know that Jesus was to be about His Father's business, but this stranger knew that that was the very business He was always to be about. She would let God's way, in the faithful hand of Christ, be exalted, though she herself were thereby set aside, even in her sorrows.

This was knowledge of Him indeed; this was accepting Him in His *full* work, as One who stood for God in a world that had rebelled against Him, as well as for the poor worthless sinner that had destroyed himself.

It is not well to be always understood. Our ways and habits should be those of strangers, citizens of a foreign country, whose language and laws, and customs are but poorly known here. Flesh and blood cannot appreciate them, and therefore it is not well with the saints of God when the world understands them.

His kinsfolk were ignorant of Jesus. Did the mother know Him when she wanted Him to display His power, and provide wine for the feast? Did His brethren know Him when they said to Him, "If thou do these things, show thyself to the world." What a thought! an endeavour to lead the Lord Jesus to make Himself, as we say, "a

man of the world!" Could there have been *knowledge of Him* in the hearts which indited such a thought as that? Most distant, indeed, from such knowledge they were, and therefore it is immediately added by the evangelist, "for neither did his brethren believe in him." (John 7) They understood His *power*, by not His *principles*; for, after the manner of men, they connect the possession of power or talents with the serving of a man's interest in the world.

But Jesus was the contradiction of this, as I need not say; and the worldly-minded kindred in the flesh could not understand Him. His principles were foreign to such a world. They were despised, as was David's dancing before the ark in the thoughts of a daughter of king Saul.

But what attractiveness there would have been in Him for any eye or heart that had been opened by the Spirit! This is witnessed to us by the apostles. They knew but little about Him *doctrinally*, and they got nothing by remaining with Him — I mean nothing in this world. Their condition in the world was anything but improved by their walking with Him; and it cannot be said that they availed themselves of His miraculous power. Indeed, they questioned it rather than used it. And yet they clung to Him. They did not company with Him, because they eyed Him as the full and ready storehouse of all provisions for them. On no one occasion, I believe we may say, did they use the power that was in Him for themselves. And yet, there they were with Him, — troubled when He talked of leaving, and found weeping when they thought they had indeed lost Him.

Surely, we may again say, What attractiveness there must have been in Him, for any eye or heart that had been opened by the Spirit or drawn by the Father! And with what authority one look or one word from Him would enter at times! We see this in Matthew. That one word on the Lord's lips, "Follow me!" was enough. And this authority and this attractiveness was felt by men of the most opposite temperaments. The slow-hearted, reasoning Thomas, and the ardent, uncalculating Peter, were alike kept near and around this

wondrous centre. Even Thomas would breathe in that presence the spirit of the earnest Peter, and say under force of this attraction, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Shall we not say, What will it be to see and feel all this by and by in its perfection! when all gathered from every clime, and colour, and character, of the wide-spread human family — all nations, kindreds, peoples, and tongues, are with Him and around Him in a world worthy of Him! We may dwell, in memory, on these samples of His preciousness to hearts like our own, and welcome them as pledges of that which, in hope, is ours as well as theirs.

The light of God shines at times before us, leaving us, as we may have power, to discern it, to enjoy it, to use it, to follow it. It does not so much challenge us or exact of us; but, as I said, it shines before us, that we may reflect it, if we have grace. We see it doing its work after this manner in the early church at Jerusalem. The light of God there *exacted* nothing. It shone brightly and powerfully; but that was all. Peter spoke the language of that light, when he said to Ananias, "While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? " It had made no demands upon Ananias, it simply shone in its beauty beside him or before him, that he might walk in it according to his measure. And such, in a great sense, is the moral glory of the Lord Jesus. Our first duty to that light is to learn from it *what He is*. We are not to begin by anxiously and painfully measuring ourselves by it, but by calmly, and happily, and thankfully learning Him in all His perfect moral humanity. And surely this glory is departed! There is no living image of it here. We have its *record* in the evangelists, but not its *reflection* anywhere.

But having its record, we may say, as one of our own poets has said,

"There has one Object been disclosed on earth
That might commend the place: but now 'tis gone:
Jesus is with the Father."

But though not here, beloved, He is just what He was. We are to know Him as it were by *memory*; and memory has no capacity to weave fictions; memory can only turn over living truthful pages. And thus we know Him for His own eternity. In an eminent sense, the disciples knew Him *personally*. It was His person, His presence, Himself, that was their attraction. And if one may speak for others, it is more of this we need. We may be busy in acquainting ourselves with truths about Him, and are may make proficiency that way; but with all our knowledge, and with all the disciples' ignorance, they may leave us far behind in the power of a commanding affection towards Himself. And surely, beloved, we will not refuse to say, that it is well when the heart is drawn by Him beyond what the knowledge we have of Him may account for. It tells us that He Himself has been rightly apprehended. And there are simple souls still that exhibit this; but generally it is not so. Now-a-days, our light, our acquaintance with truth, is beyond the measure of the answer of our heart to Himself. And it is painful to us, if we have any just sensibilities at all, to discover this.

"The prerogative of our Christian faith," says one, "the secret of its strength is this, that all which it has, and all which it offers, is laid up in a *Person*. This is what has made it strong, while so much else has proved weak; that it has a Christ as its middle point, that it has not a circumference without a centre; that it has not merely deliverance, but a deliverer; not redemption only, but a redeemer as well. This is what makes it fit for wayfaring men. This is what makes it sunlight, and all else, when compared with it, but as moonlight; fair it may be, but cold and ineffectual, while here the light and the life are one." And again he says, "And, oh, how great the difference between submitting ourselves to a complex of rules, and casting ourselves upon a beating heart, between accepting a system, and cleaving to a person. Our blessedness — and let us not miss it — is, that our treasures are treasured in a Person, who is not for one generation a present teacher and a living Lord, and then for all succeeding generations a past and a dead one, but who is present

and living for all." Good words, and seasonable words, I judge indeed, I may say these are.

A great combination of like moral glories in the Lord's *ministry* may be traced, as well as in His character. And in ministry we may look at Him in relation to *God*, to *Satan*, and to *man*. As to God, the Lord Jesus, in His own person and ways, was always representing man to God, as God would have him. He was rendering back human nature as a sacrifice of rest, or of sweet savour, as incense pure and fragrant, as a sheaf of untainted firstfruits out of the human soil. He restored to God His complacency in man, which sin or Adam had taken from Him. God's repentance that He had made man (Gen. 6: 6) was exchanged for delight and glory in man again. And this offering was made to God in the midst of all contradictions, all opposing circumstances, sorrows, fatigues, necessities, and heart-breaking disappointments. Wondrous altar! wondrous offering! A richer sacrifice it infinitely was, than an eternity of Adam's innocence would have been. And as He was thus representing man to God, so was He representing God to man.

Through Adam's apostacy, God had been left without an image here; but now He gets a fuller, brighter image of Himself than Adam could ever have presented. Jesus was letting, not a fair creation, but a ruined, worthless world — know what God was, representing Him in grace, and saying, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the *Father*." He declared God. All that is of God, all that can be known of "the light" which no man can approach unto, has now passed before us in Jesus.

And again, in the ministry of Christ, looked at in relation to God, we find Him ever mindful of God's rights, ever faithful to God's truth and principles, while in the daily, unwearied actions of relieving man's necessities. Let human sorrow address Him with what appeal it may, He never sacrificed or surrendered any thing that was God's to it. "Glory to God in the highest," was heard over Him at His birth, as well as, "on earth goodwill to man;" and according to this, God's

glory, all through His ministry, was as jealously consulted, as the sinner's need and blessing were diligently served. The echo of those voices, "Glory to God," and "Peace on earth," was, as I may express it, heard on every occasion. The Syro-phoenician's case, already noticed, is a vivid sample of this. Till she took her place in relation to God's purposes and dispensations, He could do nothing for her; but then, everything.

Surely these are glories in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, in the relations of that ministry to God.

Then as to *Satan*. In the first place, and seasonably and properly so, the Lord meets him as a *tempter*. Satan sought in the wilderness to impregnate Him with these moral corruptions which he had succeeded in implanting in Adam and the human nature. This victory over the tempter was the needed righteous introduction to all His works and doings touching Him. It was, therefore, the Spirit that led Him up to this action. As we read, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." Ere the Son of God could go forth and spoil the house of the strong man, he must bind him. (Matt. 12: 29) Ere he could "reprove" the works of darkness, he must show that He had no fellowship with them. (Eph. 5: 2) He must withstand the enemy, and keep him outside Himself, ere He could enter his kingdom to destroy his works.

Jesus thus *silenced* Satan. He bound him. Satan had to withdraw as a thoroughly defeated tempter. He could not get anything of his into Him; he rather found that all that was there was of God. Christ kept outside all that which Adam, under a like temptation, had let inside; and having thus stood the clean thing, He can go, under a perfect *moral* title, to reprove the unclean.

"Skin for skin," the accuser may have to say of another, and like words that charge and challenge the common corrupted nature; but he had nothing to do, as an accuser of Jesus, before the throne of God. He was silenced.

Thus His relationship to Satan begins. Upon this, He enters his house and spoils his goods. This world is that house, and there the Lord, in ministry, is seen effacing various and deep expressions of the enemy's strength. Every deaf or blind one healed, every leper cleansed, every work under His repairing hand, of whatsoever sort it was, was this. It was a spoiling of the goods of the strong man in his own house. Having already bound him, He now spoiled his goods. At last he yields to Him as the One that had "the power of death." Calvary was the hour of the power of darkness. All Satan's resources were brought up there, and all his subtlety put forth; but he was overthrown. His captive was his conqueror. By death, He destroyed him that had the power of it. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The head of the serpent was bruised; as another has said, that "death and not man was without strength."

Thus Jesus the Son of God was the *bruiser* of Satan, as before He had been his *binder* and his *spoiler*. But there is another moral glory that is seen to shine in the ministry of Christ, in the relation it bears to Satan. I mean this: *He never allows him to bear witness to him.* The testimony may be true, and, as we say, flattering, good words and fair words, such as, "I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God," but Jesus suffered him not to speak. For His ministry was as *pure* as it was gracious. He would not be helped in His ministry by that which He came to destroy. He could have no fellowship with darkness, in His service, any more than in His nature. He could not act on expediency, therefore rebuke and silencing of him was the answer he got to his testimony. [As far as the Lord's ministry in the Gospel goes in relation to Satan, He is simply, as we have now seen, his binder, his spoiler, his bruiser. In the Apocalypse, we follow Him in further relations to the same adversary. There we see Him "casting him down from heaven;" then, in due season, "putting him in the bottomless pit;" and afterwards leaving him in "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Rev. 12 & 20 We thus track His conquest over him, from the wilderness of the temptation to the lake of fire.] Then as to *man*, the moral glories which show themselves in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, are bright and excellent indeed.

He was constantly *relieving and serving* man in all the variety of his misery; but He was as surely *exposing* him, showing him to have a nature fully departed from God in revolt and apostacy. But further; He was exercising him. This is much to be considered, though perhaps not so commonly noticed. In His teaching, He exercised people in whatever relation to Himself they stood; disciples or the multitude, or those who brought their sorrows to Him, or those who were friendly, as I may call them, or those who as enemies were withstanding Him. The disciples He was continually putting through exercises of heart or conscience, as He walked with them and taught them. This is so common that it need not be instanced. The multitude who followed Him He would treat likewise. "Hear and understand," He would say to them, thus exercising their own minds, as He was teaching them.

To some who brought their sorrows to Him He would say, "Believe ye that I can do this?" or such like words. The Syro-phoenician is an eminent witness to us how He exercised this class of persons.

Addressing the friendly Simon in Luke 7, after telling him the story of the man who had two debtors, "Tell me," says He, "therefore, which of them will love him most?"

The Pharisees, His unwearied opposers, He was in like manner constantly calling into exercise. And there is such a voice in this, such a witness of what He is. It tells us that He was not performing summary judgment for them, but would fain lead them to repentance: and so, in calling disciples into exercise, He tells us that we learn His lessons only in a due manner, as far as we are drawn out, in some activity of understanding, heart, or conscience, over them. This exercising of those He was either leading or teaching is surely another of the moral glories which marked His ministry. But further: in His ministry towards man we see Him frequently as a *reprover*, needfully so, in the midst of such a thing as the human family; but His way in reproof shines with excellency that we may well admire. While He was rebuking the Pharisees, whom

worldliness had set in opposition to Him, He uses a very solemn form of words: "He that is not with me is against me." But when He is alluding to those who owned Him and loved Him, but who needed further strength of faith or measure of light, so as to be in full company with Him, He spake in other terms: "He that is not against us is for us."

We notice Him again in this character in Matt. 20, in the case of the ten and the two brethren. How does He temper His rebuke because of the good and the right that were in those whom He had to rebuke? And in this He takes a place apart from His heated disciples, who would not have had their two brethren spared in any measure. He patiently, sifts over the whole material, and separates the precious from the vile that was in it.

So He is heard again as a reprovener in the case of John, forbidding any to cast out devils in His name, if they would not walk with them. But at that moment John's spirit had been under chastening. In the light of the Lord's preceding words, he had been making discovery of the mistake he had committed, and he refers to that mistake, though the Lord Himself had in no way alluded to it. But this being so, John having already a sense of his mistake, and artlessly letting it tell itself out, the Lord deals with it in the greatest gentleness. (Luke 9: 46-50).

So as to the Baptist: the Lord rebukes him with marked consideration. He was in prison then. What a fact that must have been in the esteem of the Lord at that moment! But he was to be rebuked for having sent a message to his Lord that reproached Him. But the delicacy of the rebuke is beautiful. He returns a message to John which none but John himself could estimate: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Even John's disciples, who carried the message between him and the Lord, could not have understood this. Jesus would expose John to himself, but neither to His disciples nor to the world.

So further, His rebuke of the two of Emmaus and of Thomas after the resurrection, each had its own excellency. Peter, both in Matt. 16 and 17, has to meet rebuke; but the rebuke is very differently ministered on each occasion.

But all this variety is full of moral beauty; and we may surely say, whether His style be peremptory or gentle, sharp or considerate; whether rebuke on His lips be so reduced as to be scarcely rebuke at all, or so heightened as almost to be the language of repulse and disclaimer; still, when the occasion is weighed, all this variety will be found to be but various perfections. All these His reproofs were "earrings of gold, and ornaments of fine gold," whether hung or not upon "obedient ears" (Prov. 25: 12.) "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." (Psalm 141: 5.) Surely the Lord gave His disciples to prove this.

Conclusion.

I have now traced some of the features of the moral glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He represented man to God — man as he ought to be, and God rested in Him.

This moral perfection of the man Christ Jesus, and God's acceptance of Him, was signified by the meat-offering, that cake of fine flour, which was baked either in oven, pan, or frying-pan, with its oil and its frankincense. (Lev. 2)

When the Lord Jesus was here, and thus manifested as man to God, God's delight in Him was ever expressing itself. He grew up before Him in human nature, and in the exhibition of all human virtues; and He needed nothing at any one moment to commend Him but Himself, just as He was. In His person and ways, man was morally glorified, so that when the end or perfection of His course came, He could go "straightway" to God, as the sheaf of first-fruits of old was taken directly and immediately, just as it was, out of the field, needing no process to fit it for the presence and acceptance of God.

(Lev. 23: 10) The title of Jesus to glory was a *moral* one. He had a moral right to be glorified; His title was in Himself. John 13: 31, 32, is the blessed setting forth of this in its due connection. "Now is the Son of Man glorified," the Lord there says, just as Judas had left the table; for that action of Judas was the sure precursor of the Lord's being taken by the Jews, and that was the sure precursor of His being put to death by the Gentiles. And the cross being the completeness and perfection of the full form of moral *glory in Him*, it was at this moment He utters these words, "Now is the Son of Man glorified." Then He adds, "and God is glorified in him."

God was as perfectly glorified then as the Son of Man was, though the glory was another glory. The Son of Man was glorified then, by His *completing* that full form of moral beauty which had been shining in Him all through His life. Nothing of it was then to be wanting, as nothing from the beginning up to that late hour had ever mingled with it that was unworthy of it. The hour was then at hand when it was to shine out in the very last ray that was to give it its full brightness. But God was also glorified then, because all that was of Him was either maintained or displayed. His rights were maintained, His goodness displayed. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, were alike and equally either satisfied or gratified. God's truth, holiness, love, majesty, and all beside, were magnified in a way, and illustrated in a light, beyond all that could ever have been known of them elsewhere. The cross, as one has said, is the moral wonder of the universe.

But then again the Lord adds, "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself; and shall straightway glorify Him." This is His recognition of His own title to personal glory. He had already perfected the full form of *moral* glory through life and in death. He had also vindicated God's glory, as we have seen. Therefore it was but a righteous thing that He should now enter on *His own personal* glory. And this He did when He took His place in heaven, at the right hand of the Majesty there, as in company with God Himself, and all that at once, or "straightway."

God's work as Creator had been quickly soiled in man's hand. Man had ruined himself; so that it is written: "God repented that He had made man." (Gen. 6) A terrible change in the Divine mind, since the day when God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was "very good"! (Gen. 1) But in the Lord Jesus, the Divine complacency in man was restored.

This was blessed! and the more acceptable, as we may say, from the previous repentance. It was more than first enjoyment, it was recovery after loss and disappointment; and that, too, in a way exceeding the first. And as the first man, upon his sin, had been put *outside* creation as I may say, this Second Man (being, as He also was, "the Lord from heaven,") upon His glorifying of God, was seated *at the head* of creation, as at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Jesus is in heaven as a glorified Man, because here on earth God had been glorified in Him as the obedient One in life and death. He is there indeed in other characters. Surely we know that. He is there as a Conqueror, as an Expectant, as the High Priest in the tabernacle, which God has pitched, as our Forerunner, and as the Purger of our sins. But He is there also, in the highest heavens glorified, because in Him God had been here on earth glorified.

Life and glory were His by personal right, and by moral title. One delights to dwell on such a truth, to repeat it again and again. He never forfeited the garden of Eden. Truly indeed did He walk outside it all His days, or amid the thorns and briers, the sorrows and privations of a ruined world. But this He did in grace. He took such a condition upon Him; but He was not exposed to it. He was not, like Adam, like us all, on one side of the cherubim and the flaming sword, and the tree of life and the garden of Eden, on the other. In His history, instead of angels keeping Him outside or beyond the gate, when He had gone through His temptation, they come and minister to Him. For He stood where Adam failed and fell. Therefore, man as He was, verily and simply man, He was this distinguished Man. God was glorified in Him, as in all beside He had been dishonoured and disappointed.

In one sense, this perfectness of the Son of Man, this moral perfectness, is all for us. It lends its savour to the blood which atones for our sins. It was as the cloud of incense, which went in to the presence of God, together with the blood, on the day of atonement. (Lev. 16)

But, in another sense, this perfection is too much for us. It is high, we cannot attain to it. It overwhelms the moral sense, as far as we look at it in the recollection of what we *ourselves* are, while it fills us with admiration, as far as we look at it as telling us what He is. The personal judicial glory, when displayed of old, was overwhelming. The most favoured of the children of men could not stand before it, as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and Peter and John experienced the same. And this moral glory, in like manner exposing us, is overwhelming.

Faith, however, is at home in the presence of it. The god of this world blinds the mind to the apprehension and joy of it; but faith welcomes it. Such are the histories of it here among men. In the presence of it, Pharisees and Sadducees together asked for a sign from heaven. The mother, through vanity, mistakes it, and the brethren of the Lord through worldliness. (John 2: 7.) Disciples themselves are under constant rebuke from it. The oil olive beaten for this light was too pure for any; but it was ever burning in the sanctuary, or "before the Lord." The synagogue at Nazareth strikingly lets us learn the unpreparedness of man for it. They owned the gracious words which proceeded out of the Lord's lips; they felt the power of them. But quickly a strong current of nature's corruption set in and withstood this movement in their hearts, and overcame it. God's humbled, self-emptied witness, in the midst of a proud, revolted world, was discovered; and this would not do for them. Let "Joseph's son" speak as He may, good words and comfortable words, He will not be accepted — He is a carpenter's son. (Luke 4) It is wonderful — wonderful witness of the deep inlaid corruption. Man has his amiabilities, his taste, his virtues, his sensibilities, as this scene at Nazareth in Luke 4 may tell us. The

"gracious words" of Jesus raised a current of good feeling for a moment; but what was it all, and where was it all, when God tested it? Ah! beloved, we may still say, in spite of this, our amiability and respectability, our taste and emotions, that in us (that is, in our flesh) "dwelleth no good thing."

But again, I say, faith is at home with Jesus. Can we, I ask, treat such an One with fear or suspicion? Can we doubt Him? Could we have taken a distant place from Him who sat at the well with the woman of Sychar? Did she herself take such a place? Surely, beloved, we should seek intimacy with Him. The disciples, who companied with Him, have to learn their lessons again and again. We know something of this. They had to make discovery of Him afresh, instead of enjoying Him as already discovered. In the 14th of Matthew they had to cry out, "Of a truth, thou art the Son of God." This was discovering Him afresh. Had their faith been simple, they would have slept in the boat with Him. What a scene it was, to their shame and His glory! They spoke insultingly or reproachfully to the Lord, as though He was indifferent to their danger: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" He awoke at the sound of their voice, and at once set them in safety. But then, He rebukes them, not however for the injustice their hard words had done Him, but for their want of faith.

How perfect was this! How perfect, surely, was everything; and each in its generation! — the human virtues, the fruits of the anointing that was on Him, and His divine glories. The natures in the One Person are unconfused; but the effulgence of the divine is chastened, the homeliness of the human is elevated. There is nothing like this, there could be nothing like this, in the whole creation. And yet the human was human, and the divine was divine, Jesus slept in the boat: He was man. Jesus quelled the winds and the waves: He was God.

This moral glory must shine. Other glories must give place till this is done. The Greeks, who had come to worship in Jerusalem at the

feast, enquire after Jesus, desiring to see Him. This savoured of the kingdom, or of the royal glory of the Messiah. It was a sample of that day, when the nations shall come up to the city of the Jews, to keep holy day; and when, as King in Zion, He shall be Lord of all, and God of the whole earth.

But there was a secret deeper than this. It needs a juster sense of God's way, than simply to be expecting a kingdom. The Pharisees needed that, when in Luke 17, they asked the Lord when the kingdom should appear. He had to tell them of another kingdom, which they did not apprehend — a kingdom *within*, a present kingdom, which had to be entered and known, ere the glorious manifested kingdom could appear. The disciples needed it in Acts 1, when they asked their Lord if He would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. He had to tell them also of another thing, ere the restoration could take place; that they were to be gifted by the Spirit, for testimony to Him all the world over.

So here in John 12. The Lord lets us know that *moral glory* must precede the kingdom. He will surely shine in the glory of the throne by and by, and the Gentiles shall then come to Zion, and see the King in His beauty; but ere that could be, the moral beauty must be displayed in all its fulness and unsulliedness. And this was His thought now, when the Gentiles had inquired after Him. "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." This was His moral glory, as we have said before, John 13: 31, 32. It had been shining all through His ways, from His birth hitherto; His death was to be the completeness of it; and therefore the hour was then at hand, when it was to shine out in the last ray that was to form it, and give it perfection. The Lord thus supplies or introduces on this occasion, as He did, as we have seen, in Luke 17 and in Acts 1, the truth, the additional truth, which needs the richer, juster sense of God's ways to apprehend. The moral glory must be fully displayed, ere Messiah can show Himself in royal glory to the ends of the earth.

It is, however, His and His only. How infinitely distant from one's heart is any other thought! When the heavens opened, in Acts 10, the sheet was seen descending ere Peter was commanded to have fellowship with it, or ere it ascended and was lost or hid again on high. The contents of it had to be cleansed or sanctified. But when the heaven was opened in Matt. 3, Jesus on earth needed not to be taken up to be approved there, but voices and visions from on high, sealed and attested Him just as He was. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

And when the heavens were opened again, as in Matt. 27, that is, when the veil of the temple was rent in twain, all was finished, nothing more was needed, the work of Jesus was sealed and attested just as it then was. An opened heaven at the beginning, shone out in full acceptance of His *person*; an opened heaven at the end, shone out in acceptance of His work.

And let me close in saying, that it is blessed and happy, as well as part of our worship, to mark the characteristics of the Lord's way and ministry here on the earth, as I have been seeking in measure to do in this paper; for all that He did and said, all His service, whether in the substance or the style of it, is the witness of what He was, and He is the witness to us of what God is. And thus we reach God, the blessed One, through the paths of the Lord Jesus, in the pages of the evangelists. Every step of that way becomes important to us. All that He did and said was a real, truthful expression of Himself, as He Himself was a real, truthful expression of God. And if we can understand the character of His ministry, or read the moral glory that attaches to each moment and each particular of His walk and service here on earth, and so learn what He is, and thus learn what God is, we reach God, in certain and unclouded knowledge of Him, through the ordinary paths and activities of the life of this divine Son of Man.

The
Son of God.

by
J. G. Bellett

Chapter 1

"The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father"

(John 1: 18)

I am sure that I dread *reasonings* where *affections* should animate us, and the withdrawing from the place of living power into anything like a region of notions or theories. But the mysteries of God are all of the highest practical value, in either strengthening for service, comforting under trial, or enlarging the soul's communion.

The apostle speaks of himself and others as "ministers of Christ," and also as "stewards of the mysteries of God." And so we, in our measure, are to be ministers (that is, servants), in all practical, personal readiness and devotedness; patient, diligent, and serviceable in labours; in all of which some of us may know how little we are in comparison with others.

But we are also to be "stewards"; and that, too, of "mysteries," keeping uncorrupt and inviolate the peculiarities of divine revelation. Reasoning men may not receive them. The cross was foolishness to such; and "the princes of this world," the men of philosophy who professed themselves to be wise, knew not "the wisdom of God in a mystery." But that mystery is not to be surrendered to them in anywise. Our stewardship is of such; and it is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful (1 Cor. 4: 1, 2).

The guardianship and witness of the personal glory of the Son of God form a chief part of this high and holy stewardship. I observe John guarding that glory with a jealousy quite of its own kind. There are, for instance, measures and methods recommended, when Judaizing corruptions or the like are to be dealt with. In the Epistle to the Galatians, where the simplicity of the gospel is vindicated, there is a *pleading* and a *yearning* in the midst of earnest and urgent

reasoning. But in John's epistles, *all* is peremptory. There is a summary forcing out, or keeping out, all that is not of that unction of the Holy One, which teaches the *Son* as well as the Father, which will admit of no lie to be of the truth, and which distinctly says, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2: 23).

This diversity of style in the wisdom of the Spirit has its value; and we should mark it. The observing of days or the not eating of meat are things which really depreciate the full glory and liberty of the gospel. But they are to be borne with (Rom. 14). But depreciation of the person of the Son of God would not be thus borne with, or have a decree passed in its favour after this manner.

A mere journeying from Egypt to Canaan would not have constituted true pilgrimage. Many a one had travelled that road without being a stranger and pilgrim with God. Nay, though the journey were attended with all the trials and inconveniences of such an arid and trackless wild, it would not have been divine or heavenly pilgrimage. A merely toilsome, self-denying life, even though endured with that moral courage which becomes God's strangers on earth, will not do. In order to make that journey the journey of God's Israel, the ARK must be in their company, borne by a people ransomed by blood out of Egypt, and tending, in their faith of a promise, to Canaan.

This was the business of Israel in the desert. They had to conduct the ark, to accompany it, and to hallow it. They might betray their weakness, and incur chastening and discipline in many a way, and on many an occasion; but if their direct business were given up, all was gone. And this did come to pass. The tabernacle of Moloch was taken up, and the star of Remphan and this was despite of the ark of Jehovah; and the camp had, therefore, their road turned away from Canaan to Babylon or Damascus (Amos 5; Acts 7).

And what ark is in the midst of the saints now for safe and holy and honourable conduct through this desert-world, if not the name of the

Son of God? What mystery is committed to our stewardship and testimony, if not that? "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any one unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 9, 10). The wall of partition is to be raised by the saints between them and Christ's dishonour.

It is upon the heart a little to consider the Lord Jesus as Son of God; and, if He give help from Himself, the subject will be a blessing to us.

We are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28: 19). This carries with it the *formal* declaration of the mystery of the *Godhead*; the Son being a divine Person (in the recognition or declaration of this sentence), as is the Father, and as is the Holy Ghost.

It appertains to other scriptures to give us the same mystery (that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three Persons in the one divine glory or Godhead), in other and more moral ways; showing it in its grace and power, and in its application to our need, our life, and our edification. John's Gospel specially does this, drawing it out from its orderly form, as in the words of baptism, and giving it to our understanding as saints, our affections, and our consciences, making it our possession in faith and communion.

In connection with this, I might observe, that in John 1: 14, the saints are heard, as it were, interrupting the story of the glories of Jesus, and sealing, by their testimony, the great truth of "the Word" being "made flesh." And, in the fervour which became them at such a moment, they break or interrupt the current of their own utterances in that verse. For they begin to speak of the Word made flesh, but, ere they end that record, they (in a parenthesis) publish His *personal* glory, which they say they had seen, even "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." And this only begotten of the Father is spoken of, very soon afterwards, as "in the bosom of the Father" — words to be deeply cherished by our souls* (ver. 18).

*He is *prototokos* or first-begotten in several senses: and we have companionship with Him, *prototokos* or First-born among many brethren. But He is also the *monogenes* or Only Begotten, and there He is alone.

I doubt not the Lord is called "the Son of God" in different respects. He is so called as being born of the Virgin (Luke 1: 35). He is such by divine decree, as in resurrection (Ps. 2: 7; Acts 13: 33). This is true, and remains true, though further revelation be made to us of His divine Sonship. He is the Son, and yet has obtained the name of Son (Heb. 1: 1-3). Matthew and Mark first notice His Sonship of God at His baptism. But John goes back farther still, even to the immeasurable, unspeakable distance of eternity, and declares His Sonship "in the bosom of the Father."

And there were, I doubt not, different apprehensions of Him, different measures of faith touching His person, in those who called on Him. He Himself owns, for instance, the faith of the centurion, in apprehending His personal glory, to be beyond what He had found in Israel (Matt. 8; Luke 7). But all this in no wise affects what we hear of Him, that He was the Son "in the bosom of the Father," or "that Eternal Life, which was with the Father," and was manifested to us (1 John 1).

We must not, beloved, touch this precious mystery. We should fear to dim the light of that love in which our souls are invited to walk on their way to heaven. And - what is a deeper and tenderer thought, if I may be bold to utter it — we should fear to admit of any confession of faith (rather, indeed, of unbelief) that would defraud the divine bosom of its eternal, ineffable delights, and which would tell our God that He knew not a Father's joy in that bosom, as He opened it; and which would tell our Lord that He knew not a Son's joy in that bosom as He lay there from all eternity.

I cannot join in this. If there are Persons in the Godhead, as we know there are, are we not to know also that there are relationships between them? Can we dispense with such a thought? Is there not

revealed to faith, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; the Son begotten, and the Spirit proceeding? Indeed there is. The Persons in that glory are not *independent*, but *related*. Nor is it beyond our measure to say that the great archetype of love, the blessed model or original of all relative affection, is found in that relationship.

Can I be satisfied with the unbelieving thought, that there are not *Persons* in the Godhead, and that Father, Son, and Spirit are only different lights in which the One Person is presented? The *substance* of the gospel would be destroyed by such a thought, and can I be satisfied with the unbelieving thought that these Persons are not related? The *love* of the gospel would be dimmed by such a thought.

It was once asked me, Had the Father no bosom till the Babe was born in Bethlehem? Indeed, fully sure I am, as that inquiry suggests, He had from all eternity. The bosom of the Father was an eternal habitation, enjoyed by the Son, in the ineffable delight of the Father "the hiding-place of love," as one has called it, "of *inexpressible* love which is beyond glory; for glory may be revealed, this cannot."

The soul may have remained unexercised about such thoughts as these, but the saints cannot admit their denial.

"Lamb of God, Thy Father's bosom
Ever was Thy dwelling-place!"

The soul dare not surrender such a mystery to the thoughts of men. Faith will dispute such ground with "philosophy and vain deceit." Even the Jews may rebuke the difficulty which some feel regarding it. They felt that the Lord's asserting His *Sonship* amounted to a making of Himself equal with God. So that, instead of Sonship implying a secondary or inferior Person, in their thought it asserted *equality*. And, in like manner, on another occasion, they treated Jesus as a blasphemer, because He was making Himself God, in a discourse which was declaring the relationship of *a son to a father* (John 5, 10). The Jews may thus, again and again, rebuke this wretched, unbelieving difficulty which the "vain deceit" of man

suggests. They were wiser than to pretend to test, by the prism of human reasonings, the light where God dwells.

"No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father" (Luke 10: 22), is a sentence which may well check our reasonings. And the word, that the eternal life was manifested to us, to give us fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1: 2), distinctly utters the inestimable mystery of *the Son* being of the Godhead, having "eternal life" with *the Father*. And again, as we well know, it is written, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." I ask, Can any but God declare God? In some sense God may be *described*. But the soul of the Church will not rest in descriptions of God; though the wisdom of the world knows nothing else. It asks for declaration or revelation of Him, which must be by *Himself*. Is not then, I ask, the Son in the bosom a *divine* Person?

Nothing can satisfy all which the Scriptures tell us of this great mystery, but the faith of this: that the Father and the Son are in the glory of the Godhead; and in that relationship, too, though equal in that glory. "He who was with God in the beginning, as eternal as God, being God Himself, was also the Son of God" — as another has expressed it; and then adds, "God allows many things to remain mysteries, partly, I believe, that He may in this way test the obedience of our minds; for He requires obedience of *mind* from us, as much as He does obedience in action. This is a part of holiness, this subjection of the *mind* to God; and it is something which the Spirit alone can give. He alone is able to calm and humble those inward powers of mind which rise and venture to judge the things of God, refusing to receive what cannot be understood; a disobedience and pride which has no parallel, except in the disobedience and pride of Satan."

Holy, seasonable caution for our souls! "Who is a liar," asks the apostle, "but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" And he immediately adds, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." And again, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the

Father" (1 John 2: 22, 23). These are very serious sentences under the judgment of the Holy Ghost. And how can there be knowledge of the Father, but through and in the Son? How can the Father be known otherwise? And therefore is it written, "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." I may say, "Abba, Father," in the spirit of adoption; a poet may say, "We are also His offspring"; but God is not known as *the Father*, if the Son in the glory of the Godhead be not owned (Rom. 8; Acts 17). Sure we may be, nay, rather, assured we are, on divine authority, that if the unction which we have received abide in us, we shall abide in "the Son," and in "the Father."

Can the Son be honoured even as the Father, if He be not owned in the Godhead? (John 5: 23). The faith of Him is not the faith that He is *a* Son of God, or Son of God as born of the virgin, or as raised from the dead; though those are truths concerning Him, assuredly such. But the faith of Him is the faith of His proper person. I know not that I can call Jesus "Son of God," save in the faith of *divine* Sonship. The understanding which has been given us, has been given us to know "Him that is true," as being "in Him that is true, even in His *Son* Jesus Christ"; and to this it is added, "This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5).

Is not "the truth," in the sense of John's Second Epistle, "the doctrine of Christ," or the teaching which we have in Scripture respecting the *Person of Christ*? And in that teaching, is not the truth of Sonship in the Godhead contained? For what is said there? "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, *he hath both the Father and the Son.*" And the door is required to be shut against those who bring not that doctrine; the very same epistle speaking of Him as "the Son of the Father"; language which would not attach to Him as born of the Virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost.

But still further. I ask, Can the love of God be understood according to Scripture, if this Sonship be not owned? Does not that love get its character from that very doctrine? Are not our hearts challenged on

the ground of it? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Again, ",Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And again, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." Yet again, "We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (John 3; 1 John 4).

Does not this love at once lose its unparalleled glory, if this truth be questioned? How would our souls answer the man who would tell us that it was not *His own* Son whom God spared not, but gave Him up for us all? How would it wither the heart to hear that such a One was only His Son as born of the Virgin, and that those words, "He that spared not His own Son," are to be read as *human*, and not as *divine*? (Rom. 8: 32).

Good care are we to take not to qualify the precious Word, to meet man's prejudices. Was it with his servant, or with a stranger, or with one born in his house merely, that Abraham walked to Moriah? Was it with an adopted son, or with his own son, his very son, his only son, whom he loved? We know how to answer these inquiries. And I will say, I know not how I could speak of the *Son* loving me, and giving Himself for me (Gal. 2: 20), did I not receive Him by faith as Son in the bosom of the Father, Son in the glory of the Godhead.

The Son is the Christ. God, in the person of the Son, has undertaken all *office* work for us, all work for which anointing or Christhood was needed. And this He has done in the person of Jesus. We therefore say, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Only Begotten, the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, are one. But it is in *personal essential glory*, in *office*, and in assumed *manhood*, that we see Him under these different names.

We track His wondrous path from the glory to the heirship of all things. What discoveries are made of Him, beloved! Read of Him in

Prov. 8: 22-31; John 1: 1-3; Eph. 1: 10; Col. 1: 13-22; Heb. 1: 1-3; 1 John 1: 2; Rev. 3: 14. Meditate on Him as presented to you in those glorious scriptures. Let them yield to you their several lights, in which to view the One in whom you trust, the One who gave up all for you, the One who has trod, and is treading, such a path; and then tell me, Can you part with either Him or it?

In the bosom of the Father He was. There lay the eternal life with the Father; God, and yet with God. In counsel He was then set up ere the highest part of the dust of the earth was made. Then, He was the Creator of all things in their first order and beauty; afterwards, in their state of mischief and ruin, the Reconciler of all things; and by-and-by, in their regathering, He will be the Heir of all things. By faith we see Him thus, and thus speak of Him. We say, He was in the everlasting counsels, in the virgin's womb, in the sorrows of the world, in the resurrection from the dead, in the honour and glory of a crown in heaven, and with all authority and praise in the heirship and lordship of all things.

Deprive Him of the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and ask your soul if it has lost nothing in its apprehension and joy of this precious mystery, thus unfolded from everlasting to everlasting? I cannot understand a saint pleading for such a thing. Nor can I consent to join in any confession that tells my heavenly Father it was not His own Son He gave up for me.

If we could but follow the thought with affection, how blessed would it be to see the Lord all along this pathway to the throne of the glory!

And still further. *In each stage of this journey, we see Him awakening the equal and full delight of God; all and as much His joy at the end as at the beginning; though with this privilege and glory, that He has awakened it in a blissful and wondrous variety.* This blessed thought Scripture also enables us to follow. As He lay in the bosom through eternity, we need not — for we cannot —

speak of this joy. That bosom was "the *hiding-place* of love"; and the joy that attended that love is as unutterable as itself.

But when His Beloved was set up as the centre of all the divine operations, or the foundation of all God's counsels, He was still God's delight. In such a place and character we see Him in Prov. 8: 22-31. In that wondrous scripture, Wisdom or the Son is seen as the great Original and Framer and Sustainer of all the divine works and purposes, set up in counsel before the world was; as several scriptures in the New Testament also present Him to us. See John 1: 3; Eph. 1: 9, 10; Col. 1: 15-17. And in all this He can say of Himself, "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."

So, when the fulness of time was come, the Son of God lay in the Virgin's womb. Who can speak the mystery? But so it is. But it is only another moment, and a fresh occasion, of joy; and angels came to utter it, and tell of it to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem.

Then again, in a new form the Son of His love was to run another course. Through sorrows and services as Son of man, He is seen on earth; but all, and as unmixedly, awakening ineffable delight as in the hidden ages of eternity. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth," are voices of the Father, telling of this unchanging joy, while tracking the path of Jesus across this polluted earth (Matt. 3; Isa. 42).

And that same voice, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," is heard a second time; heard on the holy hill, as on the bank of Jordan. in the day of transfiguration as at the baptism (Matt. 17). And the transfiguration was the pledge and type of the Kingdom, as the baptism was entrance on His ministry and witness. But the same delight is thus stirred in the Father's bosom where the Son lay, whether the eye of God track Him along the lonely path of Jesus the Servant in a polluted world, or on the heights of the King of glory in the millennial world.

It is *delight* in Him, equal and full delight, all along the way from everlasting to everlasting: no interruption, no pause, in the joy of God in Him, though various and changeful joy; the same in its fulness and depth, let the occasions proceed and unfold themselves as they may. The One who awakens the joy is the same throughout, and so the joy itself. It can know no different *measures*, though it may differ *springs*.

And that One was alike unsullied through the whole path from everlasting to everlasting; as holy in the virgin's womb as in the Father's bosom; as spotless when ending His journey as when beginning it; as perfect as a Servant as a King; infinite perfection marking all, and equal complacency resting on all.

If the soul were but impregnated with the thought, that this blessed One (seen *where* He may be, or as He may be) was the very One who from all eternity lay in the divine bosom; if such a thought were kept vivid in the soul by the Holy Ghost, it would arrest many a tendency in the mind which now defiles it. He that was in the virgin's womb, was the same that was in the Father's bosom! What a thought! Isaiah's enthroned Jehovah, whom the winged seraphim worshipped, was Jesus of Galilee! What a thought! As spotless as *Man*, as He was as God, as unstained in the midst of the human vessel, as in the eternal bosom; as unsullied in the midst of the world's pollutions, as when daily the Father's delight ere the world was!

Let the soul be imbued with this mystery, and many a rising thought of the mind will get its answer at once. Who would talk, as some have talked, in the presence of such mystery as this? Let this glory be but discovered by the soul, and the wing will be covering the face again, and the shoe will be taken off the foot again.

I believe the divine reasonings in John's First Epistle suggest, that the communion of the soul is affected by the view we take of the Son of God. For in that epistle, love is manifested in the gift of *the Son*, and love is our *dwelling-place*. If, then, I judge that, when the

Father gave the Son, it was only the gift of the Virgin's seed, the atmosphere in which I dwell is lowered. But if I apprehend this gift to be the gift of the Son who lay in the Father's bosom from all eternity, my sense of the love rises, and hence, also the character of my dwelling-place. The communion of the soul is thus affected.

I know, indeed, from converse with saints, that many a soul, through simplicity of faith, has a richer enjoyment of a lower measure of truth, than some have of higher measures. But this does not affect the thoughts and reasonings of the Spirit in that epistle. it is still true, that love is our dwelling-place, and that our communion will therefore take its character from the love which we apprehend. And why, I ask, should we seek to reduce the power of communion, and thus hazard our enjoyment in God? The sorrow lies in this (if one may speak for others), *we but scantily care for the good things we have in Him.*

The Son, the only begotten Son, the Son of the Father, emptied Himself that He might do the divine pleasure in the service of wretched sinners. But will the Father suffer it, that sinners, for whom all this humiliation was endured, shall take occasion from it to depreciate the Son? This cannot be, as John 5: 23 tells us. Jesus had declared that God was His *Father*, 'making *Himself equal* with God.' It is a question, *Will God vindicate Him in that saying?* And yet, He is scarcely justified in it by the thought of those who deny Sonship in the Godhead. But the Father will not receive honour if it be not rendered to the Son, as we read, "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

The Spirit was given, breathed out, by Jesus risen (John 20). The Holy Ghost then proceeded from Him, and in that way became the Spirit. But will it be thought that He was not "the Spirit" in the Godhead before? Never, by a saint. And so the Son. He was born of the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and so became Son of God; but, in like manner, shall that affect the thought that He was "the Son" in the Godhead before?

Look again at John's First Epistle. There he addresses "Fathers," "young men," and "little children" (1 John 2). And he distinguishes them:

The "Fathers" are they who "have known Him that is from the beginning." They abide in "the doctrine of Christ," having "both the Father and the Son." The unction is powerful in them, if I may so express it. They have listened, as it were, with deep attention of soul, to the declaration of the Father by the Son (John 1: 18). Having seen the Son, they had seen the Father (John 14: 7-11). They keep the words of the Son, and of the Father (John 14: 21-23). They know that the Son is in the Father, they in the Son, and the Son in them, They are not orphans (John 14: 18-20).

The "young men" are they who "have overcome the wicked one," that wicked one who animates the world with the denial of the mystery of the Christ (1 John 4: 1-6). But they are not in the full settled power of that mystery, as the "Fathers" are, and they need exhortation; so that the apostle goes on to warn them against all that belongs to the world, as they had already stood in victory over that spirit in it which was gainsaying Christ.

The "little children" are they who "have known the Father." But they are only "little children," and need warning, teaching, and exhorting. Their knowledge of the Father was somewhat immature; not so connected with the knowledge of the Son, of "Him that is from the beginning," as was that of the "Fathers." He, therefore, warns them of antichrists, describing them as set against "the truth," or "the doctrine of Christ." He teaches them that "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" that if the anointing they have received abide in them, they will surely abide in the Son and in the Father; and that the house of God was of such a character as that none who savoured not of such anointing could remain there. He reminds them that the promise which the Son has promised is eternal life. And, finally, he exhorts them so to abide in what the "unction"

teaches, that they may not be ashamed in the day of the Son's appearing.

It is, therefore, all about the *person of the Son*, or "the doctrine of Christ," that this distinguishing scripture deals. It is their attainment in *that* truth, their relationship to *it*, and not *their general Christian character*, which distinguishes them as fathers, young men, and little children. These addresses, therefore, hold in jealous view the great object of the whole epistle; and that is, *the Son of God*. For the mention of the Son of God pervades it all from beginning to end. Thus: It is the blood of *the Son* that cleanses. It is with the Father we have an Advocate; which intimates the Advocate to be *the Son*. It is in *the Son* the "unction" causes us to abide. It is *the Son* who has been manifested to destroy the works of the devil. It is in the name of *the Son* we are commanded to believe. It is *the Son* who has been sent to manifest what love is. It is *the Son*, faith in whom gives victory over the world. It is *the Son* about whom God's record or testimony is. It is *the Son* in whom we have life. It is *the Son* who is come to give us an understanding. It is *the Son* in whom we are. It is *the Son* who is the true God, and eternal life.

All this is declared to us in this epistle about the Son of God; and thus it is *the Son* who is the great object through the whole of it; and the fathers, the young men, and the little children, are distinguished by the apostle *because* of their relation to that object, I believe, *because of the measure of their souls' apprehension of it*. All is, in this way, divinely and preciously consistent.

And in this same epistle John speaks much of *love* and of *righteousness*, as necessary parts or witnesses of our birth of God. But, in the midst of such teaching, He speaks of *right or wrong confession of Christ*. Does he, I ask, treat the former as *living and practical* matter, and the latter as *speculative*? He gives no warrant to any one thus to distinguish them. Not at all. All are treated as being equally of one character, and he lets us know that the exercise of love and the practice of righteousness would not complete the

witness of a soul being born of God, without the knowledge and confession of the Son.

Had the opened eye of Isaiah tracked the path of Jesus through the cities and villages of his native land, how must he have been kept in continual adoration? He had been taken into a vision of His glory. He had seen the throne, high and lifted up, His train filling the temple, and the winged seraphim veiling their faces as they owned in Jesus the Godhead-glory. Isaiah "saw His glory, and spake of Him" (Isa. 6; John 12). And it is the like sight, by faith, which we need — the faith of the Son, the faith of Jesus, the faith of His name, the apprehension of His person, the sense of the glory which lay behind a thicker veil than a seraph's wing, the covering of the lowly and earth-rejected Galilean.

And let me, in closing, remember what the Lord says about giving the household their meat in due season (Matt. 24; Luke 12). We must be careful not to corrupt that meat. "Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood," says one apostle. "Feed the flock of God which is among you," says another. And the Church of God or the flock of God is to increase with "the increase of God." Wondrous language!

Let us watch, beloved, against the attempt of the enemy to corrupt the meat of the household. The unfoldings of John about the *Son of God*, and of Paul about the *Church of God*, are meat in due season *now*; and we are not to attemper the food, stored up of God for His saints, to man's taste or reasonings. The manna is to be gathered as it comes from heaven, and brought home to feed the travelling camp with angels' food.

"I commend you to God," says one in the Holy Ghost, "and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20: 32).

Chapter 2

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"

(John 1. 14).

In the history of flesh and blood, given to us in Scripture, we learn that *by sin came death*. To all, as headed or represented in Adam, it was this: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Touching, however, the promised Seed of the woman, who was not thus represented, it was said to the serpent, "Thou shalt bruise His heel." The death of this Seed was thus to be as peculiar as His birth. He was, in birth, to be the *woman's* Seed; in death, He was to have His *heel bruised*. In the fulness of time this promised One was "made of a woman." The Son of God, the Sanctifier, took part of flesh and blood; He became "that holy thing" (Luke 1: 35).

Had death, I ask, any title? None whatever. Whatever title the everlasting covenant had on His heel, death had none on His flesh and blood. In this blessed One, if I may so express it, there was a capability of meeting the divine purpose, that His heel should be bruised; but there was no exposure to death in anywise.

Under the covenant, under this divine purpose, at His own divine pleasure, He had surrendered Himself, saying, "Lo, I come." For the great ends of God's glory and the sinner's peace, He had taken "the form of a servant." And, accordingly, in due time He was made "in the likeness of men," and being found in that "fashion," He went on in a course of self-humbling, even to "the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2).

*Had He not been equal with God, He could not have done *this*; because every creature, every one less than God, is *already* a servant to his Creator. One Jew might be a *voluntary* servant to another Jew — a servant with a bored ear (Ex. 21) - but no creature could be a

voluntary servant to God, inasmuch as all creatures are already bound servants to Him by reason of the relationship of Creator and creature.

In such a course we see Him through life. He hides His glory, "the form of God" under this "form of a servant." He did not seek honour from men. He honoured the Father that had sent Him, and not Himself. He would not make Himself known. He would not show Himself to the world. Thus we read of Him. And all this belonged to the "form" He had taken, and gets its perfect illustration in the histories or narratives of the Gospels.

Under the form of a tributary, He hid the form of the Lord of the fulness of the earth and sea. He was asked for tribute; at least, Peter was asked if his Master did not pay it. The Lord declares His freedom; but, lest He should offend, He pays the custom for Peter and Himself. But who, all the while was this? None less than He of whom it had been written, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." For He commands a fish from the sea to bring Him that very piece of money which He then passed over to the receivers (Matt. 17).

What an instance of the precious mystery that He who was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," using thus the treasures of the deep, and commanding the creatures of God's hand as all His own, — took on Him "the form of a servant!" What glory breaks through the cloud in that passing and trivial occurrence! It was all between the Lord and Peter; but it was a manifestation of "the form of God" from beneath "the form of a servant," or of a subject to the power (Rom. 13: 1). The fulness of the earth was tributary to Him at the moment when He was consenting to pay tribute to others. As, on another occasion, the unnoticed guest at the marriage-feast spread the feast, not merely as though He had been "the bridegroom," but as the very Creator of all that furnished it. There again He "manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him" (John 2).

So again we read of Him, He would not strive nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the street. He would not break the bruised reed, but rather withdraw Himself. And all this because He had taken "the form of a servant." And accordingly, on that very occasion, the scripture is quoted, "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen" (Matt. 12).

Very significant of His way, all this was. Show us a sign from heaven, was another temptation to Him to exalt Himself (Matt. 16). The Pharisees then tried Him, as the devil tried Him when he would have Him cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple; and as the kinsfolk were doing when they said, "Show Thyself to the world" (John 7). But what said the perfect Servant? No sign should be given but that of Jonas — a sign of humiliation, a sign that the world and the prince of the world were apparently to get advantage over Him for a moment, instead of such a sign as would awe and silence the world into subjection to Him.

Excellent, indeed, are these traces of God's perfect Servant. David and Paul, standing, as it were, on either side of Him, like Moses and Elias on the holy hill, reflect this Servant thus hiding of Himself, as a well-known tract has told us. David slew the lion and the bear, and Paul was caught up to the third heaven; but neither of them spoke of those things. And lovely reflections of the perfect Servant such actings were. But they, and all like them which we may find in Scripture, or among the saints, are more distant from the great Original than we have measures to measure. He hid "the form of God" under "the form of a servant." Jesus was the strength of David when he killed the lion and the bear; and He was the Lord of that heaven to which Paul was caught up; but He lay under the form of one who had "not where to lay His head."

So on the top of "the holy hill," and again at the foot of it. On the top of it, in the sight of His elect, for a passing moment, He was the "Lord of glory"; at the foot of it, He was "Jesus only," charging them

not to tell the vision to any till the Son of man were risen from the dead (Matt. 17).

Observe Him again in the vessel on the lake during the storm. He was there as a tired labouring man whose sleep was sweet. Such was His manifested form. But underneath lay "the form of God." He arose, and as the Lord who gathers the wind in His fists and binds the waters in a garment, He rebuked the sea into a calm (Prov. 30: 4; Mark 4).

It is in the full and varied glories of the Jehovah of Israel that Jesus passes at times before us. In other days, the God of Israel had commanded the creatures of the great deep, and "a great fish" was prepared to swallow up Jonah, and give him a burying-place for the appointed time. And so, in His day, Jesus approved Himself the Lord of the fulness of "this great and wide sea," summoning a host of the "small beasts," thereof into the net of Peter (Ps 104; Luke 5). "Both small and great beasts," that find their pastime therein, thus in earlier and later days, owned the word of Jehovah-Jesus.

So, the God of Israel, as the Lord of the fulness of the earth as well as of the sea, would use the dumb ass to rebuke the madness of the prophet. But more in character than even that, when the ark had to be brought home from the land of the Philistines, the God of Israel controlled nature, forcing the kine that were yoked to the cart on which the ark was placed, to take the right and ready road to Bethshemesh, on the borders of Israel, though this journey was taken by them under the strong resistance of all the instincts of nature (1 Sam. 6).

The Lord Jesus acted afterwards in the very striking assertion of this same glory and power of the God of Israel. For in His day, He, the True Ark, had to be borne homeward. In the progress of His history the moment came when He needed, like the ark in the days of Samuel, to be borne from the place where He was. He had to visit Jerusalem in His glory. It was *needful* that as King of Zion He should enter the royal city; and He gets the ass, and the colt the foal

of an ass, to do that service for Him. And He does this in all the conscious dignity and rights of the Lord of the fulness of the earth. The owners of the beast had to listen to this claim, "The Lord hath need of him;" and, contrary to nature, opposed to all that the heart of man would have stood for and pleaded, "straightway" they sent him (Mark 11; Luke 19).

Thus again was Jesus shining in the characteristic glory of the God of Israel. The veil may have been very thick, and so it was. It was no other than that of Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, the carpenter's son (Matt. 13: 55; Mark 6: 3). The cloud that covered was heavy indeed; the glory that was under it was infinite. It was the full Jehovah-glory; and no ray of all the divine brightness would refuse to assert and express it. He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," though He "made Himself of no reputation." Faith understands this veiled glory, and affection guards it as with a wall of fire. "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in His fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?" (Prov. 30).

We will not attempt to tell it; but, like Moses, while Jesus passes by, we will learn to bow our head to the earth, and worship (Ex. 34).

What instances are these in which Scripture teaches us to trace "the form of a servant" hiding "the form of God." But so also, I am bold to say, of this same character and meaning, are those cases in which He appears to be sheltering Himself from danger, or securing His life. And a delightful task it should ever be to the soul to discover thus His beauty and His glory, which he hid from the eye of man. But many of us, who would not for worlds sully that glory, may still be unapt in apprehending it, and often mistake the way of it, or the form which it takes.

The Son of God came into the world the very contradiction of him who is still to come, and after whom, as we read, the whole world is to wonder. As He Himself says, "I am come in My Father's name,

and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v. 43). And, in accordance with this, if His life is threatened, He does not at once become a wonder in the eyes of the world, but the very opposite. He makes Himself of no reputation. He would be nothing and nobody. He refuses altogether to be a wonder in the sight of men — the great and glorious contradiction of him *whose deadly wound is to be healed*, so that the whole world may wonder and worship, whose image is to live and to be made to speak, that all, both small and great, may take his name in their foreheads (Rev. 13).

The Son of God was the very contradiction of all this. He came in His Father's name, and not in His own. He had life in Himself. He was equal with Him of whom it is written, "Who only hath immortality;" but He hid that *brightness of the divine glory* under the form of one who appeared to shelter his life by the most ordinary and despised methods. Blessed to tell it, had we but worshipping hearts! The other who is to come "in his own name" by-and-by, may receive a deadly wound by a sword, and yet live, that the world may wonder; but the Son of God will flee into Egypt.

Are we so far wanting in spiritual apprehension that we cannot perceive this? Is the sight of the glory thus hidden to be indeed forced upon us? If we need that, the Lord even so far bears with us, and gives it to us. For under this veil there lay a glory which, had it pleased, might, like the flames of the Chaldean furnace, have destroyed its enemies at once. For at the last, when the hour had come, and the powers of darkness were to have "their hour," the servants of those powers, in the presence of this glory, "went backward, and fell to the ground"; teaching us that Jesus was entirely a *willing captive* then, as afterwards He was a willing victim.*

*When I remember who He was, the woman's Seed, the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh; when I remember also that death, come he in what shape he may, had no title against Him, I can have no other

thought. Considered in the flesh and blood which He took, death had no title, because there was no sin there: considered in His full person, death could not touch Him, save as He voluntarily met it under the everlasting covenant. So that the soul fully refuses the thought of His saying His life in the ordinary sense of these words.

In connection with this, look at Him on the occasion to which I have already referred, in Matt. 12. Did the Lord, I ask, *fear* at that moment the anger of the Pharisees, and feel as one that must provide for the safety of his life? That cannot be my thought. He was taking one suited and consistent stage in His beautiful and precious path as a servant, going on, not to get Himself a name of honour in the world, but such a name (through humiliation and death), as that the Gentiles might trust in it, sinners be saved through the faith of it.

Look at Him for another moment, when the sword of Herod a second time threatened (Luke 13). How did the Lord rise before it or above it? In the consciousness of this: that, let the king be as crafty as he may, let him add subtlety to force, He Himself must and would walk His appointed journey, and do His appointed work, and then be perfected; and His perfection, as He there speaks, was to come, as we know, not by any prevailing of Herod or of the Jews over Him, but by His surrender of Himself to be made the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. And on the same occasion, He recognizes this: that, though as a Prophet He may have to die at Jerusalem, it is that Jerusalem may fill up the measure of her sins; for that He, all the while, was Jerusalem's God who throughout ages of patient love had borne with her, and pleaded with her, and would soon in judgment leave her desolate (vers. 31-35).

Again I say, What glories are hidden here under the lowly form of One who was threatened with the anger of a king, and had to meet the scorn and enmity of his people!

But I may refer to one or two cases still more marked than these. Look at One in the earliest time of His ministry, in His own city. There the same great principle is exhibited; for the hill of Nazareth

is, in my sight, not a place of danger to the life of Jesus, but just what the pinnacle of the temple had been (Luke 4: 9, 29). The devil had no thought of the Lord's death at the bottom of the pinnacle; none whatever. He tempted Him - as he had tempted the woman in the garden — to magnify Himself, to make Himself, if I may so speak, as the devil had said to Eve, to be as God. He sought to corrupt the sources in Christ, as he had corrupted them in Adam, and to get "the pride of life" in as one of the master-springs. But Jesus kept "the form of a servant." He would not cast Himself down, but obediently remembered, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

So at the hill of Nazareth. That hill was not higher than the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus was in no more danger at the one spot than at the other. He would have been as entirely unhurt at the foot of the hill as at the bottom of the pinnacle. But how then should the Scripture be fulfilled, that He came not to honour Himself? He, therefore, "passing through the midst of them, went His way." He retired unnoticed and unknown, fulfilling His form as a servant, and manifesting His grace in the thoughts of His saints.

We dare not speak of such things as being done to save His life. The thought is contrary to the glory of His person, "God manifest in the flesh." Jesus was again and again, in the days of His flesh, refreshed in spirit when faith discovered His glory under the veil. When the Son of David, or the Son of God, or the Lord of Israel, or the Creator of the world, was known to faith under the form of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus rejoiced in spirit. And so now, we may say, at this time, when the form of a servant is afresh presented to our thoughts, He will joy in the saints' discovering the glory under the cloud.

The "flight," as we may call it, into Egypt, in earlier days, the days of the "young Child" of Bethlehem, is a very peculiar and beautiful incident. We may remember, that in the time of Moses, Israel in that land was like a bush in the midst of fire; but because of the sympathy and presence of the God of their fathers, the bush was unconsumed. Jehovah was above Pharaoh; and when Pharaoh would

have destroyed the people, Jehovah preserved them, and caused them to multiply in the very heart of Pharaoh's land. And this was done, "not by might, nor by power"; for Israel was there no better than a bush, a bramble-bush which a spark might have consumed. But the Son of God was in the bush. That was the secret. He was with Israel in Egypt, as afterwards He was in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego; and the smell of fire, though the bush was burning, and the furnace was heated seven fold more than was wont, did not pass on them.

A "great sight," so that Moses turned aside to look at it. And we may still, in the spirit of Moses, turn aside and visit the same spot. We may read Ex. 1-15, and then look again at this strange sight, why the bush was on fire, and the bush was not burnt; how the poor bramble of Israel was kept in the midst of the Egyptian furnace unhurt, because of the presence of the Son of God.

Let the fire be heated again and again, it never prevails. And how at the last does Israel leave Egypt? Just as the three children afterwards left the furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had heated: in triumph; with nothing burnt but the bands which bound them. Pharaoh and the Egyptian host perish in the Red Sea, but Israel goes out under the banner of the Lord.

But was Israel in Egypt with the *sympathies* of the Son of God more secure than Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh"? Shall the Israelitish bush be proof against the strength of the Egyptian fires, and shall not the lowly flesh of Jesus though in the full enmity of man, the hatred of the king, the envy of the scribes, and the rage of the multitude, be unassailable when God Himself is manifested in that flesh? The full mystery of the burning and unconsumed bush lies in that. Israel could not suffer beyond divine appointment, because of the *sympathies* of the Son of God; Jesus could not be touched beyond His pleasure, because of the *incarnation* of the Son of God.

"Out of Egypt have I called My Son," was true of Jesus as of Israel. Both Jesus and Israel, in their day, were burning, unconsumed

bushes; weak things, to all appearance, and in the judgment of men, but unassailable. Both may know their sorrows in this Egyptian world, but life is unreached; Israel from the sympathies they enjoyed, Jesus because of the Person that He was.

Was it, then, to save His life that "the young Child" was carried into Egypt? Did Israel of old leave Egypt to save their lives? Did Shadrach and his companions leave the Chaldean furnace to save their lives? Israel's life was as safe in Egypt as out of it. The Jewish children were as little hurt by fire in the furnace as out of it. Israel left Egypt to witness the glory of Jehovah their Saviour; and so did Israel's children the Chaldean fires. In like manner, and for the like end, "the young Child" was taken from Judea, from the wrath of Herod the king. The Son of God had taken the form of a servant. He had not come in His own name, but in His Father's. He had emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation, and in the fulfilling of that form He began His course while yet but a "young Child"; and He was, among other humiliations, obedient even to a flight into Egypt, as though to save His life from the wrath of the king, for the glory of Him who had sent Him.

We must watch indeed against taking these instances of His perfect servant-form, and using them to the depreciation of His person. He was unassailable. Till His hour came, and He was ready to surrender Himself, captains and their fifties again and again would fail ere they could reach Him; but rather than this, He would again and again "humble Himself," going into "Egypt" on one occasion, and into "another village" on another, the scorned, rejected Son of man.

Shall we treat this mystery of the subjection, the voluntary subjection of the Son of God, with a careless mind? Shall we draw aside the veil irreverently? And yet, if these instances to which I have referred, and others kindred with them, be cited to prove the *mortal* condition of the flesh and blood which the Lord took, we do draw aside the veil with an irreverent and unskilful hand. Yes, and with more than that. We do Him double wrong. We depreciate His

person through acts which manifest His boundless grace and love to us, and His devoted subjection to God.

And yet it is now said, that nature or violence or accident would have prevailed over the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus, to cause death as with us. But does not such a thought, I ask, connect the Lord Jesus Christ with sin? It may be said that it is not meant to do so. That may be. But is it not really so? Does it not link the Lord with sin, inasmuch as in the inspired history of flesh and blood — and we are to be wise only according to what is there written — death attaches to it *only* through sin? If flesh and blood in His person were liable to die, or by its own nature and condition capable of dying (save by His gracious surrender of Himself), is it not therefore connected with sin? And if so, is Christ before the soul? This suggestion treats Him as one *exposed* to death. It takes such knowledge of Him as leaves Him liable to die in a way which *He could never have taken up* in the fulfilling of His form as a servant. *And beyond what he took up in that character He was liable to nothing.*

There is, indeed, something in this suggestion to make one fear that "the gates of hell" are again attempting the "Rock" of the Church, the person of the Son of God. And if it be vindicated on this plea, that it is designed only to illustrate the Lord's true humanity, the vindication itself becomes matter of increased suspicion. For, is it mere humanity, I ask, I get in the person of Christ? Is it not something immeasurably different, even "God manifest in the flesh"? He would not, as a Saviour, do for me, a sinner, if He were not Jehovah's Fellow. Every creature owes all that he can render. None but One who thinks it not robbery to be equal with God can *take* "the form of a servant"; for he *is* a servant already, as I have said before. No creature can supererogate, as another has said; the thought would be rebellion. None could be qualified to stand surety for man, but One who could without presumption claim equality with God, and consequently be independent.

True humanity was capable of *sinning*. Adam in the garden was so, for he did sin. We may say, more simply and certainly, that he was capable of *sinning*, than that he was capable of *dying*. The history shows us the first, but forbids us to determine the second; inasmuch as it tells us, that death came in by sin. By nature there was a capability of sinning, but we are not told the same as to a capability of dying.

If, then, by and by, another were to come, and, just to illustrate, as he might say, the true humanity of Christ, were to suggest the capability or possibility of His sinning, I ask, What would the soul say to him? We may leave the answer to those who know Christ. But we may, at the same time, be sure of this: that the devil is in all these attempts upon the "*Rock*" of the Church, which is the *person of the Son of God* (Matt. 16: 18). For His work, His testimony, His sorrows, His death itself, would be absolutely nothing to us, if He were not God. His *person* sustains His *sacrifice*, and in that way His person is our Rock. It was a confession to His person, by one who was at that time ignorant of His work or sacrifice, which led the Son of God to speak of the "Rock" on which the Church was to be built, and also to recognize that truth or mystery against which "the gates of hell," the strength and subtlety of Satan, were to try their utmost again and again.

And they have been thus engaged from the beginning, and are still so. By Arians and Socinians, the full glory of "God manifest in the flesh" was clouded long ago with either a deeper or a more specious falsehood. Lately, the *moral* nature of the Man Christ Jesus, "over all, God blessed forever," was assailed in Irvingism, and it was blotted and tainted, as far as that evil thought could reach. Still more lately, the *relationships to God* in which Jesus stood, and the *experiences of the soul* in which Jesus was exercised, have been the unholy traffic of the human intellect; and now *His flesh and blood*, the "temple" of His body, has been profaned.

But one can trace a kindred purpose in all, *the depreciation of the Son of God*. And whence comes this? And whence comes the very opposite and contradictory energy? What is *the Father* occupied with, or jealous about, if it be not the glory of the Son, in resistance of all that would depreciate Him, be it gross or subtle? Read, beloved, the Lord's discourse to the Jews in John 5. There that secret is disclosed, that though the Son has humbled Himself, and can, as He says, "do nothing of Himself," the Father will see to it, that He be not thereby dishonoured, or in anywise depreciated; watching over the rights, the full divine rights, of the Son, by this most careful and jealous decree, "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

Patience in teaching, patience with the simply ignorant, is surely the divine way, the way of the gracious Spirit. The Lord exercised that way Himself: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" But no allowance of any depreciation of Christ is the divine way also. John's writings prove this to us - the most awful portion of the oracles of God, as well as being so peculiar and precious, because they so concern the personal glory of the Son. And they seem to me to show but little, if any, mercy to those who would sully that glory, or carelessly watch over and around it.

And, let me add, other facts in the history of the blessed Lord, such as hunger and thirst and weariness, are not to be used as the least warrant for this thought about the mortality of His flesh and blood. The Son of God in flesh was exposed to nothing. Nothing outside the garden of Eden was His portion. He was hungry and wearied at the well of Samaria. He slept in the ship after a day of fatiguing service. But whatever of all this He knew in the place of thorns and thistles and sorrow and sweat of face, He knew it all and took it all, only as fulfilling that "form of a servant" which in unspeakable grace He had assumed.

The "Man of sorrows" may be addressed on one occasion as though He appeared to be nearly fifty years old (John 8: 57). But I am to know, from that, only how He had borne sorrows and services for our blessing and the Father's glory. In such features I am to read Him whose "visage was so marred more than any man," because of His endurings for us, and the contradiction of sinners against Him; and not because of the decaying tendencies of natural old age in the smallest measure of them, as though such tendencies by any possibility could attach to Him.

The Jews are again and again charged with being His murderers (Acts 2: 36; Acts 3: 15; Acts 7: 52). Surely they are, and rightly so. We are all in the same condemnation. It is the guilt of murder that lies at our door. In a full judicial sense, they were His "betrayers and murderers." Strange it may seem to reason, but what we read touching this is perfect in the esteem of faith: "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10: 18). He was *free*, and yet under *commandment*. Strange all this, again I admit, to reasonings and unbelief, but perfect in the judgment of faith.

The Son of God died on the tree, where the wicked hand of man had nailed Him, and the eternal purpose and grace of God had appointed Him. There He died, and died because He was there. The Lamb was *slain*. Who would think of gainsaying such a thought? Wicked hands murdered Him, and God provided Him as His own Lamb for the altar. Who would touch for a moment so needed and precious a mystery? And yet the Lamb gave up His own life. No exhaustion under suffering, no pressure of the cross, led Him to the death; but His life He yielded of Himself. In token of being in full possession of that which He was rendering up, "He cried with a loud voice," and then "gave up the ghost." The history of the moment admits of no other thought; and, I will add, neither should the worshipping affections of the saints. Pilate marvelled that He was dead already; he would not believe it; he had to satisfy himself of it. No time had

been passed on the cross sufficient to extort the life, so that the legs of the others had to be broken. But He was dead already, and Pilate must make inquiry, and call for the witness, ere he would believe it.

The thought we claim is thus the only interpreter of the strict, literal history of the fact. And our souls, had we grace, would bless God for such a picture of His slain Lamb, and of our crucified, dying, killed, and murdered Saviour. Do we blot out the record that He was the slain Lamb, or silence the song in heaven which celebrates that mystery, when we say, that His life the slain Lamb rendered up Himself? The history of Calvary, which the Holy Ghost has written, sustains this thought; and again we say, What we claim is the only interpreter of the strict history of the fact. He was *free*, and yet under *commandment*. Faith understands it all. And according to this mystery, when the hour had come, as we read, "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19: 30). He owned the commandment which He had received, and yet of Himself yielded up His life. He was *obedient* unto death, and yet laid down His life as of Himself.

Faith understands all this without difficulty; yea, understands that herein alone lies the true and perfect mystery. He died under covenant counsels, to the which He willingly yielded, being the "Fellow" of the Lord of hosts.

But, as we have already said to His praise, the Son of God on earth was ever hiding His glory, "the form of God," as we have been seeing, under "the form of a servant." His glory had been owned in all parts of the dominions of God. Devils owned it, the bodies and the souls of men owned it, death and the grave owned it, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea owned it, winds and waves owned it, and so did the corn and the wine. I may say that He Himself was the only One who did not own or assume it; for His way was to veil it. He was "Lord of the harvest," but appeared as one of the labourers in the field; He was the God of the temple, and the Lord of the Sabbath, but submitted to the challenges of an unbelieving world (Matt. 9: 12).

Such was the veil or the cloud under which He thus again and again causes the glory to retire. And so, in entire fellowship with all this, as we have already said, did He carry Himself on those occasions when His life was threatened. Under despised forms, He hid His glory again. At times the favour of the common people shelters Him (Mark 11: 32; Mark 12: 12; Luke 20: 19); at times He withdraws Himself in either an ordinary or a more miraculous manner (Luke 4: 30; John 8: 59; John 10: 39); at times the enemy is restrained from laying hands on Him, because His hour was not come (John 7: 30; John 8: 20); and on one distinguished occasion, as we have seen, a flight into Egypt removes Him from the wrath of a king who sought His life to destroy it.

In all this I see the one thing from first to last — the Lord of glory hiding Himself, as One who had come in Another's name, and not His own. But He was "the Lord of glory," and "the Prince of life." He was a willing *captive*, as I have already observed, and so was He at the very last a willing *victim*. He *gave* His life a ransom for many"* (Matt. 20: 28 Titus 2: 14).

*The Son put Himself under the commandment of the Father, for the ends of God's glory in our salvation (John 10: 18; John 12: 49); and now the Father delivers a commandment to us, to give all divine honour to the Son, or, in other words, to walk in the truth of His person (John 5: 23; 1 John 3: 23; 2 John 4-6).

In other days the ark of the Lord was in the hands of the enemy; it had been taken captive by the Philistines at the battle of Ebenezer. Then God "delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand;" but it was unassailable. It was apparently a weak thing, a thing of wood and gold. Its presence troubled the uncircumcised, their gods, their persons, their lands. It was all unaided and alone, and in the midst of enemies who were fresh in the heat and pride of victory. Why, then, did they not break it to pieces? Apparently, to dash it against a stone would have been to destroy it. It was constantly in their way, and appeared to be always

at their mercy. Why, then, did they not rid themselves of it? *They could not*: that is the answer. The ark among the Philistines was another burning and unconsumed bush. It might appear to have been at the mercy of the uncircumcised, but it was unassailable. The Philistines may send it from Ashdod to Gath, and from Gath to Ekron; but no hand can touch it to destroy it (1 Sam. 4-6)

And so the True Ark, the Son of God in flesh, may be the sport of the uncircumcised for a little season: Pilate may send Him to Herod, and Annas to Caiaphas; the multitude may lead Him away to Pilate, and Pilate may give Him up again to the multitude; but His life is beyond their reach. He was the Son of God, and though manifested in flesh, still the Son as from eternity. Whatever sorrows He had gone through, whatever weariness He had endured, or hunger or thirst, all had been filling out "the form of a servant," which He had taken. But He was the Son who had "life in Himself," the unassailable Ark, the Bush, even in the midst of the raging flames of the world's full hatred, unconsumable.

Such was the mystery, I doubt not.

But while saying this — while going through the meditations of this paper with some desire of my soul, and, I trust, profit also — there is nothing I would more cherish than to feel as a true Israelite should have felt on the day when the ark of God returned home out of the land of the Philistines. He should then have rejoiced and worshipped; he should have been very careful to assure himself that this great event had indeed taken place, even though he were living at a distance from the scene. As an Israelite of any of the tribes, this thing deeply concerned him, that the ark had been rescued, and that the uncircumcised were not still handling it, or sending it hither and thither among their cities. But being satisfied of that, he had to be watchful that he himself did not touch it or inspect it, that he did not sin against it, like a Bethshemite, even after it had come from among the Philistines.

We are right, I am sure, in refusing those thoughts upon the *mortal* condition of the blessed Lord's body. All such words and speculations are as the handling of the ark with uncircumcised or Philistine hands. And we are to show the error of the thought itself, as well as its *irreverence*; that is, we are to be satisfied only with the full deliverance of the ark, and its return to us. But then, another duty becomes us: we are not to handle it, or inspect it, as though it were ordinary. Our words are to be few; for in "the *multitude* of words" on such a matter, "there wanteth not sin." Physical considerations of such a subject are not to be indulged, even though they may be sound and not to be gainsaid; for such considerations are not the way of the Spirit or of the wisdom of God. The Lord's body was a *temple*, and it is written, "Ye . . . shall reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord."

If one were to refuse to follow these speculations, and instead of *answering* them to *rebuke* them, I could say nothing. It might be with many a soul a holy, sensitive refusal to meddle beyond one's measure and the standard of Scripture with what must ever be beyond us. I remember the words, "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." But these speculations on the person of the Son of God began in other quarters. The ark got into uncircumcised hands — and this word which I have taken on me to write is an endeavour to recover it thence; — and what I would indeed desire, is to take it down from "the new cart" with the reserve and holiness that become the soul in doing such service.

I will just add, that all this present question is made to profit the soul. A lion's carcass (forbidding as such an object must have been) of old time was forced to yield even honey, delicate as it is, and good for food. Paul had to do the forbidding work of vindicating the doctrine of resurrection in the very face of some among the saints at Corinth; but that was made fruitful, like the carcass of the lion. For not merely does a vindication of the doctrine itself come forth, but glory after glory, belonging to that mystery, passes before him. He is given, through the Spirit, to see resurrection in its order, or in its

different seasons; the interval between such seasons, and the business to be done in each of them, according to divine dispensations; the scene which is to succeed the last of those seasons; and also the great era of the resurrection of the saints, in all its power and magnificence, with the shout of triumph which is to accompany it (1 Cor. 15). Here was honey, and honey again, I may say, out of a lion's carcase, for such is controversy among brethren.

But as it was once written, so is it, in the abounding grace of God, still existent: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

Chapter 3

"I will put My trust in Him"

(Heb. 2: 13).

What a moment it must have been when the Lord stilled the wind on the Lake of Galilee! It must have been wondrous and beautiful to witness it; as it would be now, had we but hearts sensible of the glories of Christ, to think of it. People may talk of the necessary course of principles, of laws of nature, and of the course of things; but surely it is the first law of nature to obey its Creator. And here, in the twinkling of an eye, the Sea of Galilee felt the presence, and answered the word, of Him who at His pleasure transfigures the course of nature, or by a touch unhinges it all (Mark 4).

This was Jesus-Jehovah. This was the God whom Jordan and the Red Sea had, of old, obeyed: "What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills, like lambs? *Tremble thou earth, at the presence of the Lord.*" The answer lies there, whether we listen to the voice of the Red Sea in the days of Exodus, or to the Sea of Galilee in the times of the gospel. The presence of God tells the secret. "He spake, and it was done."

We read that when the sun and the moon stood still in the midst of heaven, the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man. Joshua spake to the Lord then; and the Lord fought for Israel. And the occasion was full of wonder. The Holy Ghost, who records it, gives it that character. "Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." But Jesus acts at once, and from Himself, and no wonder is made of it. All the amazement that is felt comes from the *unprepared, unbelieving* hearts of the

disciples, who knew not the glory of the God of Israel. But under His teaching who takes of the things that are Christ's to show them to us, we, beloved, should the better understand it, discerning it alike, whether at the divided Red Sea, or at the Jordan that was "driven back," or on the stilled Lake of Galilee.

But there is more of Jesus at the Red Sea, than the dividing of its waters. The cloud which appeared to Israel as soon as they had been redeemed by the blood in Egypt, and which accompanied them through the wilderness, was the guide of the camp. But it was also the veil or the covering of the glory. In the midst of Israel such was that beautiful mystery. Commonly it was a hidden glory; at times manifested, but always there; the guide and companion of Israel, but their God also. He who dwelt between the cherubim, went along the desert before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh (Ps. 80). The glory abode in the cloud for Israel's use, but was in the holy place also; and thus, while conducting the camp in its veiled or humbled form, it assumed the divine honours of the sanctuary.

And such was Jesus, "God manifest in the flesh," commonly veiled under "the form of a servant," always without robbery equal with God in the faith and worship of His saints, and at times shining forth in divine grace and authority.

Now, just as they were approaching the Red Sea, Israel had to be *sheltered*. The cloud does this mercy for them. It comes between the Egyptians and the camp, and is darkness to the one and light to the other, so that the one came not near the other all the night; and then, in the morning, the Lord looked to the host of Egypt through the pillar of cloud, and troubled the host of Egypt. And so, on an occasion kindred with this at the Red Sea, Jesus acts as the cloud and the glory. He comes between His disciples and their pursuers: "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way." He shelters them with His presence as of old. And He looks through the cloud, and again, as of old, troubles the host of the enemy. "Jesus saith unto them, I am He . . . As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He,

they went backward, and fell to the ground." He did but look out, and His arm was found not to be shortened. With like ease and authority, the God of Israel does His proper acts at the Red Sea, and Jesus the same in the garden of Gethsemane (Ex. 14; John 18). The gods of Egypt worshipped Him at the Red sea, the gods of Rome worshipped Him in Gethsemane, and when brought again the second time into the world, it shall be said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

But further. In the progress of their history, Israel had to be *rebuked* as well as to be sheltered; to be disciplined as well as to be redeemed. This we see, as we leave the Red Sea and enter the wilderness. But the same glory hid within the cloud will do this divine work for them, as it did the other. In the day of the manna, in the day of the spies, in the matter of Korah, at the water of Meribah, Israel provokes the holiness of the Lord, and the glory is seen in the cloud witnessing the divine resentment (Ex. 16; Num. 14, 16, 20).

And just so, Jesus again. When grieved — as the Glory in the cloud was — at the hardness of heart, or unbelief of the disciples, He gives some token, some expression, of His divine power, with words of rebuke. As on that occasion I have referred to, on the Lake of Tiberias; for there He said to the disciples, "Why are ye so fearful?" as well as to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still." And so again and again, when the disciples betray ignorant and unbelieving thoughts of Him. As, for instance, to Philip, on one distinguished occasion, He says, in the grief and resentment of the Glory in the cloud, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? (John 14).

Surely here also was the same mystery. Was not the Lord here again shining through the veil for the confounding of the disobedience or unbelief of Israel? This was the glory seen in the cloud as in the day of the manna, or kindred cases already referred to. Very exact is the corresponding of these forms of divine power. The cloud was the

ordinary thing; the glory within *was now and again manifested*, but was always there. The guide and companion of the camp was the Lord of the camp. And is not all this Jesus in a mystery? The glory was the God of Israel (Ezek. 43: 4; Ezek. 44: 2), and Jesus of Nazareth was the God of Israel, or the glory (Isa. 6: 1; John 12: 41). The Nazarene veiled a light, or manifested in flesh a glory, which, in its proper fulness, "no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6: 16).

Moses beautifully *refused* glory, but Jesus *hid* it. "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. 11: 24). And a lovely victory over the world that was. We like to wear our honours, to make the most of what we are, and even to take more than we are entitled to, if men will make mistakes in our favour. But Moses humbled himself in the Egyptian palace; and that was a beautiful victory of faith over the course and spirit of the world. But Jesus did more. It is true, He had not servants and courtiers to teach, for He was a stranger to palaces. But the villagers of Nazareth adopted Him as "the carpenter's son," and He would have it so. The Glory of glories, the Lord of angels, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the God of heaven, was hid under that common report, and there He lay without an answer to it.

It is the gracious office of the Holy Ghost, in Heb. 2, to open the sources of this great mystery. The *grace* of God would fain exercise or indulge itself — precious as such a thought is — and the *praise* of Him "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," demanded the mystery, so to speak (ver. 9, 10). These things are told us there. These are the rich fountains whence the great purpose and transaction flow; that transaction, that unspeakable mystery of redemption through the humiliation of the Son of God, which is to give its character to eternity. Divine grace sought to gratify itself, and divine glory would be displayed to perfection. All issues from such springs. Flesh and blood was taken up by the Sanctifier; death was undergone; like temptations with the brethren, apart from sin, were endured; relationships to God, experiences in Himself, and sympathies with the saints, were borne and known; the life of faith

on earth, with its prayers and tears, to Him that was able to save from death; life of intercession in heaven; all fitness to be both a sacrifice and a priest accomplished; ability to succour, and worthiness to cleanse, as well as resurrection, ascension, present expectancy, and a coming Kingdom and glories — all these find their springs and sources there.

The Son of God took His place in connection with all this. He was dependent, obedient, believing, hopeful, sorrowful, suffering, despised, crucified, buried; everything which the great eternal plan made necessary to Him. He emptied Himself for all this, but all that He did *was infinitely worthy of His person*. The word at the beginning, "Let there be light: and there was light," was not more worthy of Him, than were the prayers and supplications "with strong crying and tears," in the days of His flesh. He could never have been allied with anything unworthy of Godhead, though found, abundantly and at all personal cost, in conditions and circumstances into which our guilt and His grace in putting it away brought Him.

The Person in the manger was the same as on the cross. It was "God manifest in the flesh." And in the full sense of that glory we can but speak of His humbling of Himself from the earliest to the latest moment of that wondrous journey. Led of God, the wise men of the East worshipped "the young Child" at Bethlehem. Simeon, I may say, worshipped Him at an earlier moment, in the temple; and strangely — which nothing can account for but the light of the Holy Ghost who then filled him — he blesses the mother, and not the Child. He had the Child in his arms, and naturally he would, on such an occasion, have given the Infant his blessing. But he does not. For he had that Child in his arms, not as a feeble infant whom he would commend to God's care, but as God's Salvation. In that glorious character, in the hour of nature's perfect feebleness, he held Him up, and gloried in Him. "The less is blessed of the better." It was not for Simeon to bless Jesus, though without wrong or robbery he would bless Mary.

Anna, the prophetess, receives Him in like spirit. And earlier still, while yet unborn, He was worshipped I may say, by the leaping of the child in the womb of Elizabeth, at the salutation of Mary. As also, ere He was conceived, the angel Gabriel owns Him as the God of Israel, before whose face the son of Zacharias was to go; and then, also, Zacharias in the Holy Ghost owns Him as the Lord whose people Israel were, and as "the Day-spring from on high."

Self-emptying obedience, subjection of a kind quite its own, is, therefore, to be seen in every stage and action of such a One. And what was that course of service in the esteem of Him to whom it was rendered? As the *born* One, the *circumcised* One, the *baptized* and *anointed* One, the *serving*, *sorrowing*, and *crucified* One, and then as the *risen* One, He has passed here on earth under the eye of God. In the secrecy of the Virgin's womb, in the solitudes of Nazareth, in the activities and services of all the cities and villages of Israel, in the deep self-sacrifice of the cross, and then in the new bloom of resurrection, has "this wondrous Man" been seen and delighted in of God - perfect, untainted, recalling the divine delight in man more than when of old he was made in God's image, and more than annulling all the divine repentings of old, that man had been made on the earth.

His person lent a glory to all His course of service and obedience, which rendered it of unutterable value. Nor is it merely that His person made all that service and obedience *voluntary*. There is something far more than its being thus voluntary. There is that in it which the *Person* ("My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts") imparts: and who can weigh or measure that? We know this full well among ourselves. I mean *in kind*. The higher in dignity, in *personal* dignity, the one who serves us is, the higher the value of the service rises in our thoughts. And justly so; because more has been engaged for us, more has been devoted to us, then when the servant was an inferior; more has the heart instinctively learnt, that our advantage was indeed sought, or our wishes and desires made an object. We do not forget the *person* in the *service*. We cannot. And so in this dear

mystery we are meditating on. The service and obedience of Jesus were perfect; infinitely, unmixedly worthy of all acceptance.

But beyond that, beyond the *quality* of the fruit, there was the Person who yielded it; and this, as we said, imparted to it a value and a glory that are unutterable. The same value rested on the services of His life which afterwards gave character to His death. It was His person which gave all its virtues to His death or sacrifice; and it was His person which gave its peculiar glory to all He did in His course of self-humbling obedience. And the *complacency* of God in the one was as perfect as His *judicial acceptance* of the other. Some symbol (like that of the rent veil) is seen by faith uttering that complacency and full delight of God over *every* passing act in the life of Jesus.* Would that we had eyes to see, and ears to hear that, as we pass on through the ways of Jesus from the manger to the tree! But so it was, whether seen or not by us. Complacency of God beyond all thought to conceive, rested on all He did and all He was, throughout His life of obedience. As another has said, "Divine wisdom is the way of our recovery by Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh,' designed to glorify a state of obedience. He would render it incomparably more amiable, desirable, and excellent, than ever it could have appeared to have been in the obedience of all the angels in heaven, and men on the earth, had they continued therein, in that His own eternal Son entered into a state of obedience, and took upon Him the form or condition of a servant unto God."

*I speak of the rent veil as the symbol of *divine acceptance*. No living obedience of Christ could have rent it; only His death.

These are strengthening thoughts about the ways of Jesus. These ways of service and subjection to God are to get their own peculiar character, and in our sight. Obedience has been glorified in His person, and shown in all its ineffable beauty and desirableness; so that we are not merely to say, that the complacency of God in Him was ever maintained in its fulness, but that it passes beyond all

created thought. "The form of a servant" was a reality, just as much as "the form of God" in Him; as truly an *assumed* reality, as the other was an *essential, intrinsic* reality. And being such, His ways were those of a servant; just as, being the Son, His glories and prerogatives were those of God. He prayed; He continued whole nights in prayer. He lived by faith, the perfect pattern of a believer, as we read of Him: "The Leader and Completer of faith." In sorrow He made God His refuge. In the presence of enemies He committed Himself to Him who judged righteously. He did not His own will, perfect as that will was, but the will of Him who sent Him. In these and in all kindred ways was "the form of a servant" found and proved and read and known to perfection. It is seen to have been a great and living reality. The life of this Servant was the life of faith from beginning to end.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we are taught to consider Jesus as "the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession"; and also as "the Leader and Completer of faith" (Heb. 3: 1; Heb. 12: 2, 3). As the one, He is set before us for the relief of our consciences and the succour of our times of temptation; as the other, for the encouragement of our hearts in the like life of faith. As "the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession," He is alone; as "the Leader and Completer of faith," He is connected with a great cloud of witnesses. As the one, He is for us; as the other, He is *before* us. But even when before us, as in the fight and life of faith, there is some distinctness; for the Holy Ghost calls on us to look at this "Leader and Completer of faith" in a way in which He does not speak touching any other. He speaks of our being *compassed about* with them but calls on us to *be looking to Him*.

And further: it was the "contradiction of sinners against Himself" that formed the life of trial and of faith in Jesus; and those are peculiar words. Others, like Him, in the fight of faith had cruel mockings and scourgings, the edge of the sword, the caves of the earth, tortures, bonds, and imprisonments; and all from the enmity of man. But their conflict in the midst of such things is not thus spoken

of. It is not called the "contradiction of sinners against themselves." There is a force and elevation in such words that suit only the life of faith which *Jesus* led and contended in.

How perfect are these minuter paths of the Spirit's wisdom in the Word! Ps. 16 gives us *Jesus* in this life of faith. There the Son of God is One in whom "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," as in Heb. 12: 2, 3. He enjoys the present portion of a priestly man. He sets the Lord always before Him, and knows that as He is at His right hand, He shall not be moved. He looks also for the pleasures at the right hand, and for the joy of the presence of God, in other regions.

Ps. 116 is the end of His life of faith in - resurrection, joy, and praise; and the apostle, in "the same spirit of faith," can look to share like resurrection-joy with his divine Lord and Fore-runner (2 Cor. 4: 13, 14).

"I will put My trust in Him" may be said to have been the language of the life of *Jesus*. But His faith was gold, pure gold, nothing but gold. When tried by the furnace, it comes out the same mass as it had gone in, for there was no dross. Saints have commonly to be set to rights by the furnace. Some impatience or selfishness or murmur has to be reduced or silenced, as in Ps. 73 and 77. Job was overcome: trouble touched him, and he fainted, though often he had strengthened the weak hands, and upheld by his word them that were falling. "The stoutest are struck off their legs," as an old writer says. Peter sleeps in the garden, and in the judgment-hall tells lies, and swears to them; but there has been One whom the furnace, heated seven times, proved to be precious beyond expression.

Read Luke 22; see this One in that great chapter; see *Jesus* there in the hour of the trial of faith. He is first in company with *the sorrow that was awaiting Him*, then with *His disciples*, then with *the Father*, and then with *His enemies*: and mark it all, beloved. How unutterably perfect all is! this faith in its unalloyed preciousness, when tried in the fire! But *all* the life of *Jesus* was the life and

obedience of faith. In one light of it, it was most surely the life of the Son of God, in "the form of a servant," humbling Himself even unto death, though "in the form of God," and though He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"; but in another, it was the life of faith: "I will put My trust in Him," "I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." These are His breathings, and we celebrate Him, after our own way, in His life of faith, and sing together of Him

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

And all this precious life of faith was answered by the care and keeping of God. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The faith of Him who was serving on earth was perfect, and the answer of Him who dwelt in the heavens was perfect (Ps. 91).

The care which watched over Him was *unceasing from the womb to the grave*. So had it been of old declared by His Spirit in the prophets: "I was cast upon Thee from the womb. Thou art My God from My mother's belly." "Thou didst make Me hope [or, Thou keptest Me in safety] when I was upon My mother's breasts." It was *unwearied throughout*. "Thou maintainest My lot." "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. 22, Ps. 16). This help, and care, and watchfulness, in one aspect of His history, was everything to Him. It watched over Him that very night in which the angel warned Joseph to flee into Egypt. It was the Father's unspeakable joy to exercise the diligence of that hour. He who kept *that* Israel could not slumber *then*.

But all this, instead of being inconsistent with the full divine rights of His person, gets its special character from them. The glory of this relationship, and of the joy and complacency which attended it, is

gone, if the Person be not vindicated and honoured. Such was the Person, that His *entrance* into the relationship was an act of self-emptying. Instead of beginning a course of subjection, either at the flight into Egypt, or at the manger at Bethlehem, He had taken "the form of a servant" in counsel before the world began; and, as fruit thereof, He was "found in fashion as a man." And all His doings and services were the ways of this self-emptied One: all of them from the earliest to the last. For He was as truly "God manifest in the flesh" when on the journey to Egypt in His mother's arms, as when in Gethsemane, in the glory and power of His person, the enemy coming to eat up His flesh stumbled and fell. He was as simply Emmanuel as an Infant in Bethlehem, as He is now at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.* All was humbling of Himself, from the womb to the cross. I for, get His person or who He was, if I doubt that. But in another light of the glorious mystery, we are to see the relationship, and the tender, perfect care and help which, according to it, the Father was ever rendering Him. But these things are only like the various lights or characters in which the different evangelists present the Lord, as we are generally acquainted with. He was the Object of the Father's care, and yet Jehovah's Fellow; and we may look at His path in the chastened light with which that divine care and watchfulness invest it, as we may gaze at it in that brightest light and most excellent glory in which His rights and honours as the Son of God present it to us. If He had this relationship to the care of God, assumed as it was according to eternal counsels, so had all creatures, earthly and heavenly, angelic and human, throughout the universe, the same relationship to Him.

*I do not mean that on the occasion of the journey to Egypt "the young Child" exercised mind or will. That would be precision beyond the way of Scripture. But that act, like all from Bethlehem to Calvary, has the one character of self-humbling obedience in it.

By reason of such various truth as this, He could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" and yet the Holy Ghost could say of Him, that the God of peace brought Him again from the

dead (John 2: 19; Heb. 13: 20). His enemies who sought His life fell before Him at a word; and yet, so did His perfect faith acknowledge God's perfect care and guardianship, that He could say, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (John 18: 5, 6; Matt. 26: 53). He could, with a touch, heal the ear of the servant, nay, restore it when cut off, when just at the same time He would have His own brows bleed under the crown of thorns (Luke 22: 51; Mark 15: 17-19). In the perfection of His place, as the emptied One, He would ask for sympathy, and say, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" and shortly after, in a moment of still greater gloom, in one sense, He could be above the pity of the daughters of Jerusalem, and honour by the promise of Paradise the faith of a dying malefactor (Matt. 26: 40; Luke 23: 28, 42, 43). For in brightness He shines, even in the deepest moment of His humiliation: and let sinners know that it is not the compassion of men His cross seeks, but their *faith*; that it does not ask them in human kindness to *feel that hour*, but in faith of their hearts and to the full peace of their consciences to be *blessed by that hour*; not to *pity* the cross, but to lean on it, and to know, that though accomplished in weakness, it is the very pillar which is to sustain the creation of God forever.

In such different, but consistent forms, we read the life of the Son of God in flesh. Is the one the less real because the other is true? The tears of Jesus over Jerusalem were as real as though there was nothing in His heart but the sorrow of an ill-requited Lord and Saviour over a rebellious, unbelieving people. And yet His joy in the full purpose of divine wisdom and grace was just the same unmixed, undivided reality. The "Woe unto thee, Chorazin!" and then the "I thank Thee, O Father," were equally living and true affections in the soul of Jesus (Matt. 11). There was no want of full reality in either; and so "the form of a servant," with all its perfect results, and "the form of God," in all its proper glories, were, in the like way, real and living mysteries in the one Person.

And may we not, at times, turn aside to gaze more intently at His person, while we are tracing either the acts of His life, or the secrets of His love and truth? It is a part of the obedience of faith to do so. "The fear of the Lord is clean;" but there is a fear that is not altogether clean, having some spirit of bondage and unbelief in it. The refusal to turn and look at such great sights as these may be such. I grant the "mystery," and that the mystery is "great." So was it a great and mysterious sight which Moses turned to look at; but with unshod feet he might still look and listen. Had he not done so, he would have gone away unblessed. But he listened, till he discovered that the "I AM" was in the bush; and, further, that "the God of Abraham" was there also. A strange spot for such glory to enshrine itself! But so it was. In a burning bramble-bush, the Lord God Almighty was found (Ex. 3).

And supposing I go to Calvary, and look there on the smitten "Shepherd," whom shall I discover, if I have an opened eye, but the Fellow of the Lord of hosts? (Zech. 13). And if I go into the midst of the rabble which surrounded Pilate's judgment-hall at Jerusalem, whom shall I find there, even in the One spit upon and buffeted and derided, but Him who of old dried up the Red Sea, and covered the Egyptian heavens with sackcloth? (Isa. 1: 3).

And I ask, When I have so looked, and by the light of the Spirit in the prophets made these discoveries, am I quickly to retire? If I had bowels, I might ask, Where can I go for richer refreshment of spirit? If my faith discover, in the grieved and insulted Jesus, amid the men of Herod and the officer of the Romans, the God who did His wonders of old in the land of Ham, am I not to linger on that mount of God, and Moses-like to turn aside and look and listen? I cannot treat the sight as too great for me. I do not believe such would be the mind of the Spirit. Liberty of thought, while I stay at the mount, shall be rebuked if it transgress; but to linger there is not transgression, but worship. I speak, the Lord knows, of *principles*, not of *experiences*. The exercises of the heart there are dull and cold indeed; and the sorrow is (if one may speak for others), not that we

spend too much thought over the mystery of the person of the Son of God, but that we retire to other objects too quickly.

That Person will be "the eternal wonder and ornament of the creation of God." Some may own, in general, the manhood and the Godhead in that Person. But we are also to own the full, unsullied glory of each of these. Neither the soul or moral man, nor the temple of the body, is to be profaned. The whole man is to be vindicated and honoured.* And though the relationship in which Jesus stood to God, the care which that induced, and the obedience which that involved, may well be another great sight for us to turn aside to look at, still we shall fail to see it aright, and to eye it in its glory, if we forget in anywise the person of Him who sustained it.

*One of the martyrs in the days of Queen Mary wrote thus from his prison: "He hath made all, bought all, and dearly paid for all: with His own immaculate body hath He discharged your bodies from sin, death, and hell, and with His most precious blood paid your ransom and full price once for all and forever."

The divine reasoning in the epistle to the Hebrews, among other things, evinces this: that the efficacy of the priesthood of Christ depends entirely on His person. Read the first seven chapters: what a writing it is! In our Priest we must find *a man*; one capable of succouring the brethren, from having been tempted like them. So that we must see our High-Priest passing into the heavens from *amid the sufferings and sorrows of the scene here*. Most surely so. But in our Priest we must find *the Son* also, because in none other partaker of flesh and blood was there "the power of an endless life." And, accordingly, Melchisedec represents the person as well as the virtues, dignities, rights, and authorities of the true Priest of God; as we read of him: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7: 1-3).

And what a sight does all this give us of "the High Priest of our profession"! He came down from heaven, in the full, personal glory

of the Son; and in the due time He went up to heaven, bearing the virtue of His sacrifice for sin, and those compassions which succour saints. Faith acquaints itself with this whole path of Jesus. It owns in Him the Son while He tabernacled in the flesh among us; and when His course of humiliation and suffering had ended here, faith owns the once rejected and crucified Man glorified in the heavens — the one Person: God manifested in the flesh here, Man hid in the glory there. As we read of Him and of His blessed, wondrous path: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3: 16).*

*He was, indeed, very Man and very God in one Person. All depends on this "great mystery." The death of the cross would be nothing without it, as all would be nothing without that death.

In "the form of God," He was God indeed; in "the form of a servant," He was a Servant indeed. He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"; exercising all the divine rights, and using all the divine treasures and resources with full authority; and yet making Himself of no reputation, emptying Himself, and being obedient. This tells the secret. All that appears in the *history* is interpreted by the *mystery*. It is as the glory in the cloud again. The companion of the camp, in all its afflictions afflicted, was the Lord of the camp. The glory which traversed the desert in company with the wanderings of Israel, was the Glory which dwelt between the cherubim in the holy of holies.

But the further words of this scripture (Phil. 2: 5-11) invite me onward for a little still. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" (ver. 9). We are only in new wonders, when we read these words. For what, we may ask, could exalt Him? Ere He entered upon His course of sufferings and of glories, He was in Himself infinitely great and blessed. Nothing could personally exalt Him, being, as He was, "the Son." His glory was divine. It was unspeakable and infinite. No other honours could ever increase His

personal glory. But still we see Him traversing a path which conducts Him to honour and glory still.

Strange and excellent mystery! And — still stranger, and more excellent, as we may say — these new and acquired glories are, in some sense, the dearest with Him. Scripture entitles us thus to speak; as it does to speak of many things of His grace, which the heart would never have conceived. And yet, with all this — to compare divine things with human, as is the way of the Spirit's instruction — what I now speak of is known among men. Let the highest by birth among us, let a prince, the son of a king, go forth and acquire dignities: his acquired dignities, though they cannot raise him personally, will be his dearest distinctions, and form the choicest materials of his history in the esteem of others. Such a thing as that is instinctively understood among us. And so is it (in the unspeakably precious mystery of Christ) with the Son of God. According to eternal counsels, He has gone forth to battle; and the honours He has acquired, the victories He has won, or is still to win, will be His joy for eternity. They are to form the light in which He will be known, and the characters in which He will be celebrated forever; though, personally, He dwells in a light which no man can approach unto. And this He prizes: "Jehovah-jireh," "Jehovah-rophi," "Jehovah-shalom," "Jehovah-tsidkenu," "Jehovah-nissi," are all *acquired* honours. And how are these *chief* with Him in the unspeakable ways of boundless grace! In Ex. 3, He communicates His *personal* name to Moses, saying out of the bush, "I AM THAT I AM." But then, He communicates His *acquired* name also, calling Himself "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"; and to this second, this acquired name, He adds, "This is My name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations:" words which deeply tell us how He prized that glory which He had acquired in His doings for sinners. As also in the tabernacle, or temple, where His *name* was recorded, it was His *acquired* and not His personal name, that was written and read there. The mysteries of that house did not speak of His essential omnipotence, omniscience, or eternity, or like glories, but of One in whom mercy rejoiced

against judgment, and who had found out a way whereby to bring His banished ones home to Him.

Surely these are witnesses of what price in His sight is His name *gained in service for us*. But "God is love" may account for it all. There the secret is told. If the manifestations are excellent and marvellous, the hidden springs which are opened in Himself give us to know it all.

We are to know Him as "made under the law," as surely as we know Him in His personal glory, far above all law. All His life was the life of the obedient One. And so, though God over all, the Jehovah of Israel, and the Creator of the ends of the earth, He was the Man Christ Jesus. He was Jesus of Nazareth, anointed of the Holy Ghost, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him. In these lights we see Him, and in these lights we read His varied, wondrous history. He *imparted* the Holy Ghost, and yet was *anointed* with the Holy Ghost.

The Son came forth to take part of flesh and blood. So had the way and the grace of the eternal counsel run; so had our necessities required it. He was found "in fashion as a man." He was exercised in a life of entire dependence on God, and accomplished a death which (among other virtues) was in full subjection to Him. This was His covenant place, and in such place He acted and suffered to perfection; and thence came the services and the afflictions, the cries and the tears, the labours and the sorrows, of the Son of man on earth.

But still more: even now that He is in heaven, it is, in a great sense, the same life still. A promise awaited Him there, and that promise He received and lives on to this hour: "Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool," was said to Him as He ascended; and in the faith and hope of that word, He took His seat in heaven, "sat down on the right hand of God; from *henceforth expecting* till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. 1, 10). Here was hope answering promise, and this found in the heart of Jesus as

He ascended and sat down in heaven, just as He was the believing One, and the hoping One, and the obedient One, and the serving One, when on this earth of ours.

And further still: in His onward ways of glory, will He not continue to be subject? Every tongue is to confess Him Lord; but is not this to be "to the glory of God the Father"? And when the Kingdom is given up, is it not still written, "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all"? And as subject thus to Him who puts all things under Him, so in the same regions of coming glory will it be His gracious delight to serve His saints; as we read: "He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." And again: "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (1 Cor. 15; Luke 12; Rev. 7).

Chapter 4

"Received up into glory"

(1 Tim. 3: 16).

In earlier days, the angels had desired to look into the things of Christ (1 Peter 1: 12). When these things themselves were manifested and accomplished, this desire was answered; for in the history, as we find it in the evangelists, the angels are set to be eyewitnesses of that which they had thus long desired to look into. They are privileged to find their place and their enjoyment in the history of Christ in "the mystery of godliness"; and to find it, just as of old they had found it, in the sanctuary of God. In that sanctuary, all, it is true, was for the use and blessing of sinners. The altars, and the laver and the mercy-seat, and all else, were provided for us. The action and the grace of the house of God were for sinners. But the cherubim gazed. They were set in that house to look at its deepest mysteries. And so, in the same condition shall we find them, in the day of the great originals, or of the heavenly things themselves, when "God was manifest in the flesh." For then, it is equally true, all was for the service and salvation of us sinners, or that God, so manifested, might be "preached unto the Gentiles," and "believed on in the world;" but still all was as surely for this end, that He might be "seen of angels."

Thus they took the same place in the sanctuary of old, and in the great mystery itself. They looked; they gazed; they were eyewitnesses. And further, the sight they took of the mystery was of the same intense and interested character as the cherubim had before expressed in the holy of holies. "And the cherubim spread out their wings on high, and covered with their wings over the mercy-seat, with their faces one to another; even to the mercy-seat-ward were the faces of the cherubim" (Ex. 37). And so, in the history of Christ, the True Ark, they will be thus again seen.

The angel of the Lord comes, in his commission and ministry from heaven, to announce to the shepherds of Bethlehem the birth of Jesus. But as soon as he had fulfilled his service, "suddenly there was with him a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2). And when the time came for another great event, and "God manifest in the flesh" was raised from the dead, soon to be "received up into glory," the angels are again present with the like intense and interested delight. At the sepulchre, as Mary Magdalene looked in, two of them were sitting, "one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain;" and at the crisis of the ascension itself, they are again present, instructing the men of Galilee in the further ways of Him who had just then gone up on high (John 20; Acts 1).

What hanging over the mercy-seat was all this! What cherubim-gaze again and again was this! This utterance of the heavenly host in the fields of Bethlehem was not part of their ministry to man, but an act of worship to God. They were not then instructing the shepherds, nor even formally addressing themselves to them; but breathing out the rapture in which their own spirits were held in thoughts of the One that had been then born. And so their attitude in the sepulchre. When Mary appears, they have, it is true, a word of sympathy for her; but there they were in the sepulchre before she had come, and there they would have been though she had never come. As the cherubim in the tabernacle had hung over the ark and mercy-seat, on either side one, so now in the sepulchre the angels hang over the place where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and the other at the feet.

What ways of *seeing* Jesus were these! As we read, "God was manifest in the flesh — seen of angels." Well may we, beloved, covet grace to have like utterances and like attitudes over Jesus. And well may we grieve over what in our hearts is short of this; great indeed as some of us know that to be. I believe that many of us need to be attracted more than we are wont to be by these things. Many of

us have dwelt (if I may distinguish such things by such terms) more in the *light* of the knowledge of the divine *dispensations*, than in the *warmth* of such *mysteries* as Bethlehem, the garden, and the Mount of Olives, revealed to the enraptured angels. But in this we have been losers — losers in much of that communion which marked the path and the spirit of others in other days. My desire has been to turn to this "great sight," led that way by the condition of things around and among us. Glorious, I need not say, is the Object — the same Person, "God manifest in the flesh," followed by faith from the manger to the cross, from the cross through the grave up in resurrection, and thence to the present heavens, and eternal ages beyond them.

The Holy Ghost — in a way which we will now consider for a while — makes it His gracious business to aid this vision of faith, by carefully forming before us (so to express myself), the *links* between the parts or stages of this wondrous journey, "God was manifest in the flesh — received up into glory." By the apostle John, as our previous meditations may have led us to see, the Spirit very specially reveals or declares the link between "God" and "flesh" in the person of Jesus. We listen to this at the opening of his gospel and his epistle. I need not repeat it. But, of course, all the divine writings either assume or utter this truth, in their different ways, as well as John. But it is the other link, or that between "God was manifest in the flesh" and "glory" or the heavens, which is rather our *present* matter in the progress of these meditations; so that we will now pass on with evangelists and angels, from Bethlehem to the garden of the sepulchre, and to the Mount of Olives.

The Gospel by Matthew, in a general way, witnesses the resurrection. To be sure it does. The angels at the tomb declare it; the women on the road back to the city hold the feet of the risen Saviour; and the disciples meet Him on the mountain in Galilee.

Mark tells of several appearances of the Lord, after His resurrection, to His own whom He had chosen; as, to Mary Magdalene, to two of

them as they walked into the country, and to the eleven as they sat at meat.

Luke, however, goes more carefully into the *proofs* which Jesus gave His disciples, that it was indeed He Himself, and none other, who was in the midst of them again. He eats before them. He shows them His hands and His side. He tells them that a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as they saw He had. He shows them out of the Psalms, and out of the prophets, that thus it was to be.

John has his own peculiar style still, while dealing with this common testimony. In his gospel, we may say, all with the Lord is strength and victory; and so is it at the sepulchre, as well as everywhere else. When the disciples visit it, they see the linen clothes lying, and the napkin, that was about the Lord's head, wrapped together in a place by itself. There was no disturbance, no symptom of effort or of struggle, no sign as though something arduous had been accomplished there. All is as the trophy and witness of victory, rather than the heat and strife of battle. "Bless, bless the *Conqueror* slain," is the voice from the tomb, as it is opened before us by John. And if the place thus speak, so does the Lord Himself afterwards. It is not that He verifies His resurrection after the same manner as we find Him doing in Luke. He does not, so properly, give them *sensible* signs that He Himself was in the midst of them again. He does not eat and drink with them here, as He had done there. The broiled fish and the honeycomb are not called in to stand in evidence. But in other courts, so to speak, the truth of His resurrection is recorded. He makes it good to the *hearts* and to the *consciences* of His disciples. His voice on the ear of Mary tells her who He was, because her heart had been familiar with that name on those lips; and His pierced hands and side were shown, that they might speak peace to the conscience of the others, in the assurance of the accepted sacrifice; yea, even to the drawing out, from the depths and secrets of the soul of one of them, the cry of thorough conviction, "My Lord and my God! "

Thus do the evangelists lead us into the garden of the sepulchre. The Mount of Olives has its witnesses likewise — the ascension as well as the resurrection of Jesus. And again I would say, To be sure it has.

Neither Matthew nor John, however, declares it. The Lord is still on the mountain in Galilee when Matthew's Gospel closes. Neither does John take us to the Mount of Olives or to Bethany, the same thing. In a parabolic action, as I judge, after the disciples had dined in His presence on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He intimates His going up to the Father's house, and their following Him there; but it is not the ascension itself; it is not the scene at Bethany; it is not the actual translation of the Lord from earth to heaven (John 21).

Mark, however, asserts the fact: When the Lord had done speaking with His disciples, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. Here the fact, the very moment, of the ascension is declared. But, I may say, that is all. It is simply the ascension of One who had all rights and honours belonging to Him, and awaiting Him on high; but among the disciples there is no communion, in spirit, with that event. The story in Mark does not so much as tell us whether or not the disciples were eyewitnesses of it.

But Luke gives us something quite beyond this. In his Gospel, the ascension of the Lord is witnessed by eyes and hearts which had, and felt they had, their own immediate and personal interest in it: "And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God."

Thus, then, as the risen Man, from among a throng of witnesses that He was indeed the same Jesus, Jesus reaches the heavens. And though a cloud received Him out of their sight, He was thus known to be beyond it, in the highest, *the same Jesus still*. Jesus, who had eaten with them in the days of His sojourn with them, had now eaten

with them in His risen days. Jesus, who had given them draughts of fishes in the days of His sojourn with them, had now given them draughts of fishes in His risen days. Jesus, who had blessed the meat and given it to them then, had done so in like manner now: and this was He who had now ascended in their sight. How are all the stages of this wondrous journey thus tracked distinctly, though variously, for us, by the same Spirit, in the evangelists! We hold the same blessed One in view at Bethlehem, in the garden of the resurrection, and at the mount of the ascension. Manifest in flesh, the Son journeyed from Bethlehem to Calvary. Risen from the dead, with His wounded hands and side, He ate and drank with His disciples during forty days; and then, with the same wounded hands and side, He ascended the heavens. He gave them counsel after He rose, as He had done before. He entrusted a commission and ministry to them then, as before. He knew them, and called them by name, just as before. And, at the last, when they looked after Him as though they had lost Him for ever, the angel appears to them to tell them that "this same Jesus" had other ways still to accomplish for them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? THIS SAME JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

And this is the secret or the principle of all divine religion. It is "the mystery of godliness." Nothing recovers man to the knowledge and worship of God, but the understanding and faith of this, through the Spirit. This is the truth which forms and fills the, house of God: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Do we, indeed, beloved, vividly and constantly hold this one Person in view from first to last? He journeyed through the fatigues and sorrows of life, died upon the cross, rose from the bowels of the earth, and ascended to the very highest place in heaven. The links are formed never to be broken, though they bind together the highest and the lowest. The Spirit holds them in our view, as He has formed

them, and holds them in view at times with divine desire and delight. In such breathings as Psalms 23 and 24, how rapidly does He carry His prophet from the lowly life of faith, of dependence, and of hope, which Jesus passed here in the days of His flesh, onward to the day of His entrance as "the Lord mighty in battle," "the Lord of hosts," "the King of glory," into the "everlasting doors" of His millennial Jerusalem!

Are we, in spirit, on that road with Him also? And as a further question for our souls, which may well humble some of us afresh, Are we, in real, living power, with our Lord in the *present* stage of this mysterious journey? For He is still in this world, the *rejected* Christ. How far are we, in spirit, with Him as such? Are we considering "this poor man," or continuing with Jesus in His temptations? (Ps. 41: 1; Luke 22: 28.) "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (James 4: 4) Jesus was no more any *one* in the world after His resurrection than He had been before it. The resurrection made no difference as to this. The world was no more to Him then than it had been in other days, when, as we know, He had not where to lay His head. He left it for heaven then, as He had left it for Calvary before. When He was born, the manger at Bethlehem received Him: now, when risen from the dead, heaven receives Him. As born, He had proposed Himself to the faith and acceptance of Israel; but it was to be refused by Israel. As risen, He published Himself through the apostles to Israel again; but it was to be refused by Israel again; and Jesus is still the Stranger here. The present time is still the age of His rejection. He was a lonely One on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, though then the Risen Man, as He had been before on the way from Bethlehem to Calvary. But, beloved, is it in such a character that you and I have joined Him on the road?

Many a thought would be too much for us, were we not trained for it after the method of the divine wisdom: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," says our divine Teacher to us; and in this way His "gentleness" makes us "great."

We are prepared for enlarging communications from Him. Jesus can annihilate distances as He can control oppositions. On the Lake of Tiberias He trod the troubled waters outside, and then, when He entered the ship, immediately it was at the land whither they went (John 6: 18-21).

As the irradiations from the hidden glory that was there break through, after these manners, and enter the soul, how welcome they are! And what have we to do but to open all the avenues of the soul, and let Jesus enter? Faith listens. The Lord would have had the poor Samaritan at the well simply a listener from beginning to end. She may speak, and does speak; but what are her words but the witness of this: that understanding, conscience and heart were all opening to His words? And when the whole vessel was open, Jesus poured Himself in.

It is this listening attitude of faith we long more simply to occupy; and surely specially so, when tracing these profound and holy subjects.

The links between the parts of this great mystery, the transition-moments in the progress of the way of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we have been now shortly considering with the evangelists. In other words, we have been with angels and with disciples at Bethlehem, in the garden of the sepulchre, and on the mount of Olives.

As we enter, immediately afterwards, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall be struck with this: that what fills the mind of the apostles, and forms the great burthen or thought of all their preaching, is that Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, the Man denied and crucified here, was now in heaven. Peter makes it his first and constant business to link with the fact of the ascension of Jesus of Nazareth all the grace and power which were then (in that day of his testimony) ministered from heaven in the midst of the Jewish people. On the descent of the Holy Ghost, the prophecy of Joel becomes (properly and naturally, nay, necessarily) the text of Peter's

sermon. But the manner in which he preaches from it is this: he finds Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One, in it. He declares the man who had been lately approved of God in the midst of them by miracles and signs, to be now in heaven, and, as the *God* spoken of in that prophecy, to have now shed forth the promised Spirit; and moreover, that this same One was the *Lord* spoken of in that prophecy, whose *name* was for *salvation* now, but whose *day* would be for *judgment* by and by.

This is Peter's sermon and exhortation upon the text from Joel. It is the Man now in heaven whom he finds or declares in all the parts of that magnificent oracle. If John, I may here say, find in Jesus on earth full, unsullied glory; so Peter now finds in heaven, in the place there of all grace and salvation and power, the Son of man, the Nazarene, who had been despised and rejected here.

So, in the next chapter, it is Jesus of Nazareth, (the name of all slight and scorn among men) now glorified on high, of whom Peter speaks, and by whom he acts. The lame beggar at the Beautiful gate of the temple is healed by the faith of that name; and then the apostle further declares, that this same Jesus the heavens had received, and would retain, till the time when His restored presence should bring refreshing and restitution with it. And being challenged by the rulers, in the chapter that follows, on the ground of this miracle of healing, Peter publishes this same despised Jesus of Nazareth, as the Stone set at nought by the builders here, but made "the Head of the corner" in heaven.

This is the name, and this the testimony. Whether we see the apostles in the face of the power of the world, or in the midst of the sorrows of the children of men, this is their only thought - here all their art is found, their virtue and their strength. And immediately after this, this same name of Jesus is all their plea and ground of confidence in the presence of God. The weak One, as men might say, the "Holy Child Jesus," whom Israel and the Gentiles, Herod and Pilate, the kings of the earth and the rulers, had stood against

and refused, this One they hope in before God. They know Him in the sanctuary now, as they had known Him among men before. And mark their different style in using that name. Mark the *assurance* with which they pledge it to the needy, the *boldness* with which they contend for it before the world, and the *tenderness* ("Thy Holy Child Jesus") with which they plead it with God. The beggar at the gate of the temple had been healed by it; and the place where they had thus named that name before God is shaken, and they are filled with the Holy Ghost. All power is now owned in heaven as belonging to that name, as before all power had flowed out of it here. Yea, more; the world, or hell itself, is moved at it, for the high priest and the Sadducees are filled with indignation, and cast the witnesses of that name into the common prison.

With all this, Peter, in the fullest manner, sets forth the weakness and humiliation of the Jesus whom he was thus again and again testifying to be now exalted to the highest in the heavens. This is very striking in these early preachings of his. Jesus had been slain, Peter says, set at nought, delivered up, denied, taken, killed, hanged on a tree. He puts no restraint on language like this. And, in the same spirit, he seems to glory in the despised name of "Jesus of Nazareth." He has it on his lips again and again. All the forms of sorrow and of scorn which "the Prince of life," "the Holy One and the Just," wore or carried in His heart, His body, or His circumstances here among men, are remembered and rehearsed by him in his fine, vivid style, under the fresh anointing of the Holy Ghost. This is the One he glories in, all through these chapters of his earliest ministry to the Jews. (Acts 2, Acts 5) And yet this One who had been thus dealt with here he declares to be God's great Ordinance, "Lord and Christ." That a Man in heaven was David's Lord; that the Seed of Abraham was raised up for blessing; that the promised Prophet, like unto Moses, was ascended on high; - this was the word that he spoke with boldness.

And as this *anointing* of the Holy Ghost thus leads Peter to testify of the Man in heaven, of Jesus of Nazareth, once denied here, but now

exalted there, so *rapture* in the Holy Ghost, immediately afterwards, does the same for Stephen. If Peter *speaks* of Him in heaven, Stephen *sees* Him in heaven. The preacher declares Him without fear, and the martyr sees Him without a cloud: "But 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 7)

Thus, after this manner, the Spirit gives Jesus in heaven to the lips and the eyes of His different witnesses. But it is blessed to add, that Jesus in heaven was as great a reality to Peter as He was to Stephen, though Peter knew that mystery under an anointing only, while Stephen knew it under a rapture, in the Holy Ghost. May we, beloved, know it in our own souls in more of the like power. May we enjoy it in the light of the Spirit now, as we shall enjoy it in more than the vision of it for ever.

Such is the first preaching in the Acts, after the great link had been formed between "God" and "flesh," and between "God manifest in the flesh" and "heaven." But what a vast and wondrous scene is in this way kept within the view of faith; and all for our blessing and light and joy! We see the links between heaven and earth, God and sinners, the Father and the manger at Bethlehem, the cross of Calvary and the throne of the Majesty in the highest. Could human thought have ever reached or planned such a scene as that? But there it is before us, a great reality at this hour, and for eternity. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4). The Spirit had revealed the God of glory in the Babe of Bethlehem: and now, when all power and grace is ministered from heaven, the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost, the healing of the sorrows of the children of men, the salvation of sinners, the promise of days of refreshing and restitution, — all this is found and declared to be in and from the Man glorified in heaven.

What divine mysteries are these, passing all conception of the heart! "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" was the inquiry of the Lord in the day of His humiliation; and the only right answer was this: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And now, in this season, when it is asked of the apostles in the day of their preaching, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" the divine answer is this: "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole."

This is the One, the same One, the only One. He has left His memorial in "the lower parts of the earth," and borne it with Him upward, "far above all heavens." He fills all things. God has been here; Man is there. That God was here on earth in full glory was told to faith in other days, the Son among the children of men; that Man was now in heaven, having passed in there from amid the slight and the scorn, the weakness and the humiliation of the scene here, was now told to faith, in like manner, in these days. And faith apprehends the mystery, that it is the One, the same One, the only One; that He who ascended is He also who had descended; that He who descended is the same also that ascended.

"His glorious meetness," to use very much the language of another, "for all the acts and duties of His mediatory office is resolved into the union of His two natures in the same Person. He who was conceived and born of the Virgin was Emmanuel; that is, "God was manifest in the flesh": "unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; . . . and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9). The One who spake to the Jews, and as a man was then only a little more than thirty years old, was "before Abraham" (John 8). The perfect and complete work of Christ in every act of His office, in all that He did, in all that He suffered, in all that He continueth to do, is the act and work of *His whole person*."

This is the mystery. Faith apprehends it in the full certainty of the soul. And faith apprehends more of the same mystery, and listens with intelligence and delight to this: "Justified in the Spirit, . . . preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world." God, though manifest in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit. All in Him was perfect *moral* glory; all was, to the divine mind, and for the divine acceptance, infinitely, ineffably right. *We* have need of a justification from without or through another. - *Nothing* in *us* stands justified in itself: *all* in *Him* did so. Not a syllable, not a breath, not a motion, which was not an offering acceptable, well-pleasing to God, an odour of sweetest smell: "He was as spotless as Man as He was as God; as unsullied in the midst of the world's pollutions as when daily the Father's delight before the world began." Faith knows this, and knows it well, without a thought to cloud it. And, therefore, faith also knows that His history, the toils and sorrows, the death and resurrection of this blessed One, "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit," was not for Himself, as though He needed it, but for sinners, that He and His precious history might be "preached unto the Gentiles," and "believed on in the world." In the sacrifice He accomplished, in the righteousness He wrought out and brought in, He is presented to sinners, even the most distant, be they who they may, far off or near, Gentile or Jew, that they may trust in Him, though still in this world, and be assured of their justification through Him.

Time would fail me to watch and follow, throughout, the Word of God upon this mystery; but I would add that among all the epistles, as they follow the book of the Acts, that to the Hebrews is pre-eminent in doing for our souls service connected with it. "Received up into glory" is a voice heard throughout that divine oracle from beginning to end. Would that the soul had in power what the mind has in enjoyment, when listening to such a voice! One *cannot* write but with the sense of this, and one *would not* write but with the confession of it.

Each chapter of this wondrous writing, or each stage or period in the argument of it, gives us a sight of the ascended Jesus. It opens directly and at once with this. *It seems as though it were forcing this object upon us somewhat abruptly.* (Heb. 1) Most welcome indeed all this is to the soul, but this is the style of it. The Son, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person, is seen — after having by Himself purged our sins here — in His ascended place in heaven, inheriting there a name more excellent than that of angels, getting title to a throne which is to endure forever, and filling a seat in highest dignity and power, till His enemies be made His footstool.

The second chapter (Heb. 2) gives us another sight of the same object. The Sanctifier having descended to be the Kinsman of the seed of Abraham, and to do for them a kinsman's part, is then in His assumed manhood declared to have re-ascended the heavens, there to fulfil for us the services of a merciful and faithful High Priest. And this scripture, I may say, so abounds with this thought that this same chapter gives us this same object a second time. It shows us, as from Ps. 8, that "wondrous Man," made for a season lower than the angels, now crowned on high with glory and honour.

The next chapters (Heb. 3, 4) are but parenthetical, incidental to previous teaching; but still this sight of Christ is kept before us. He is declared to have been here on earth, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; but now to have passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, to give us grace and help from the sanctuary there.

In the next subject, that of the priesthood (Heb. 5-7) we have the same ascended Lord still in view. The Son is declared to be made a Priest, "higher than the heavens." He had descended to come to the tribe of Judah, and to perfect Himself in the days of His flesh here; but was now ascended again, the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey Him.

And so, in the next great matter dealt with — the covenants (Heb. 8, 9). Immediately on their opening before us, we see Jesus in the tabernacle in the heavens; that tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; and therefrom ministering "the better covenant."

So again, in the next chapter (Heb. 10) when the victim is the thought, as the priesthood and the covenants had been before, we have the same ascended Jesus in view. It is the One who could say, "Lo, I come! "that is, revealed as having sanctified sinners in the body prepared for Him on earth; but then to have gained the heavens; opening for us a way to tread with all boldness those highest, purest, brightest courts of God's presence.

Here the doctrine of the epistle formally closes; and, after this manner, we see, in various lights and characters, the same glorious and wondrous Person, the ascended Son of God. And, I may add, so rich is this epistle in this thought, so faithful is it to this its object, that after we formally leave the doctrine of it, we soon find that we have not left this great mystery — Christ in heaven. In the practical warnings that follow, we find it still. Jesus, as "the Leader and Completer of faith," is seen at the end of His life of faith *in heaven*: "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" (Heb. 12: 2). Thus is He seen in heaven in this new character: the life of faith leads Him thither; as all that He did and suffered for us in divine grace leads Him thither. And there He shines before the eye of faith: and had we but senses to discern it, and a heart to enjoy it, we should know it — that heaven itself is bright with beauty and glory unknown to it before, since Jesus in all these characters, won and acquired on earth, and for us sinners, has reached there.

And this is the mystery; the assumption of flesh and blood by the Son, so that He became the Kinsman of the seed of Abraham, and then the assumption of that wondrous Person into heaven: "God was manifest in the flesh — received up into glory." And blessed is the

task of inspecting, as we have been seeking to do, these mysterious links. And these links are formed never to be broken, though they bind together what lay at distances beyond all created thought to reach. The Spirit holds them in our view, as He formed them for the divine delight and glory, according to divine, eternal counsels. "The Word made flesh" of John 1 is the "good thing" out of Nazareth (vers. 14, 46). The Emmanuel of Matthew was the Babe who lay in the manger at Bethlehem. In the midst of the throne, there has been seen a Lamb, as it had been slain (Rev. 5). In the Person of the One whose lips were telling of wisdom suited to the commonest traffic of human life, He was found who had been set up, in the secrecy of the Godhead-Persons, as the foundation of all the divine way (Prov. 8). In the bush of Horeb, there was the God of Abraham; in the cloud of the wilderness, the Glory; in the armed man of Jericho, the Captain of the Lord's host; in the stranger that visited Gideon in his threshing-floor, and Manoah in his field, the God to whom alone worship is due throughout the whole creation.

These are among the witnesses that (in unspeakable grace, and for the divine delight and glory) the highest and the lowest are linked together: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3: 13).

How finely that thought of the apostle, which we get in the epistle to the Ephesians, rises upon the renewed mind: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Eph. 4: 8). The dignities, the offices, the services, which the ascended One fills and renders, are of so eminent a character, that they tell us He must be He who had already descended, already been One in heaven "above all;" as it is written: "He that cometh from above is above all" (John 3: 31). The dignity of His person is involved in this mystery of His ascending and descending. That challenge in Ephesians 4: 8, 9 seems to intimate this; and the Epistle to the Hebrews opens the reasons of it more fully. For it tells us, that ere He ascended, He had accomplished the

purging of our sins; that ere He ascended, He had destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered his captives; that ere He ascended, He had perfected Himself as the Author of eternal salvation to such as we are (Heb. 1, 2, 5). In these characters, and in such others, He went up: and when He had actually ascended, He filled the true sanctuary in the heavens, the tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, there to secure to us an eternal inheritance (Heb. 8, 9).

Who could have ascended in such glory and strength as this and far more than this — but One who had been already in heaven "above all"? "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first?" The offices He fills tell who He is. His sufferings, even in weakness and humiliation, bespeak His person in full divine glory.

But then again: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." This follows, and this tells us the boundlessness of His sovereignty, as the other had revealed to us the dignity of His person. In His works, His journeys, His triumphs, the highest and the lowest regions are visited by Him. He has been on earth, in the lower parts of the earth. He has been in the grave, the territory of the power of death. He is now in the highest heavens, having passed by all principalities and powers. His realms and dominions are thus shown to the eye of faith. No pinnacle of the temple, no exceeding high mountain, could have afforded such a sight. But it is shown to faith: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."

This is the mystery. It is the same Jesus, Emmanuel, the Son, and yet the Kinsman of the seed of Abraham. And here I would say — for there is a call for it — I know we are not to confound the natures in this glorious and blessed One. I fully bow in faith to the truth that the Sanctifier took part of flesh and blood. I avow with my whole soul the true humanity in His person; but it was not an *imperfect* humanity, in the condition or under the results of sin, in any wise.

But I ask, with that, Is there not some unsuspected and yet real unbelief touching the mystery of the Person in the minds of many? Is the *undividedness* of the Person throughout all the periods and transitions of this glorious, mysterious history kept in the view of the soul?

I would have grace to delight myself in the language of the Holy Ghost, and speak of "the Man Christ Jesus." The "Man" that is risen is declared to be the pledge of resurrection to us (1 Cor. 15: 21). The "Man" that is ascended is the great assurance to us that our interests are, every moment, before God in heaven (1 Tim. 2: 5). The "Man" to return from heaven by and by will be the security and joy of the coming kingdom (Ps. 8). The mystery of the "Man, *obedient, dead, raised, ascended, and returned*, thus sustains, we may say, the whole counsel of God. But still, again I say, the Person in its undividedness is to be kept in the view of the soul. "The perfect and complete work of Christ in every act of His office, in all that He did, in all that He suffered, in all that He continueth to do, is the act and work of His whole person." Yea, indeed, and His whole Person was on the cross, as everywhere else. The Person was the sacrifice, and in that Person was the Son, "over all, God blessed forever." He "gave up the ghost," though He died under God's judgment against sin; and though He was by the hands of wicked men crucified and slain. And this is an infinite mercy.

It was *Himself*, beloved, from first to last. He trod the mysterious way Himself, though He trod it unaided and alone. None other than He, "God manifest in the flesh," could have been there. The Son became the Lamb for the altar here; and then the Lamb that was slain reached the place of glory, far above all heavens. It is the Person which gives efficacy to all. Services would be nothing; sorrows would be nothing; death, resurrection, and ascension, all would be nothing (could we conceive them), if Jesus were not the one He is. His person is the "Rock;" therefore "His work is perfect" (Deut. 32: 4). It is the mystery of mysteries. But He is not presented

for our discussion, but for our apprehension, faith, confidence, love and worship.

God and man, heaven and earth, are together before the thoughts of faith in this great mystery. God has been here on earth; and that too in flesh; and Man glorified is there on high in heaven. It is the *links* between these great things that I have sought to look at particularly; fitted as this exercise is to make the things of heaven and eternity *real* and *near* to our souls. The moral distances are infinite; but the distances themselves are now nothing. Nature, beset with lusts and worldliness, makes it hard indeed for the soul to pass in; but the distance itself is nothing. Jesus, after He was in heaven, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, showed Himself to Stephen; and, in a like moment of time, shone across the path of Saul of Tarsus, as he travelled from Jerusalem to Damascus; and though we have not like visits from the glory, the nearness and reality of it are pledged afresh, and made good to our souls, by the sight of these great mysteries.

And is not the kingdom to be the exhibition of the results of these mysterious links? For heaven and earth, in their different ways, shall witness and celebrate them. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad" (Ps. 96: 11). The Church, one with this exalted, glorified Man, will be on high, far above all principalities and powers. The ladder which Jacob saw, shall (in the mystery) be set up; the Son of man shall be the centre as well as the stay of all this predestinated system of glory and of government. The nations shall learn war no more. The stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim shall be one, and one King shall be to them both. "It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hosea 2: 21, 22). And what is all this, but the happy fruit, to be gathered in the days of the coming kingdom, of these links which, as we have been seeing, have been already formed? The germs and principles of all these manifestations in heaven and on earth, among angels, and men, and

all creatures, and the creation itself, are found, so to speak, at Bethlehem, in the garden of the sepulchre, and at the Mount of Olives.

May the heart and conscience learn the lesson. May we gaze on these mysterious links of which we have been speaking, more in company with the angels in the fields of Bethlehem, and in the tomb of Jesus, or, I might here add, more in the dear mind of the disciples on the Mount of Olives, as they gazed there on the glorious link which was then forming between Jesus and the heavens. See them in Luke 24: 44-52. They were then like Israel in Leviticus 23: 9-14, celebrating the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits. Jesus, the True First-fruits, had just then been gathered, and He had, as their divine Teacher, expounded to them the mystery of the gathered sheaf, that is, the meaning of His resurrection. They then watched that mysterious moment They looked as their risen Lord ascended, and they kept the feast as with a sacrifice of burnt-offering. "They worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

Surely we may say, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

He was received up gloriously, or in glory, as well as into glory. He entered the light of the highest heavens; but He entered it glorious Himself. and there He now is, a glorious body, the pattern of what ours is to be. The real manhood is there, in the highest heavens; but it is glorified. And though thus glorified, yet it is the real human nature still. "Jesus is in the same body in heaven wherein He conversed here on earth. This is that 'Holy Thing' which was framed immediately by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin. This is that 'Holy One' which, when He was in the grave, saw no corruption. This is that body' which was offered for us, and wherein He bare our sins on the tree. That individual nature wherein He suffered all sorts of reproaches, contempts, and miseries, is now unchangeably seated in incomprehensible glory. The body which was pierced is that

which all eyes shall see, and no other. That tabernacle shall never be folded up. The person of Christ, and therein His human nature, shall be the eternal object of divine glory, praise, and worship."

Thus speaks one for our edification and comfort. And one of our own poets has thus sung of Him, looking after Him up to heaven:

"There the blest Man, my Saviour, sits,
The God, how bright He shines,
And scatters infinite delights
On all the happy minds.

"Seraphs, with elevated strains,
Circle the throne around,
And charm and fix the starry plains
With an immortal sound.

"Jesus the Lord their harps employs;
Jesus, my Lord, they sing;
Jesus, the name of both our joys,
Sounds sweet on every string."

"His present state is a state of the highest glory of exaltation above the whole creation of God, and above every name that is or can be named."

He was received up with the unspeakable love, and with the boundless, unmeasured acceptance of God the Father; as He had wrought out and accomplished the purpose of His grace in the redemption of sinners. He was received up in triumph, having led captivity captive, and spoiled principalities and powers; and there He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, with all power given to Him in heaven and on earth. He was received up as the Head of His body, the Church, so that out of the fulness of the Godhead which dwelleth in Him bodily, it "increaseth with the increase of God," through the Holy Ghost given to us. He was received up as into a temple, there to appear in the presence of God

for us, there to sit as the Minister of the true tabernacle, there to make continual intercession for us; and in this and in like ways of grace to serve in His body before the throne. He was received up as our Forerunner, as into the Father's house, there to prepare a place for the children, that where He is, there they may be also. And further: as He sat down in heaven, He sat down as an expectant; He waits to come forth to meet His saints in the air, that they may be with Him forever; He waits till He is sent to bring times of refreshing to the earth again by His own presence; and He waits till His enemies be made His footstool.

Cold is the affection, and small the energy; but in principle I know nothing at all worthy of such visions of faith, but that spirit of *devotedness* that can say with Paul, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound," and that spirit of *desire* which looks after Him still, and says, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Beloved, our God has joined Himself thus by links which never can be broken, which His own delight and glory in them, as well as His counsel and strength, will secure forever. These links we have gazed at, mysterious and precious as they are. Himself has formed them, yea, Himself constitutes them, faith understands them; and on the Rock of Ages the believing sinner rests, and rests in peace and safety.

With my whole soul I say, May these meditations help to make these objects of faith a little nearer and more real to us! They will be worthless if they tend not to glorify Him in our thoughts, to give Him, with a fresh pressure, beloved, to our hearts.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee."

May that be the breathing of our souls, till we see Him. Amen.

Chapter 5

"Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet"

(Heb. 2: 8).

In the opening of the Gospel of Luke one is struck by the deep and vivid expression of intimacy between heaven and earth which is found and felt to be there. It is man's necessity and weakness which open the heavenly door; but once open, it is thrown wide open.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless. They were of the priestly family, the seed of Aaron. But it was not their righteousness that opened heaven to them, but their need and infirmities. Elizabeth was barren, and they were both now well stricken in age; and their point of real blessing lay there, lay in their sorrow and weakness. For to the barren wife and the childless husband Gabriel comes with a word of promise from heaven. But, as we said, the door of heaven, being once opened, is flung wide open. Angels are all action and joy; and no matter whether it be the temple in the royal, holy city, or a distant village in despised Galilee, Gabriel with equal readiness visits either and both. The glory of God, as well as hosts of angels, fills also the fields of Bethlehem. The Holy Ghost, in His divine light and power, fills His elect vessels, and the Son Himself assumes flesh. Heaven and earth are very near each other. The action and the joy which had begun on high, are felt and answered from the scene here below. The shepherds, the favoured women, the aged priest, and the *unborn child*, share the holy enthusiasm of the moment, and waiting saints go forth from the place of expectation.

I know no scripture finer than Luke 1, 2 in this character. It was as in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; but a blessed transition was accomplished -

"Heaven comes down our soul to greet."

Earth learns, and learns in the mouth of these wondrous witnesses, that the door of heaven was indeed thrown wide open to her. And the intimacy was deep, as the services and grace were precious. The angel calls Zacharias and Mary by their names, and speaks to them also of Elizabeth by name — a language or style which lets the heart know its meaning at once.

We might bless the Lord for this; and we should do so, did we a little more simply, a little more believingly, walk on in the sense of the nearness and *reality* of heaven.

Jacob and Stephen, in their day, and in like manner, had heaven opened to them, and were given also to know their own personal interest in it. A ladder was set up in the sight of Jacob, and as the top of it entered heaven, the foot of it rested just on the spot where he was lying. It was a mean, dishonoured place; the witness, too, of his wrong, as well as of his misery. But the ladder adopted it; and the voice of the Lord, who was in His glory above it, spoke to Jacob of blessing, of security, of guidance, and of inheritance.

Stephen, likewise, saw the heaven opened, and the glory there; but the Son of man was *standing* at the right hand of God. And this told the martyr, as the ladder had told the patriarch, that he and his circumstances at that very moment were the thought and object of heaven.

Thus was it, after these same ways, in these distant days of Jacob and Stephen — distant from each other as well as distant from us. But time makes no difference. Faith sees these same opened heavens *now*; and learns, too, like those of old, that they are ours. It learns that there are links between them and our circumstances. In the eye of faith there is a ladder., heaven stands open before it, and "the Man Christ Jesus" is seen there — the Mediator of the new covenant, the High-Priest, the Advocate with the Father, the One who sympathizes; the Forerunner, too, into those places of glory.

Jesus has ascended, and the present action in the heavens, where He is gone, is known by faith to be all "for us." Our need, as well as our sorrow, is in remembrance there. Jacob's sufferings were those of a penitent; Stephen's were a martyr's: but heaven was the heaven of Jacob as well as of Stephen.

But, though this is so, this is not all. Faith knows another secret or mystery in heaven. It knows that if the Lord took, as He surely did take, His seat there in these characters of grace for us, He took it likewise as the One whom man had despised and the world rejected. This is equally among the apprehensions which faith takes of the heavens where the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is now seated.

The Lord Jesus died under the hand of *God*; His soul was made an offering for sin. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Isa. 53: 10). And He rose as the One who had thus died, His resurrection witnessing the acceptance of the sacrifice; and He ascended the heavens in the same character also, there to carry on the purpose of the grace of God in such a death and such a resurrection.

But the Lord Jesus died also under the hand of *man*; that is, man's wicked hand was in that death, as well and as surely as God's infinite grace. He was refused by the husbandmen, hated by the world, cast out, crucified, and slain. This is another character of His death. And His resurrection and ascension were in that character also, parts or stages in the history of One whom the world had rejected; His resurrection, consequently, pledging the judgment of the world (Acts 17: 31); and His ascension leading Him to the expectation of a day when His enemies are to be made His footstool (Heb. 10: 13).

These distinctions give us to understand the different sights which faith, in the light of the Word, gets of the ascended Jesus; seeing Him, as it does, in priestly grace there, making intercession for us, and, at the same time, awaiting, as in expectation, the judgment of His enemies.

The gospel publishes the *first* of these mysteries; that is, the death of the Lord Jesus under the hand of God for us, and His resurrection and ascension as in character with such a death. And this gospel is rightly gloried in as all our salvation.* But the *second* of these mysteries, the death of the Lord under the hand of *man*, may be somewhat forgotten, while the first of them is thus rightly gloried in. But this is a serious mistake in the soul of a saint, or in the calculations and testimony of the Church. For let this great fact, this second mystery, as we have called it, the death of the Lord Jesus under the hand of *man*, be forgotten, as it may be on earth, it is surely not forgotten in heaven. It is not, it is true, the occasion of *present* action there; it is the death of the *Victim*, and the intercessions of the Priest upon such death, which form the action that is there now. But as surely it will be the death of *the divine Martyr*, the death of the Son of God at the hand of *man*, that will give character to the action there by and by.

*In preaching the gospel, the *sin of man* in putting the Lord of glory to death will surely be declared; but it is the death of the Lord as *the Lamb of God* which is the ground of the grace published by the gospel; and that is what I mean here.

These distinctions are very clearly preserved in Scripture. Heaven, as it is opened to us in Rev. 4, is a very different heaven, differently minded, I mean, differently moved and occupied, from the heaven presented to us in the epistle to the Hebrews; just as different, I may say, as the death of the Lord Jesus looked at as under man's hand (that is, perpetrated *by us*), and as under God's hand; that is, accomplished *for us*. We may have the same objects or materials in each, but they will be seen in very different connections. We have, for instance, a throne and a temple in each of these heavens, the heaven of Hebrews and the heaven of the Apocalypse; but the contrasts between them are very solemnly preserved. In Hebrews, the throne is a throne of grace, and whatever our present time of need and sorrow may require is found there and obtained there. In the Apocalypse, the throne is one of judgment, and the instruments

and agencies of wrath and of vengeance are seen to be lying before and around it. In Hebrews, the sanctuary, or temple, is occupied by the High-Priest of our profession, the Mediator of the better covenant, serving there in the virtue of His own most precious blood. In the Apocalypse, the temple gives fearful notes of preparation for judgment. Lightning and earthquake and voices attend the opening of it. It is as the temple seen by the prophet, filled with smoke, and the pillars of it shaking in token that the God to whom vengeance belongs was there in His glory (Isa. 6).

The sight we get of heaven in the Apocalypse is thus very solemn. It is the place of power furnishing itself with the instruments of judgment. Seals are opened, trumpets are blown, vials are emptied; but all this introducing some awful visitation of the earth. The altar that is there is not the altar of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the heavenly priesthood eat of the bread of life, but an altar that supplies penal fire for the earth. And there is also war there; and at the last it opens for Him whose name is called "The Word of God," whose vesture is dipped in blood, and who carries a sharp sword in His mouth, that with it He may smite the nations.

Surely this is heaven in a new character. And the contrast is very solemn. This is not the heaven which faith *now* apprehends, a sanctuary of peace filled with the provisions and witnesses of grace, but a heaven which tells us that though judgment is the Lord's strange work, yet that it is His work in due season. For heaven in its revolutions, is, as we may say, the place of the witness of *grace*, of *judgment*, and of *glory*. It is the heaven of *grace* now; it will become the heaven of *judgment* in the day of Rev. 4, and so continue throughout the action of the book of Apocalypse; and then at the close of that book, as we see in Rev. 21, 22, it becomes the heaven of *glory*.

The soul should be accustomed to this serious truth, that judgment precedes glory. I speak of these things in the progress of the history of the earth or the world. The believer has passed from death into

life. There is no condemnation for him. He rises not to judgment but to life. But he ought to know, that in the progress of the divine history of the earth or the world judgment precedes glory. The kingdom will be seen in the *sword* or "rod of iron," ere it be seen in the *sceptre*. The Ancient of days sits in white garments on a throne of fiery flame with the books opened before Him, ere the Son of man comes to Him with the clouds of heaven to receive dominion (Ps. 2; Dan. 7).

These lessons are very clearly taught and marked in Scripture. In the day of Rev. 4 it is Christ *rejected* by man, and not Christ *accepted of God for sinners*, that has become its thought and object. And, accordingly, preparations are being made to avenge the wrongs of the Lord Jesus on the world, and to vindicate His rights in the earth: in other words, it is heaven beginning that action which is to seat Him in His Kingdom upon the judgment of His enemies.

But all this shows us again, according to my leading thought in these meditations on "the Son of God," how it is the *same* Person that is kept before us, and to be known by us, in each and all of the stages or periods of the same great mystery. We are still, at whatever point we may have arrived, in company with the same Jesus. For these distinctions, which I have been now noticing, tell us that He has been received up into heaven, and is now seated there, in the very characters in which He had been before known and manifested here on earth, For He had been here as the One who accomplished the grace of God toward us sinners to perfection, and as the One who endured the enmity of the world in its full measure; and it is in these two characters, as we have now seen, that He is seated in heaven.

He does not quickly take this second character, or appear actively in heaven as the One who had been despised and rejected on earth. He lingers ere He reaches the heaven of the Apocalypse. And in this feature of character, in this delaying of His approaches to judgment, and tarrying in the place of grace, we have a very sweet expression of the Jesus whom faith has already known. For, when He was here,

as the God of judgment He approached Jerusalem with a very measured step. He said to her, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," ere He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23: 37, 38). He lingered in the plains below, visiting every city and village of the land, in patient service of grace, ere He took His seat on the mount, to speak of judgment and of the desolations of Zion (Matt. 24: 3). And now of Him who, after this manner, trod softly the road which led Him to the Mount of Olives, the place of judgment, is it written, "The Lord . . . is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3: 10).*

*"Son of man" is the characteristic of His person when presented in His judicial glory, as also in His place of dominion in the earth (Ps. 8; John 5: 27; Matt. 19: 28).

How do we thus hold in view the same Person with like character attaching to Him, whether when He was here on earth, or as He is now in heaven, — the Person one, the moral one, though scenes and conditions change! "The grace that was in Christ in this world is the same with that which is in Him now in heaven." Comforting words! How truly should we know we speak truly when we say, *We know Him!* We have been considering Him from the beginning. He came down from heaven; He lay in the virgin's womb, and in the manger at Bethlehem; He traversed the earth in full, unsullied glory, though veiled; He died, and was buried; rose, and returned to heaven; and, as we have now been meditating, faith sees Him there, the One whom faith had known to be here, the very One, the Minister and Witness of the grace of God to man, the Bearer of man's full enmity against God, and yet the reluctant God of judgment.

But I must notice still more of this same Jesus, and something still more immediately in connection with my present meditation.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, He looked for His Kingdom. He offered Himself as her King, the Son of David, to the daughter of

Zion. He took the form of the One who had been of old promised by the prophets, and entered the city "meek, and sitting upon an ass." In a still earlier day, His star, the star of the kingly Bethlehemite, had appeared in the eastern world, summoning the Gentiles to the Son of David, born in the city of David. But what He then looked for He found not: "His own received Him not." But He carried with Him to heaven this very same mind, this desire for His Kingdom! "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom." He thinks of His Kingdom, though now on the throne of the Father, as He had thought of it and looked for it when here. And I may again say, How strictly, in this fine characteristic, are we kept in communion with the *same* Jesus still! Once on earth He was, and now in heaven He is; but we know Him, after these manners, as the same Lord, — in person one, in purpose and desire one, though places and conditions change. He was King of Israel when here, and with desire claimed His Kingdom; and being refused it at the hands of the citizens, He has received it in heaven, and in due time will return, in a day of the gladness of His heart, to administer it here, where at the first He sought it: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7).

We are, after this manner, viewing the one Person, the same Jesus, and the heart prizes this when we think upon it. And there is one other feature of this identity, surpassing, yea, far surpassing, all that I have already noticed.

When He was here, He desired to be known by His disciples, to be discovered by them, sinners as they were, in some of His hidden glories. He rejoiced likewise in all the communications of His grace to faith. The faith which drew upon Him without reserve, the faith which used Him without ceremony, the faith which could outlive

apparent neglect or repulse, was precious to Him. The sinner who would cling to Him in the face of the world's scorn, or would trust in Him all alone, without countenance or encouragement from others, was deeply welcome to Him. The soul that with freedom would ask for His presence, or seek communion with Him, seated at His feet or standing by His side, might get from Him what it would, or, like interceding Abraham, have Him as long as it pleased.

He desired oneness with His elect, full, personal, abiding oneness, ready as He was to share with them His name with the Father, the love in which He stood, and the glory of which He was Heir.

He sought for sympathy, He longed for companionship in both His joys and His sorrows. And we can by no means appreciate the disappointings of His heart, when this He sought, but found it not; deeper, at the least we may say, far deeper than when He claimed a kingdom, as we have already seen, and received it not. "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" spoke a lonely heart.

And further still. He purposed, when He was here, that He would share His throne with His people. He would not abide alone. He would share His honours and His dominions with His elect, as He would that they, in sympathy, should understand and share His joys and sorrows with Him.

And now (excellent and wonderful as is the mystery which speaks it to us), all this is, or is to be, made good to Him in and by the Church. The Church is called to answer the desires of the Lord Jesus in all these things, to be all this to Him, either in the Holy Ghost now, or in the Kingdom by and by; to enter now, in spirit, into His thoughts and affections, His joys and His sorrows, and hereafter to shine in His glory, and to sit on His throne.

What a mystery! The Church, now endowed with the indwelling Spirit, and destined to sit, glorious herself, in the inheritance of His dominion, is the answer to these *deepest* desires of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the days of His flesh. And again I say,

What a mystery! We may well admire those harmonies which tell us of the SAME Jesus, the ONE Person in these different parts of His wondrous ways. He sought and claimed a kingdom when He was here, and when He was here desired the sympathies of His saints. But His people were not prepared to own His royalty, His saints were not able to give Him this fellowship. A kingdom, however, He is receiving now in heaven, and He will return and administer it here. This fellowship He is beginning to find now through the Spirit indwelling His elect; and it will be in its fuller measure made good to Him in the day of their perfection. The Kingdom will be His glory and His joy. It is called "The joy of the Lord," for it will be said to them who share it with Him, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But this fellowship, in which the Church will stand with Him, will be still more to Him. It was His *deepest desire* here, and it will be His *richest enjoyment* by and by. Eve was more to Adam than all his possessions beside.

Have we, beloved, any power in our souls to rejoice in the thought of the heart of the Lord Jesus being thus satisfied? We may trace the forms of these joys which thus await Him as in the day of His espousals, the day of the gladness of His heart; but have we capacity, in spirit, to do more? It is humbling to put such inquiries to one's own soul, we may surely say, with all unfeignedness.

But these will be His, the Kingdom and the Church.

The Kingdom will be His by many titles. He will take it UNDER COVENANT, or, according to counsels which were taken in God before the foundation of the world. He will take it BY PERSONAL RIGHT; for He, the Son of man, never lost the image of God. Of course, He could not; because, though Son of man, He was Son of the Father. But He *did not*; and, having that image, dominion is His by personal title, according to the first great ordinances of power and rule: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth,

and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1). He will take it likewise by title Of OBEDIENCE; as we read of Him: "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 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" (Phil. 2). He will take it, too, by title of DEATH; for we read again: "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; . . . whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1). And the cross, on which He accomplished that death, had written upon it, and kept there unblotted, uncanceled, in a single letter of it, by the strong prevailing hand of God Himself, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27: 37).

Thus, dominion is the Son of man's by covenant, by personal title, by title of service or obedience, and by title of death or purchase: and, I may add, BY CONQUEST also; for the judgments which are to clear His way to the throne, and take out of the Kingdom all that offends, are, as we know, executed by His hand. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord *mighty in battle*" (Ps. 24).

What foundations are thus laid for the dominion of the Son of man! How does every title join in subscribing itself to His honoured and glorious name! As we see in Rev. 5, none in heaven or earth could take the Book but the Lamb that was slain, who was the Lion of Judah: but into His hand He that sits on the throne lets it pass at once; and then the Church in glory, angels, and all creatures in all parts of the great dominions, triumph in the Lamb's rights and title. And if the title is thus sure, sealed by a thousand witnesses, and wondrous too, so will be the power and kingdom which it sustains. In the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "the Lord from heaven," as well as "the Son of man," all the great purpose of God in the rule of all things stands revived and established. We may say, As "all the

promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen," so all the destinies of man under God are alike in Him yea, and in Him amen.

There was dominion in Adam; government in Noah; fatherhood in Abraham; judgment in David; and royalty in Solomon. In Christ all these glories will meet and shine together. In Him, and under Him, will be "the restitution of all things." Many crowns He will wear, and many names He will bear. His name of "Lord" in Ps. 8, is not His name of "King" in Ps. 72. The form of glory in each is peculiar. The crowns are different, but both are His. And He is likewise "the Father of the everlasting age"; a King, and yet a Father — the Solomon and the Abraham of God. In Him all shall be blessed; and yet to Him all shall bow. The sword, too, is His; the "rod of iron," as well as the "sceptre of righteousness." He will judge with David, and rule with Solomon.

As Son of *David*, He takes power to exercise it in a given sphere of glory. As Son of *man*, He takes power, and exercises it in a wider sphere of glory. He comes likewise in His own glory, in the glory of the Father, and in the glory of the holy angels. And as the risen Man He takes power. This is shown us in 1 Cor. 15: 23-27. And in that character He has His peculiar sphere also. He puts death, the last enemy, under His feet. And this is so fitting, like everything else, perfect in its place and season, that as the risen Man He should put down death.

Scenes of various glory will surround Him, and characters of various glory will attach to Him. The very bearing of the Kingdom will be this: *it will be full of the glories of Christ*; varied, yet consistent and blending. The cross has already presented a sample of this perfect workmanship. "Mercy and truth" met together there. There God was "just," and yet a "Justifier." And it is to be after this same manner in coming days of strength, as it has been thus in past days of weakness. As mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, once met and embraced each other, so authority and service, blessing and yet rule, a name of all majesty and power, and yet such a name as shall

come down like showers on the mown grass, shall be known and enjoyed together. There shall be the universal dominion of man in the whole range of the works of God; the honours of the Kingdom in holding all nations under rule, together with the presence of "the Father of the everlasting age" holding them all in blessing. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9).

All is tending to this blessed and glorious lordship and headship of the Son of God, though it be through "seas of tribulation" to some, and through the full judgment of "this present evil world." God is leading this way, and man cannot hinder it, though he seek to fix the earth on its present foundations, refusing to learn that they are all out of course, that the earth and its inhabitants are dissolved, and that Christ alone bears up its pillars. "The bundle of life" (as she spoke who confessed to David's glory in the day of David's humiliation) is a firm bundle, well compacted and sure, because the Lord Himself is in it, as of old He was in the burning bush. But beyond the measure of that bundle (weak and despised in the thoughts of man, like a bramble-bush), all is tottering; and times are surely at hand, that will teach this in *history* to those who will not learn it, nor seek to learn it, watch and pray to learn it, in *spirit*.

The sword and the sceptre of this coming day of power are *alone* in their glories. There is no other sword, no other sceptre, that is or can be like them. The sword is to be "bathed in heaven" (Isa. 34: 5). What an expression! The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, the powers of heaven shall be shaken, darkness shall be under His feet, and thick clouds of the sky shall accompany Him, in the day when that sword is drawn for the slaughter. And the power of it is the treading of the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Everything that is high and lifted up, the principalities and powers that rule the darkness of this world, the beast and his prophet, kings, captains, and mighty men, as well as the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, are among the enemies which are made to feel it; "the host of the high ones that

are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth." The sources, as well as the agencies, of evil, are searched out and visited by the light and strength of it.

Is not such a sword *alone* in its glory? Could Joshua's or David's have wrought such conquests as these? Would principalities of darkness have yielded to them? Would death and hell have submitted themselves? "Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook?" But "He that made him can make His sword to approach unto him."

In whose hand, then, I ask, must that sword be, which can quell hosts like these? The very service in that day of power, like every other service of His, whether in weakness or in strength, tells us who He is. There is this beautiful and divine self-evidencing light and power to Him, and about Him, and around Him, let Him act as He may, yea, let Him suffer as He may, which we have been feebly tracing and admiring, but which we will still acknowledge, and worship. The victories of this God of battles, in other days, were of the same high character. For of old His warfare bespoke His person and glory, as it is still to do. Therefore is it written of Him, "The Lord is a man of war: *the Lord is His name*" (Ex. 15: 3). His warfare, in this utterance of the Spirit, is said to reveal His lordship, His glory, His name, His person. In Egypt the gods felt His hand, as they did afterwards among the Philistines, and again in Babylon. Dagon fell before the ark, Bel bowed down, Nebo stooped. These were days of the same hand.

And as is the sword, so is the sceptre. Solomon's was but a distant shadow of it, and Noah's government and Adam's dominion shall be thought of no more, in comparison with it.

All shall be the subject world then, the subject *creation* as well as the subject *nations*. "O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name: show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people" (Ps. 96). Under the shadow of this

sceptre, and in the light of this throne of glory, shall dwell from one end of the earth to the other the "willing" and the "righteous" nations. There shall be a covenant between men and the beasts of the field. The wilderness too shall rejoice. The lame shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing. The sun of that Kingdom shall not go down, nor the moon withdraw herself, for the Lord shall be its everlasting light. Nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Israel shall revive, the dry bones shall live. The stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim shall be one again. The city shall be called "The Lord is there." Of the land it shall be said, "This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." And again, she shall be saluted in words that speak her holy dignities: "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness" (Jer. 31: 23).

The Gentiles shall be brought to a right mind. Their reason will return to them. The senseless world, though "made by Him," yet "knew Him not." The kings of the earth, and the rulers, stood up against the Anointed. They kicked against the pricks, betraying their madness and folly. But their reason will return to them. The story of Nebuchadnezzar will be found to be a mystery as well as a history. The reason of that head of gold, that great head of Gentile power, returned to him after his term of judicial folly; and he knew and owned that the heavens did rule. And so the world by and by will no longer senselessly not know its Maker, but as deeply own Him as once it madly refused Him. For "kings shall shut their mouths at Him," in token of this deep and worshipping acknowledgement. The beast's heart shall be taken away from them, and a man's heart be given them. No longer shall they be rebuked as by the ox that knoweth his owner, and by the crane, the turtle, and the swallow, that observe the time of their coming, but they shall fly "as doves to their windows." "Behold, these shall come from far; and, to, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim (Isa. 49: 12).

The works of God's hand, as well as Israel and the Gentiles, shall rejoice in the same sceptre. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Isa. 11: 6). The very soil shall own again the early and the latter rain, and the tillage as of a divine husbandman. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it" (Ps. 65: 9).

What a sceptre! Is not such a sceptre, as well as such a sword, *alone* in its glory? Was ever sceptre like it? Could power in any hand but one be such as this? What Adam lost in the earth; what Israel lost in the land of election and of promise; what Abraham lost in a degraded, disowned, and outcast seed; what the house of David lost in the throne; what the creation itself lost by reason of him who subjected it to bondage and corruption, — all shall be gathered up and held and presented in the presence and power of the days of the Son of man,

"The Son" alone could take such a kingdom. The virtue of the sacrifice already accomplished, as we have seen in earlier meditations on this blessed Object, rests on the *person* of the Victim; the acceptableness of the sanctuary now filled and served, rests, in like manner, on the *person* of the High-Priest and Mediator who is there; the glories and the virtues of the Kingdom that is to be, could be displayed and exercised and ministered only in and by the same *Person*. The Son of God serves in the lowest and in the highest - in poverty and in wealth; in honour and dishonour; as the Nazarene and as the Bethlehemite; in earth and in heaven; and in a world of millennial glories both earthly and heavenly: but all service, from beginning to end, in all stages and changes in the great mystery, tell *who* He is. He could no more have been *what* He was on the cross, were He not there *the One* He was, than He could now be sitting on the Father's throne were He not the same. Faith cares not where it sees Him, nor where it follows Him: it has the one

bright, ineffably blessed Object before it, and resents the word that would presume to soil Him, even though ignorantly.

We must still, however, look at other glories of this coming Kingdom of His.

"The Second Man is the Lord from heaven," and a glory must attend on the rising of such a One, which the throne of Solomon could never have measured. Yea, in the presence of this "Lord from heaven," far brighter glories than that of Solomon will be outdone. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients, gloriously" (Isa. 24: 23). There will be heavenly things in His Kingdom, as well as restored earthly things. Adam had the garden, and all its teeming beauty and fruitfulness. But beyond that, the Lord God walked there with him. Noah, Abraham, and others, in patriarchal days, had possession of flocks and herds, and in Noah we see power and lordship in the earth. But beyond all this, they had angel visits, yea, and visits and visions and audiences of the Lord of angels. The land of Canaan was a goodly land, a land of milk, and of oil, and of honey; but more than that, the glory was there, and the witness of the divine presence dwelt between the cherubim.

So will it be in the coming days of the power of the Son of God. Heaven will grace the scene with a new and peculiar glory, as surely as of old the Lord God walked in the garden of Eden, or as surely as angels passed up and down in the sight of the patriarch, or as surely as the divine presence was known in the sanctuary in Jerusalem in the land of promise. And not merely will there be this visitation of the earth again, and the glory from heaven again, but this will all be of a new and wondrous character. The earth will have the witness of this strange, surpassing mystery, that she herself, from her very dust and bonds, has supplied a family for the heavens, who, in their glories, shall revisit her, more welcome than angels, and, in their appointed authorities and powers, shall be over her in government

and in blessing. "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is *man*, that Thou art mindful of him?" (Heb. 2: 5, 6).

What links between the highest and the lowest are these! "The Second Man is the Lord from heaven." The holy city will descend out of heaven, having the glory of God, and in the presence of it will the rule of the Kingdom or power over the earth be ministered. This shall be something outreaching Adam's sovereignty and Solomon's brightness.

In the scene on the holy hill in Matthew 17, and in that of the royal visitation of the holy city in Matthew 21, this day of the power of the Son of God, this "world to come," is entered (in a mystery) in both its heavenly and its earthly places. The heavenly glory shines on the holy hill. Jesus is transfigured. His face shines as the sun, and His raiment is white as the light; and Moses and Elias appear in glory with Him. So, on the occasion of the royal entrance into the holy city, the same lowly Jesus assumes a character of glory. He becomes the Lord of the earth and its fulness, and the accepted, triumphant Son of David. Here, on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, He is seen, for a mystic moment, in His rights and dignities in the earth; as, for another like moment He had appeared on the "high mountain apart," in His personal, heavenly glory. These solemn occasions were, each of them in its way, as I may say, a *transfiguration*; though the glory of the celestial was one, and the glory of the terrestrial was another. But equally on each occasion Jesus was glorified; borne away for a moment from His then lowly path, as the humbled, toiling, rejected Son of God. The two great regions of the millennial world spread themselves out before us, in vision or in mystery, then. Such sights were but passing, and quickly lost to us; but what they pledged and presented are to abide in their brightness and strength in the coming day of glory. For that bright day, that happy world, will be full of the glories of the Son of God. It is *that* fulness which will give it its bearing and its import, as we

have said before. Head of the risen family, or Sun of the celestial glory, He will then be Lord of the earth and its fulness; and King of Israel and the nations, He will then be also. Strangely, mysteriously, in that system of glories, will all be linked together, — "the lower parts of the earth" and "far above all heavens." "God was manifest in the flesh — received up into glory." "The Second *Man*" is no less than "the Lord from heaven."*

*The happy, gladdening virtue of that millennial world is also strikingly witnessed. Peter, on the holy hill, speaks of the common joy which it imparted; so that he and his companions would have remained there for ever, if they might. But it was not he who spoke, but the power of the place which spoke in him. So on the king's highway from Jericho to Jerusalem: the owner of the ass bows with full readiness of heart to the claims of the Lord of the earth; and the multitudes of Israel triumph in the Son of David, their palm-branches and their garments, strewn in the way, bespeaking their homage and their joy, as in a feast of tabernacles. But here again, it was not so properly they who act and speak, as the power of the occasion acting and speaking in them.

What mysteries! what counsels of God touching the ends of creation, in the hidden ages before the beginnings of creation! Would that the affection and worship of the heart followed the meditations of the soul! The Son, who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, lay in the Virgin's womb, assuming flesh and blood with the children; as Son of man, God in flesh, He journeyed along the rugged paths of human life, ending them in the death of the cross: He left the grave for the glory, the lowest parts of the earth for the highest places in heaven: and He will come again on the earth in dignities and praise, in rights, honours, and authorities, of ineffable, surpassing greatness and brightness, to make glad "the world to come."

But there is another mystery ere this scene of glories, "the world to come," can, in the way of God, be reached. The *Church* must be linked with the heavens, as her Lord has already been.

The path of the Church across the earth is that of an unnoticed stranger. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John 3: 1). And as her path *across* the earth is thus untracked, so is her path *from* it to be. All about her is "the stranger here." And as the world around knows not the Church, nor will be a witness of the *act* of her translation, she herself knows not the *time* of such translation. But we know this link between us and the heavens will be formed ere the Kingdom, or "the world to come," be manifested; because the saints are to be the companions of the King of that Kingdom in the *first* acts of it; that is, when He bears the sword of judgment, which is to clear the scene for the sceptre of peace and righteousness; as He has promised: "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. 2: 26, 27).

"I will give him the morning star" (ver. 28).

Is there not something of a link, something of an intermediate, connecting action, intimated by this? The sun is that light in the heavens which connects itself with the earth, with the interests and the doings of the children of men. The sun rules the day, the moon and the stars the night. But "the morning star" receives no appointment in such a system. "He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening" (Ps. 104). The morning star has no place in such arrangement. The children of men have laid them down, and their sleep, in divine mercy, is still sweet to them, while the morning star is decking the face of the sky.

The season in which the sun shines is *ours*. I mean, the sun is the companion of *man*. But the morning star does not, in this way, recall man to his labour. It appears rather at an hour which is quite its own, neither day nor night. The child of the *earlier* morning, the one who is up before the sun, or the watchman who has gone through the night, sees it, but none else.

The sun, in the language or thought of Scripture, is for the *Kingdom*. As we read: "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth" (2 Sam. 23: 3, 4. See also Matt. 13: 43; Matt. 17: 2-5).

I ask, then, Is there not to be expected by us a light before the light of the Kingdom? Are not these signs in the heavens set there for times and seasons? Are there not voices in such spheres? Is there not a mystery in the morning star, in the hour of its solitary shining, as well as in the sun when he rises in his strength upon the earth? Is not the morning star the sign in the heavens of One whose appearing is not for the world, but for a people who wait for an early, unearthly Lord? The hope of Israel, the earthly people, greets the "day-spring" (Luke 1: 78); but the Church welcomes "the morning star." "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (Rev. 22: 16, 17). All is ours; and among this glorious *all*, "the morning star" for our transfiguration to be *like* Jesus, and "the rising sun" for our day of power *with* Jesus.

How are the mysterious link thus formed, and the wondrous journeys thus tracked and followed, from first to last, from everlasting to everlasting! We never lose them, nor our interest in them, even in the most sacred, intimate moment.

We have now, in the progress of our meditations along this glorious pathway of the Son of God, watched a light in the heavens earlier than that of the day-spring, a light which Jesus, the Son of God, amid His other glories, claims to be, and to share with His saints: "I will give him the morning star."

And after the morning star has shone for its brief hour, the sun in his appointed season will rise: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13: 43). And it shall be "a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth (Ps. 96).

"Scenes surpassing fable, and yet true."

One has said, "Faith has a world of its own." Surely we may say, after tracking these ascendings and descendings of the Son of God, linking all together, the highest and the lowest, and introducing all into the brightness of such a Kingdom, This is so: faith has indeed "a world of its own." Oh for that power in the soul to walk there! and that power lies in the earnestness and fervour of faith, which is but the simplicity and reality of faith.

David and Abigail walked in the world which was faith's world, when they met in the wilderness of Paran. To all appearance, or in the reckoning of men, David at that time was but the sport of the wicked, and wandering in caves and dens of the earth: he would have been debtor, if it might be so, to a rich neighbour for a loaf of bread. But faith discovered another in David; and in the eyes of Abigail, all was new. In that favoured though unnoticed hour, when the saints of God thus met in the desert, the Kingdom, in spirit, was entered. The wilderness of Paran was the Kingdom in the communion of the saints. The needy, hunted, persecuted fugitive was, in his own eyes, and in the eyes of Abigail, the lord of the coming Kingdom, and the "anointed of the God of Jacob." Abigail bowed before him as her king, and he, in the grace of a king, "accepted her person." The provisions she brought in her hand, her bread, and her wine, her clusters of raisins, and cakes of figs, were not her bountifulness to the *needy* David, but the tribute of a willing

subject to the *royal* David. She deemed herself too happy and too honoured if she might but minister to his servants. It was after this manner, that by faith she entered another world on this fine and beautiful occasion, as I may call it; witnessing to us that *faith has indeed "a world of its own."* And that world was far more important to Abigail's heart than all the advantages of her wealthy husband's house. The wilderness was more to her than the fields and flocks of Mount Carmel. For there her spirit drank of those pleasures - which faith had discovered in the pure though distant regions of glory.

Blessed, beloved, when we have like power to enter and dwell in our own world! Had not Noah such a world when he built a ship apparently for the land, and not for the water? Had not Abraham such a world when he left country and kindred and father's house? Had not Paul such a world when he could say, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body"? Have we not all our own world at this moment, when by faith our souls have access "into this grace wherein we stand"? This grace is the present, peaceful, happy dwelling-place of the *conscience* sprinkled and purified, and the bright dwelling-place of *hope*, whence it looks out for "the glory of God" (Rom. 5: 1, 2). It is but poorly known, if one may speak for others; but it is ours. And amid all this conscious infirmity, our faith has but to glorify the Son of God; for deeper enjoyment of Him is the diviner progress.

In closing this meditation, in which we have looked (according to our measure), at "the world to come," I would say, that few lessons lie more on the heart at the present day, than *the rejection of Christ*. I might naturally say so in this place; for if He shall be thus *glorious*, as we have seen, in "the world to come," so surely is He *rejected* in "this present evil world."

But this is easily forgotten; and the god of this world would have it so. There is large and increasing accommodation and refinement

abroad; social, intellectual, moral, and religious improvement; and all helping to keep an *unworldly* Christ out of sight. But faith eyes a rejected Jesus and a judged world. Faith knows that though the house be swept, and emptied, and garnished, it has not changed its master or owner, but is only made the more fit for the ends and purposes of its master.

Solemn mistake, beloved, to think of refining and cultivating "this present world" for the Son of God? If David, on one occasion, were careless about the mind of God as to the carriage of the ark, so was he, on another occasion, ignorant of the mind of God as to the building for the ark a house of cedars. He sought to give the Lord an abiding habitation in an uncleansed, uncircumcised land. He therefore did greatly err, not knowing the *purity* of the glory of the Lord; and so with those who link the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, with the earth as it is now, or with the kingdoms of "this present world." With whatever right desire of the heart this may be, as with David, again we say (and how surely, in our own convictions), They do greatly err, not knowing the *purity* of the glory of the Lord. This is a lesson we need to learn with increasing power. The Son of God is still a Stranger on the earth; and He is not seeking it, but seeking a people out of it, to be strangers for a while longer with Him, on the face of it, and amid all the vanities and ambitions which constitute the history of its every hour.

"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me" (Luke 22: 28, 29).

"Through the dark path of sorrow which Jesus has trod,
Thy feeble ones wander, our Father, our God!
And the thick clouds that gather but turn us away
From the waste, howling desert where He could not stay."

Chapter 6

"Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him"

(1 Cor. 15: 28).

It is happy and establishing to the soul to bear in lively faith and recollection that it is the very same Jesus who was here on earth that is now in heaven, and whom we are to know "through His own eternity." When we keep this in memory, every passage of His life here will be introduced afresh to us, and we shall feel and own that we have in the evangelists a more wonderful page to meditate, yea, and in some sense a much happier one too, than we once counted upon.

In the days of His sojourn among us, everything was a reality to Him; all was living and personal. He did more than touch the surface. When He healed a wound or removed a sorrow, He in a way felt it. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." His spirit drank of the *springs*, as of the stream; for not only were His joys real, His sorrows real, His fears and disappointments, and the like, real, but He entered into every occasion in *all* its character. He knew the unuttered language of that needy soul that touched Him in the crowd, and felt that touch in all its meaning. He was filled with delight at the faith of that Gentile who pierced the thick cloud of His humiliation, and reached the divine glory which shone in His person beneath it; and He alike feasted on the bold — but not too bold — faith of that sinner of the city who pierced the *dark* cloud of her own sin and shame, and reached the divine grace which could heal it all (Luke 7). He understood the hasty step of Zacchaeus as he climbed the sycamore-tree, and the thoughtfulness of Nathanael as he sat under the fig-tree. He heard the strife of the disciples by the way as they went up to Jerusalem; heard it in the tumult of the lusts within,

ere it broke out in wars and fightings. And He knew the love as well as the self-confidence which drew Peter from the ship to the water.

Surely, then, it is for us, as we read "the wondrous story" in the recollection of this, to feel after *Himself*, as we mark the hand that did the deed, or track the foot that was treading the path. Every act and word would be felt with something of a new impression; and if so, what more blessed advance could we be making? Would it not be edifying in a high sense indeed, if we could be thus acquainting ourselves more really with a living, personal Jesus? At this time of ours, beloved, there may be a tendency to forget His *Person* or *Himself*, in the common testimony that is now borne so extensively to His *work*. The region of doctrine may be surveyed as with a measuring line and a level, instead of being eyed, with an admiring, worshipping heart, as the place of the glories of the Son of God. And yet it is this He prizes in us. He has made *us personally* His objects; and He looks for it that we make Him ours.

And I ask myself, Is not this, in a sense, the very topmost stone? Is not this personal desire of Christ toward us chief in the ways of His grace? Election, predestination, pardon, adoption, glory, and the Kingdom, — are they not only crowned by this desire of Christ toward us, this making of us an object to Himself? Surely it crowns all; surely it is the topmost stone; lying above and beyond all; fuller and richer and higher than any. Adoption and glory, welcome into the family and participation in the Kingdom, would be defective, were there not also this mystery — the Son of God has found in us an object of desire. It assumes all the other works and counsels in the history of grace. and is thus beyond them all.

The Spirit delights to tell of the work of Christ, and to bear it in its preciousness and sufficiency to the heart and conscience. Nothing could stand us for a moment, had not the work been just what it was, and so counselled and ordered of God. But still the work of the Lord Jesus Christ may be the great *subject*, where He Himself is but a faint *object*; and the soul will thus be a great loser.

But these meditations on the Son of God, which I have been following now, I may say, to their close, suggest to me another thought just at this time.

When considering the deeper and more distant parts of God's ways, we sometimes feel as though they were too much for us; and we seek relief from the weight of them by going back to earlier and simpler truths. This, however, need not be. If we rightly entertained these further mysteries, we should know that we need not retire from them for relief; because they are really only other and deeper expressions of the same grace and love which we were learning at the very beginning. They are but a more abundant flow, or a wider channel, of the same river, just because they lie somewhat more distant from the source.

Till this assurance be laid up in the soul, we are ill prepared to think of them. If we have a fear, that when we are looking at *glories*, we have left the place of *affections*, we wrong the truth and our own souls. It is not so by any means. The more fully the glories unfold themselves, the more are the riches of grace revealed. The rising of a river at its birthplace, where we take in the whole object at once, without effort or amazement, possesses, as we know, its own peculiar charm; but when it becomes, under our eye, a mighty stream, with its diversified banks and currents, we only the rather learn why it ever began to flow. It is the same water still; and we may pass up and down from its source, and along its channels, with various but still constant pleasure. We need seek no relief by turning to its source, as we survey it in its course, along and through the ages and dispensations. When, in spirit (as now in the way of these meditations), we reach the "new heaven" and the "new earth," we are only in company with the same glorious Person, and in fellowship with the same boundless grace, whom we knew, and which we learnt, at the very beginning.

The *same* One made *real* to the soul, and brought *near*, is what I would desire, in God's grace, to be the fruit of these meditations:

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He is so both in His own glory and to us.

In earlier days there were manifestations of Him, the Son of God, sometimes in *veiled*, sometimes in *unveiled* glory. To Abraham at the tent door, to Jacob at Peniel, to Joshua under the walls of Jericho, to Gideon, and to Manoah, the manifestations were veiled, and faith, in more or less vigour, through the Spirit, removed the covering, and reached the glory that was underneath. To Isaiah, to Ezekiel, and to Daniel, the Son of God appeared in unveiled glory; and He had, by a certain gracious process, to make the brightness of the glory tolerable to them (Isa. 6; Ezek. 1; Dan. 10).

The Person, however, was one and the same, whether veiled or unveiled. So, in the days when He had really (and not as in those earlier days), assumed flesh and blood, the glory was veiled, and faith was set to discover it, as in the time of Abraham or of Joshua; and after He had ascended, He appeared to John in such brightness of unveiled glory, that something had to be done by Him in grace, as in the case of Isaiah or of Daniel, ere His presence could be sustained (Rev. 1).

Times and seasons in this respect made no difference. Of course, till the fulness of time came, the Son was not "made of a woman." Then it was that "the Sanctifier," as we read, "took part of the same" flesh and blood with the children (Heb. 2: 11, 14). For flesh and blood indeed He took then, and not till then; very Kinsman of the seed of Abraham He then indeed became. "It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren" (ver. 17). And all this waited for its due season, "the fulness of the time," the days of the Virgin of Nazareth. But those manifestations of the Son of God in earlier days were pledges of this great mystery, that in due time God would send forth His Son, "made of a woman." They were, if I may so express it, the shadows of the forthcoming substance. And what I have been observing has this in it — which is of interest to our souls — *that those foreshadowings were beautifully exact*. They forecast, in

forms both of glory and of grace, the ways of Him who afterwards travelled and sojourned here on earth in humble, serving, sympathizing love, and is now set as glorified in heaven, the Son of man, the Virgin's Seed, forever.

It is delightful to the soul to trace these exact resemblances and forecastings. If we have a veiled glory at the threshing-floor at Ophrah, so have we at the well of Sychar. If we have the brightness of the unveiled glory by the side of the Hiddekel, so have we the same in the Isle of Patmos. The Son of God was as a travelling man in the sight of Abraham in the heat of the day, and so was He to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as the day was fast spending itself. He ate of Abraham's calf, "tender and good," as He did of "a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb," in the midst of the disciples at Jerusalem. In His risen days, He assumed different forms, to suit, in divine grace, the need or demand of the moment; as He had done of old, whether as a stranger or a visitor, whether as simply a "man of God" to Manoah and his wife in the field, or as an armed soldier to Joshua at Jericho.

And it is this, I think I can say again, which I specially value in following these meditations upon Him — to see Jesus *one* throughout; and that, too, *near* and *real* to us. We need (if one may speak for others), the purged eye that is practised to see, and delight in, such a heaven as the heaven of *Jesus* must be. Will it be nothing, we may ask our hearts, will it be nothing to spend eternity with Him who looked up, and caught the eye of Zacchaeus in the sycamore-tree, and then, to the thrilling joy of his soul, let his name fall on his ear from His own lips? With Him who, without one upbraiding word, filled the convicted, quickened heart of a poor sinner of Samaria with joy, and a spirit of liberty that far more than abounded? Surely we want nothing but the child-like, simple, believing mind. For we are not straitened in Him, and there is nothing *to* Him like this *believing* mind. It glorifies Him beyond even the services of eternity.

Nature, it is indeed true, is not equal to this. It must come from the inworking and witness of the Holy Ghost. Nature finds itself overwhelmed. It always betrays itself as that which, as the apostle speaks, comes "short of the glory of God." When Isaiah, on the occasion already referred to, was called into the presence of that glory, he could not endure it. He remembered his uncleanness, and cried out that he was undone. All that he apprehended was the glory; and all that he felt and knew in himself was his unfitness to stand before it. This was *nature*. This was the action of the conscience which, as in Adam in the garden, seeks relief from the presence of God. Nature in the prophet did not discover the altar which, equally with the glory, lay in the scene before him. He did not perceive that which was fully equal to give him perfect ease and assurance, to link him (though still a sinner in himself) with the presence of the glory in all its brightness. Nature could not make this discovery. But the messenger of the Lord of hosts not only discovers but applies it; and the prophet is at ease in the possession of a cleanness or a holiness that can measure the very "holy of holies" itself, and the brightness of the throne of the Lord of hosts.

The Spirit acts above nature, yea, in contradiction of nature. Nature in Isaiah — in us all — stands apart, and is abashed, unable to look up: the Spirit draws us right inward and upward in liberty. When Simeon is led by the Spirit into the presence of the glory, he goes up at once in all confidence and joy. He takes the Child Jesus in his arms. He makes no request of the mother to suffer it to be so; he feels no debt to any one for the blessed privilege of embracing "the Salvation of God," which his eyes then saw. He through the Spirit had discovered the *altar*; and the *glory*, therefore, was not beyond him (Isa. 6; Luke 12).

And true still, as true as ever, as true as in the days of Isaiah and of Simeon, are these things now. The Spirit leads in a path which nature never treads. Nature stands apart, and is afraid; yea, will rebuke where faith is full of liberty. And these diverse ways of nature and of faith we may well remember for our comfort and

strengthening, as we still look at the Son of God, and meditate on mysteries and counsels of God connected with Him.

Our meditations have waited on the Lord from the eternity of the Father's bosom to the coming days of the millennial kingdom. We have watched His ascendings and descendings in the intermediate dispensations, and marked the links between the successive parts in this great mystery, or the transition-moments in the stages of these wondrous journeys. We have but little liberty from

Scripture (our only chart and compass) to follow Him farther. The Psalms and the prophets open the door into the coming Kingdom, and open it widely. But they scarcely carry us beyond it. At least, if they lead us to know that there are regions still in the farther distance, that is almost all they do. They never give us to *survey* them.

This coming Kingdom they again and again speak of as everlasting. Rightly so, as I need not say; but rightly so in this sense : that it is not to give place to any other kingdom. As Daniel says of it, "The Kingdom shall not be left to other people" (Dan. 2: 44). It is to be as untransferable as the priesthood of the same Christ, the Son of God. It is to be as enduring as royalty, as long continued as power "ordained of God" is to be; for it shall not cease while He "to whom power belonged" has anything to do by means of power. But still, it will, in season, have discharged its office and service, and then cease.

Of this mystery, this ceasing or delivering up of the Kingdom, we have a *verbal* or *literal* intimation in Ps. 8. That psalm celebrates the lordship of the Son of man, in the day of His power, over the works of God's hands. But it contains an intimation (as we find from an inspired commentary upon it in 1 Cor. 15: 27, 28) that that day of power shall yield to another order of things,

We have also *moral* intimations of the same mystery. For instance, the age or dispensation we are now contemplating is, as we see, to

be a *kingdom*, the time of a sceptre; and, as such (may I not say?) it must have an end. Could a sceptre be a symbol of the *divine eternity*, the eternity of God's presence? A sceptre may exercise its prerogative power for its season; but Scripture would lead us to say that it could not be a symbol of our eternity in the blessed presence of God. Even Adam can scarcely be said to have had a sceptre. He had dominion; but was it exactly that of a king? His was lordship and inheritance, more properly, not a kingdom. It was not royal rule, though there was the fullest subjection to him, and the most perfect order. A kingdom was not developed, in the progress of the divine way and wisdom, for a long time. And all this suggests, that when the time of a kingdom, or the rule of a sceptre, or the exercise of royal power, comes, such a form of things will not be final or eternal. It cannot, I judge, give rest to the thoughts which are spiritually or scripturally exercised toward God and His ways. A *sceptre* of righteousness is not so high nor so eternal a thought as a *dwelling-place* of righteousness; and that is what Scripture confirms (2 Peter 3: 13).

And, further, as another moral intimation of this same truth, the coming Kingdom will be but an *imperfect* condition of things. We need not determine how far there may be the need of it, or the demand for its exercise. still, *power* will be present to put itself forth. The prophets, as we said, widely survey this Kingdom, in its strength, its extent, its duration, its glory, its peace and blessedness, and the like; but withal, the presence of evil and of sorrow is contemplated, though with authority to control, and resources to relieve.

Is not this, then, I ask, a further intimation of a moral character, that such an order of things is to yield to a better? Surely it is. But there is more than even this: the Kingdom is a delegated thing, a *stewardship*; and being such, we may say, in divine or scriptural reasoning, it must give an account of itself, and be delivered up. But here, beloved, meditations on Jesus Himself, the Son of God, afresh invite the soul.

In this character of it, to which I have now referred, His Kingdom is like His past time of humiliation on earth, and His present time of priesthood in heaven. All, in a great sense, was, or is, or will be, *stewardship*. He came here to this earth of ours to do God's will, and when He had accomplished it, He rendered it up as in sacrifice; His present seat in heaven is a stewardship. As a High-priest there, He is faithful, "faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all His house" (Heb. 3: 2; Num. 12: 7). And after these patterns will be His coming Kingdom and power. It will be, like the rest, a stewardship, though of something *new*, something which had not been committed to Him or put into His hands before; something, too, very glorious and excellent: still, it will be a stewardship. And, being such, it will have, in due season, to be accounted for, and delivered up. And such a mystery is full of blessedness, had we but faith and bowels to enjoy it. For, after this wondrous manner, *subjection and obedience to God* — which man, a creature of the dust, cast off and refused, — from the unutterable glory of the person of Him who owns it and renders it, receives such value as all creatures, from the highest to the lowest, though they had all continued in unintermitting and full service, could never have imparted to it.

And this is a precious truth, which the soul loses just so far as the enemy robs it of the sense and apprehension of the person of the Son.

The Son Himself delights to be all this — the Steward or Servant of the will of God, whether in grace or in glory, in humiliation or in power. And when we, in the spirit of worship, consider or recollect who He is throughout all changes and conditions, we can and will say, that changes and conditions, whether the highest or the lowest, are as nothing. What, in one sense, can raise such a One? Can glory and a kingdom elevate Him? Faith finds it easy indeed to see such a One a Steward of power and dominion and royal honours, when He comes to sit on a throne, just as He was a Steward when He traversed in weakness and humiliation the path of life. Such

distances, in one sense, are nothing to such a One as "the Son." In another sense, the distance, we surely know, is immense; for He entered into sorrow in its season, and will enter into joy in its season. All was, and is, and will be, real to Him, as we said before; and, therefore, in another sense, the distance is immense. The "Man of sorrows" will take "the cup of salvation." Will that be nothing? To Him who was despised and rejected, insulted and scorned, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. But the Person is the same throughout, God and man in one Christ; and faith, therefore, receives it, that, having been the Steward of the Father's will and grace in days of humiliation, He may still be Steward of the Father's Kingdom in days of exaltation and strength.

And so it will be, as scripture after scripture tells us. "When I shall receive the congregation," says Christ, anticipating the Kingdom, "I will judge uprightly" (Ps. 75: 2); thus owning that He is under commission, or in stewardship, when in the Kingdom. So, to the like intent, He owns that *the time of His receiving* the Kingdom, and *the distribution of the rewards and honours* of the Kingdom, are not in His hands, but in the Father's (Mark 13: 32; Matt. 20: 23). Every tongue in that day, it is most sure, shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; but then, this is to be "to the glory of God the Father." The Lord Himself again and again calls it *the Father's Kingdom*. And further, He will be *anointed* for the ministry of it, just as He was anointed for the ministry of the days of His flesh (Isa. 11: 1-3; Isa. 61: 1, 2). And further still (may I say?), He will be a *Dependent* on God during His day of strength, as He has already been, or as He once was, in His day of sorrow and weakness. Therefore we read, "Prayer shall be made for Him continually"; as Solomon, the typical king, by a public act of intercession, put under the care of the God of Israel the kingdom which he had received (Ps. 72; 2 Chr. 6).

All this is *moral* intimation that there must be a delivering up of the Kingdom; for all this shows us that the Kingdom is a delegated thing, a stewardship; and, as we said, this moral intimation is affirmed by the divine reasoning in 1 Cor. 15 and Ps. 8. *All* is

subjection: the kingly days of power, the self-emptying days of sorrow, the heavenly days of priestly ministry; all is alike subjection and service. As Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a High-Priest, but He who said unto Him, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"; so, we may say, neither did He glorify Himself to be made a King, but He which said unto Him, "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom" (Ps. 2: 7; Ps. 110: 1; Dan. 7: 13, 14).

This is the institution of the coming Kingdom of Christ. And thus it is a *delegated* thing, taken from the hands of Another, in its time to be delivered back. The Son, most surely, will be faithful, where all others have been found wanting. Of them it is written, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: He judgeth among the gods," but of the Son it is written, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom: Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Ps. 45; Ps. 82; Heb. 1).

But all this still tells us that He holds the Kingdom as a stewardship. Whether it be the *sword* or the *sceptre* of the Kingdom, whether He act as the David or as the Solomon, He will be alike faithful. When He goes forth to the judgment, or to fight the battles of the Lord, this will be so; as it is said of Him, "The Lord at Thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath" (Ps. 110: 5). And again, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth" (Ps. 46: 8). When He sits on the throne, or ministers the Kingdom in peace, this will be so. "I will walk within My house," says Christ the King, "with a perfect heart" (Ps. 101: 2). And it is said of Him to Jehovah, "He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment" (Ps. 72: 2). But, again I say, all this intimates delegated power, though in a peculiar hand.

His Kingdom shall perfect that which concerneth it, as did His death once and forever, and as His heavenly priesthood is now doing day by day. And then His sceptre shall be laid aside, the Kingdom shall cease. As it is written, "He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father." And again, "Then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

"That God may be all in all." Yes, God, by the Son, made the worlds or the ages. And when the worlds or the ages have run their course, and discharged their trust; when dispensations have manifested the counsels and the works and the glories appointed them; the Son, as the One in whom they were laid, and by whom they were ordered, may well be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

It is the subjection of office, the subjection of Him who had all things put under Him to Him who did put all things under Him. That is the character of this subjection. As to the Person, unlike the office, it is eternal. The Son is of the glory of the Godhead, as is the Father, and as is the Holy Ghost.

"Thou art the everlasting Word.
The Father's only Son;
God manifest, God seen and heard,
The Heaven's beloved One.

"In Thee. most perfectly expressed,
The Father's self doth shine;
Fulness of Godhead, too; the Blest,
Eternally divine.

"Image of th' Infinite Unseen,
Whose being none can know;
Brightness of light no eye hath seen.
God's love revealed below.

"The higher mysteries of Thy fame.
The creature's grasp transcend:
The Father only Thy blest name
Of Son can comprehend;

Worthy, O Lamb of God. art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow."

It is the mystery of mysteries, the *Person*, we are here looking at. When we think rightly of Him, even all the brightness of the coming Kingdom will be seen but as a veil. Can the splendour of the throne display Him? Would not the honours of Solomon, yea, of the kingdoms of the world, be a veil over the glory of the Son, as really as the scorn of Pilate's judgment-hall, or the thorns of Calvary? Is the *Bethlehemite* the measure of His personal worth a single title more than the *Nazarene*? Therefore, to faith it is easy to see the Servant still, in days of exaltation as in days of sorrow. He served as a Servant, He serves as a Priest, He will serve as a King.

It is the link of links, this mystery we are here contemplating; and in the faith of it, all distances and intervals vanish. Heaven and earth, God and man, the Sanctifier and the sanctified, the highest and the lowest, are introduced to each other in ways of unutterable glory to God and blessing to us.

What links, indeed, what mysteries, what harmonies, what counsels about the ends of creation, in the hidden ages of divine, eternal wisdom before creation! "Vast as is the course which Scripture has traced, it has been a *circle* still; and in that most perfect form comes back to the point from which it started. The heaven which had disappeared since the third chapter of Genesis, reappears in the latest chapters of the Revelation. The tree of life again stands by the river of the water of life, and again there is no more curse."

"Even the very differences of the forms under which the heavenly Kingdom reappears are deeply characteristic, marking, as they do,

not merely that all is won back, but won back in a more glorious shape than that in which it was lost, because won back *in the Son*. It is no longer Paradise, but the New Jerusalem; no longer the Garden, but the City of God; no longer the Garden, free, spontaneous, and unlaboured, as man's blessedness in the estate of a first innocence would have been, but the City, costlier indeed, more stately and more glorious, but at the same time the result of toil and pains, reared into a nobler and more abiding habitation, yet with stones which (after the pattern of 'the elect cornerstone'), were, each in its time, laboriously hewn and painfully squared for the places which they fill."

We may join in these thoughts, but having reached the delivering up of the Kingdom, we are on the borders of the "new heaven" and the "new earth." The heavens and the earth which are now will have been the scene of the Son's exercised energies, and the Witness of His perfections in grace and in glory, in humiliation and in power, in the services of the Servant, the Priest, and the King, in the life of faith and in the lordship of all things. And when the Son has been thus displayed, as in weakness and in strength, as on earth and in heaven, from the manger to the throne, as the Nazarene and the Bethlehemite, the Lamb of God and the anointed Lord of all, according to predestination of eternal counsels, these heavens and earth which now are will have done all they had to do; *when they have continued unto this display of the Son, they have continued long enough*. They may give place; and the soul that has surveyed them as having accomplished such a service may be prepared to hear this from the prophet of God, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth.. for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away" (Rev. 21).

But, as I said before, we have but little liberty from Scripture (our only chart and compass) to follow the Lord farther than the Kingdom. There are, however, characteristics of the "new heaven" and the "new earth," given to us in the passing or occasional notices of the Spirit.

Isaiah speaks of the former heaven and earth not being remembered when the new creation comes; thereby intimating the abounding excellence of the latter. And, again, he says, "The new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me," thereby suggesting that it is the *eternal* state (Isaiah 65, 66).

Paul says, that after the delivery of the kingdom, God shall be "all in all; by that intimating, I judge, that all delegated power, all stewardship, of which I have spoken, even in the hand of the Son, is over, as having completed its purpose.

Peter speaks of the "new heavens" and the "new earth" as being the *dwelling-place* of righteousness; by such a thought carrying our minds beyond the time of the *sceptre* of righteousness.

But John, in the Apocalypse, is more full: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." And, again, John says of the same new heaven and new earth, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21).

This is blessed: "The former things are passed away." Tears are gone; death is gone; sorrow and pain and crying are gone. No trace remains of the former things of sin and death. The millennial earth will not be a witness of so high an order as that.

"The former things are passed away." Not that we lose anything which has been given or communicated in His counsels of grace and glory, in the services of the Son, and in the operations of the Spirit. Nothing will be lost to us, which we have gathered in the progress of the divine dispensations. That could not be. Even the passing refreshments of the Spirit, which the inworking of corruption spoils us of for many and many a season, are not lost to us. They are the

witness of that which is eternal in its very essence. And in like manner, all the unfolded wisdom of God must be enjoyed forever in its bright result. It is itself essentially eternal, and cannot be lost to us. These manifestations of God in His wisdom and power, and grace and glory, have come forth and shown themselves in the progress of the ages, and they have found a struggle in an injured, ruined, degraded scene of action, like this world of ours; but in the "new heavens" and the "new earth" all this struggle in every form of it is over, and these manifestations will be known in their full, triumphant, and glorious result.

Before Him that sits on the white *horse*, the apostate powers of "this present evil world," in the hour of their fullest pride and daring, are smitten. and the Lord and His saints take righteous rule in the earth for the appointed millennial age. Before Him that sits on the white *throne*, the present heaven and earth pass away, and there is found no place for them; and He that sits on the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new." Surely these are distinctions — distinctions, too, full of meaning, and as significant of advance and development in divine counsels and ways, as any earlier moment.

It will not be the *sceptre* of righteousness, but its *dwelling-place*; and accordingly it will not be *the throne of the Son*, but "*the tabernacle of God*." It is not *divine authority over the scene*, but *the home of God in the scene*.

It will no longer be the earth that was once stained with the blood of Christ, and has been the grave of a thousand generations, but "a *new earth*;" no longer the heavens that have been clothed in sackcloth, and where thunders and wind and deluge have done the work of judgment, and borne witness of righteous wrath, but "*new heavens*."

He that is *athirst* shall drink of the fountain of the water of life; he that *overcometh* shall inherit all things (Rev. 21: 6, 7). Blessed characters of the saint! How little realized in the souls of some of us! But still blessed, when we can but read of them or think of them; to

be longing after the living God, and conquering the course of this evil world.

I would, however, say but little more. We must not speculate where we cannot teach; we must not listen where we cannot learn from *Him*. His Written Word is the standard of the thoughts of all His saints, while some have that Word more largely made the possession of their souls, through the Spirit, than others. We are to know the common standard, and also our personal measure in the Spirit. I would, therefore, pause here; just adding one thought which has been happy to myself: that though we see not those distant regions, we may trust them — trust Him, rather, who is the Lord of them. We may assure our hearts in His presence, that they will be just what we would have them to be, just what our new conditions would ask for.

Heaven has always been what the earth needed. At the beginning, the sun was there to rule the day, and the moon and the stars to govern the night. Those ordinances were set in heaven then, for they measured the earth's need then. But there was no rainbow in the sky, for the earth needed not a token that God would debate with judgment. Judgment was not known. But when conscience had been quickened, and judgment was understood and feared, when God was known (in the doings He had accomplished) to be *righteous*, and earth needed a pledge that in wrath He would remember mercy, heaven wore the token of that mercy, and hung it out as on its very forehead.

After this manner, heaven has already changed itself, or arrayed itself anew, with the changing need of the earth; and the past pledges the future, though "a new heaven and a new earth" be to be revealed. Yea, I may add, the *millennial* earth, in its day, will know the same fidelity of heaven to it. For the habitation of the glory shall be seen to be there then (as the sanctuary of peace is known by faith to be there now), and the heavenly city of that age will descend in that very character which the nations of the earth, their kings, their glory, and their honour, will both need and delight in. The God of heaven

and earth, in boundless and unwearied goodness, will, after this old, and constant, and undeviated way, be ever and alike true to the blessing of His creatures. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1: 17). And the "new heaven" and the "new earth" will but take up the same tale of various but exhaustless goodness.

We need only the happy faith which realizes it all to the soul.

"Our Father's house! no more our souls
"At fearful distance bow;
We enter in by Jesus' blood,
With happy boldness now.

"Our Father! thought had never dreamed
That love like Thine could be -
Mysterious love which brings us thus
So very near to Thee."

May these meditations help our souls to know this nearness and this reality of the blessed things of faith. Amen.

THE END