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SWEET FERN.

BY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

The subtle power in perfume found
 Nor priest nor sibyl vainly learned;
 On Grecian shrine or Aztec mound
 No censer idly burned.

That power the hoary Magian knew,
 The dervish in his frenzied dance,
 The Pythian princess swooning through
 The wonderland of trance.

And Nature holds, in wood and field,
 Her thousand sun-lit censers still;
 To spell of flower and shrub we yield
 Against or with our will.

I climbed a hill-path strange and new
 With slow feet, pausing at each turn;
 A sudden waft of west wind blew
 The breath of the sweet fern.

That fragrance from my vision swept
 The alien landscape; in its stead,
 Up fairer hills of youth I stepped,
 As light of heart as tread.

With me June's freshness, lapsing brook,
 Murmurs of leaf and bee, the call
 Of birds, and one whose voice and look
 In keeping were with all.

A fern beside the way we went
 She plucked, and smiling, held it up,
 And from her hand the wild, sweet scent,
 I drank as from a cup.

O potent witchery of smell!
 The dust-dry leaves to life return;
 And she who plucks them owns the spell,
 And lifts her ghostly fern.

Or sense or spirit? Who shall say
 What touch the chords of memory thrills?
 It passed; and left the August day
 Ablaze on lonely hills.

ABIDE IN CHRIST, AS YOUR WISDOM.

"OF GOD ARE YE IN CHRIST JESUS, who was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."—1 COR. i. 30 (R. V. marg.)

Jesus Christ is not only Priest to purchase, and King to secure, but also Prophet to reveal to us the salvation which God hath prepared for them that love Him. Just as at the creation the light was first called into existence, that in it all God's other works might have their life and beauty, so in our text wisdom is mentioned first as the treasury in which are to be found the three precious gifts that follow. The life is the light of man; it is in revealing to us, and making us behold the glory of God in His own face, that Christ makes us partakers of eternal life. It was by the tree of knowledge that sin came; it is through the knowledge that Christ gives that salvation comes. He is made of God unto us wisdom. *In Him* are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And of God you are *in Him*, and have but to abide in Him, to be made partaker of these treasures of wisdom. *In Him* you are, and *in Him* the wisdom is; dwelling in Him, you dwell in the very fountain of all light; abiding in Him, you have Christ the wisdom of God leading your whole spiritual life, and ready to communicate, in the form of knowledge, just as much as is needful for you to know. Christ is made unto us wisdom; ye are in Christ.

It is this connection between what Christ has been made of God to us, and how we have it only as also being in Him, that we must learn to understand better. We shall thus see that the blessings prepared for us in Christ cannot be obtained as special gifts in answer to prayer *apart from the abiding in Him*. The answer to each prayer must come in the closer union and the deeper abiding in Him; in Him the unspeakable gift, all other gifts are treasured up, the gift of wisdom and knowledge too.

How often have you longed for wisdom and spiritual understanding that you might *know* God better, whom to know is life eternal! Abide in Jesus: your life in Him will lead you to that fellowship with God in which the only true knowledge of God is to be had. His love, His power, His infinite glory will, as you abide in Jesus, be so revealed as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. You may not be able to grasp it with the understanding, or to express it in words; but the knowledge which is deeper than thoughts or words will be given,—the knowing of God which comes of being known of Him. "We preach Christ crucified unto them which are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Or you would fain count all things but loss for the excellency of the *knowledge of Jesus Christ* your Lord. Abide in Jesus, and be found in Him. You shall know Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship

of His sufferings. Following Him, you shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. It is only when God shines into the heart, and Christ Jesus dwells there, that the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ can be seen.

Or would you understand His blessed *work*, as he wrought it on earth, or works it from heaven by His Spirit? Would you know how Christ can become our righteousness, and our sanctification, and redemption? It is just as bringing, and revealing, and communicating these that He is made unto us wisdom from God. There are a thousand questions that at times come up, and the attempt to answer them becomes a weariness and a burden. It is because you have forgotten you are in Christ, whom God has made to be your wisdom. Let it be your first care to abide in Him in undivided fervent devotion of heart; when the heart and the life are right, rooted in Christ, knowledge will come in such measure as Christ's own wisdom sees meet. And without such abiding in Christ the knowledge does not really profit, but is often most hurtful. The soul satisfies itself with thoughts which are but the forms and images of truth, without receiving the truth itself in its power. God's way is ever first to give us, even though it be but as a seed, the thing itself, the life and the power, and then the knowledge. Man seeks the knowledge first, and often, alas! never gets beyond it. God gives us Christ, and in Him *hid* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. O let us be content to possess Christ, to dwell in Him, to make Him our life, and only in a deeper searching into Him, to search and find the knowledge we desire. Such knowledge is life indeed.

Therefore, believer, abide in Jesus as your wisdom, and expect from Him most confidently whatever teaching you may need for a life to the glory of the Father. In all that concerns your *spiritual life*, abide in Jesus as your wisdom. The life you have in Christ is a thing of infinite sacredness, far too high and holy for you to know how to act it out. It is He alone who can guide you, as by a secret spiritual instinct, to know what is becoming your dignity as a child of God, what will help and what will hinder your inner life, and specially your abiding in Him. Do not think of it as a mystery or a difficulty you must solve. Whatever questions come up as to the possibility of abiding perfectly and uninterruptedly in Him, and of really obtaining all the blessing that comes from it, always remember: He knows, all is perfectly clear to Him, and He is my wisdom. Just as much as you need to know and are capable of apprehending, will be communicated, *if you only trust Him*. Never think of the riches of wisdom and knowledge hid in Jesus as treasures without a key, or of your way as a path without a light. Jesus your wisdom is guiding you in the right way, even when you do not see it.

In all your intercourse with the *blessed Word*, remember the same truth; abide in Jesus, your wisdom. Study much to know the written Word; but study more to know the living Word, in whom you are of God. Jesus, the wisdom of God, is only known by a life of implicit confidence and obedience. The words