

lodgment of gratitude, to accept the confession of the text, "by Christ have we access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand." For in our view of the religion of Christ there be aught superior to that of others, if there be aught more dissuasive to sin, more encouraging to holiness, aught giving nobler conceptions of duty, warmer love to God, and more earnest desire to grow into his likeness, it arises in the first place from a fuller and clearer apprehension of the Universal Paternity of God, the cardinal tenet in the relation of Christ,—in the second, from a mere implicit and unquestioning trust in the exceeding great and precious promises of Christ,—and, in the third place, from a truer appreciation of the spirit which pervades the whole life and history of Christ.

Until Christ came, the idea of the Divine Paternity was one which had never visited the minds of men. Jove, it is true, received the appellation of Father, but it was merely a complimentary title, rather expressive of his authority and age than of any paternal relation he was supposed to bear to men. They were not the offspring of his creating love, nor were they the objects of his parental solicitude and care; but hopeless orphans, they groped through this mystery of life, unowned by Heaven, and bound to each other by no holier tie than the affinities of mutual frailty and dependence, and the prospect of commingling ashes in a common grave at last.—To the Patriarchs and to Moses indeed, did God grant transient glimpses of his Fatherhood, but such visions were limited to the Enochs and Jacobs of mankind. Christ reveals him broadly and fully as the Universal Parent, appeals to the daily and impartial distributions of his Providence as proofs that he is not unmindful of the relationship, and empowers and encourages, not the good and pure only, but the guilty and the vile, the Esaus of the race, with yearning and penitent hearts to circle the great white throne and lift to its occupant the cry, "Bless us, even us also, O our Father!"

But a clear apprehension of this tenet necessitates a clear apprehension of its consequent tenet the indissoluble brotherhood of man, and this again results in the conviction that whatever the temporary discipline to which he subjects us, a common destiny, alike worthy of Him, and glorious for us, awaits us all at the last. Now the spirit of this conviction is the characteristic and pervading spirit of our denominational faith. By faith then in Christ's revelation of the Father have we access to the grace wherein we stand.

Nor are we less indebted to the promises of Christ than to his display of the Paternal character of God. So lucid, so definite and convincing appears to us the language of these promises, whether as they drop from the living lips of Jesus or from the pens of his inspired apostles, that it is with some difficulty we refrain from regarding the man who doubts or disregards their purport as in a like predicament with him "who shuts his eyes, and hooting at the glorious sun in heaven, cries out, Where is it?" As easy, to our thinking, would it be to invalidate the meaning of passages which assume the existence of God, or of such as assert the future immortality of man, as of those which predict the final return of all to holiness and joy.

The same principles of interpretation, which, in the two former classes of texts, inculcate upon us the being of the Almighty and our own future existence, constrain us to deduce from the latter the tenet which confers upon us our denominational name. There are other sources, doubtless, to which we should have frequent recourse for the confirmation of our faith, but let us beware brethren, how we surrender, how we even undervalue or neglect our chief store of strength in the sure promises of the testament of the Savior. Is there a tendency among us to eschew resort to these direct and positive annunciations as hackneyed and common-place, and an inclination rather to rest for support of the dis-

tinative prospects of our system upon inferences drawn from the general tone and sentiment of Christianity? Such evidence is questionless of great value and importance, but it should rather be regarded as cumulative than as positive proof. To us, no doubt, the whole tenor and tendency of the New Testament revelation are irresistably suggestive of a final issue of glory and gladness; to others we suspect they are pregnant with a vastly different result. And the direction which, to our eyes they appear to take, is decided, and the splendor of beatitude toward which they urge the march of the Divine Government are effused upon them by the spirit of hope and trust which is born of the promises of Christ.

Though by no means desirous that our people should become distinguished for fanatic vassalage to any one idea, even though it be the loftiest and most cheering that has ever stirred the heart of humanity, and though there may be taunting justice in the charge, that we have been too literally "instant in season and out of season" in our advocacy of the peculiar tenet whose vivifying power first struck us into denominational being, yet it is essential, if we would perpetuate our independent existence, and so secure the success of the mission confided to us, that the spirit and sentiment of this leading idea should inspire and permeate all the labours of our clergy and all the conduct of our laity. To this end we deem it necessary,—we speak to you, brethren in the ministry,—that though by no means habitually, yet frequently, we furnish to our congregations, in the ministrations of the pulpit, the reasons of the hope that is in us. And in doing so, may we with becoming diffidence suggest that while never negligent of any of the subsidiary and collateral evidence which glows so luminously throughout the glorious word of God, the distinct and unqualified assertions of that word, the exceeding great and precious promises of Christ, should be commended with earnest emphasis to the faith of our hearers, as their maintenance in "that state of grace wherein they stand."

But though thus anxious that the distinct asseverations of the New Testament should neither be overlooked nor undervalued, we are by no means insensible to the aid furnished us by other sources, less direct and positive indeed, yet equally scriptural and to many minds almost equally conclusive. Let the Christian Universalist, who is ambitious of something more than the acquisition of that dogmatic tenacity with which it is perfectly possible for an utterly godless mind to cling to the mere form of a faith, let him who would have the convictions of his heart add their glowing strength to the assent of his intellect brood earnestly upon the life and character of Jesus. With a devout appreciation of the spirit of his theme, let him yield himself to the influences it effuses till there be kindled within him a disposition akin to that he contemplates, till Christ be formed within him; and in addition to the testimony of his reason, in the death of his thus renewed nature will he possess an assurance of the revolting impossibility of any final issue to the Divine government at variance with "the Christ in him the hope of glory." This will, we think, most surely be the effect upon a mind which worthily apprehends the sacred theme.

From such an apprehension there springs a species of moral evidence requiring an almost impossible amount of proof to controvert the assurance it imports. Let it be insinuated that in what have been styled "the times that tried men's souls," Washington was in traitorous collusion with the enemy, and that certain documentary evidence could be produced in attestation of the charge, and the universal heart of the country would at once spurn the pretended testimony as spurious, and hoot to silence and infamy the slanderer of so high and pure a name. And so those who look forward to the time when the Son of God shall rush down in destruction and doom upon

the world he came of yore amid angel harmonies to save, are constrained to transform him from the Christ of the Gospels to the Christ of a dis-tempered fancy. Their moral nature shrinks ached from the identification of him who comes flaming in wrath upon that dreadful day, with him whose infant smile, stirred with a strange, unearthly joy, the heart of his virgin Mother, as if no human child but a new born seraph hung upon her bosom, with him who by the gate of Nain stooped in mercy over the cold ashes of a widow's hope, and restored a warm and living son to the embrace of his rejoicing parent, with him, the friend of publicans and sinners, who rebuked even the convicted harlot with the voice of pardon, bidding her "go and sin no more;" to him who has caught the full meaning of the life of the New Testament Christ, it puts forth an imperious demand, it utters a sure word of prophecy; that all the elements of the moral world shall be so developed and arranged as to chime in holy harmony with itself.

From the manger of Bethlehem to the hill of Bethany,—in the sweet childhood which has touched all subsequent infancy with spiritual beauty, and which has consecrated the Christian painter's art to the service of a sinless idolatry, in his thoughtful boyhood urgent on his Father's business, in the sore temptation, trembling with mortal infirmity, yet untainted by mortal sin, amid the revelry of the marriage feast, smiling serenely on the gait, in the very act of unfolding his credentials from God, contributing cheerfully enjoyment to his kind, in the multitude of his miracles, lustrous with the beauty of mercy, in the sublime compassion with which he bewails the doom of the city, whose streets, ere another week, he knew were to be resonant with clamors for his blood, in the sorrowful pity lurking in the language in which he presages to Judas his treachery and woe, in the look of patient remonstrance spared to Peter, amid all the mockeries and sufferings of the judgment hall in this sympathy in which even on the road to Golgotha, amid the loud grief of his female followers, he forgo his own miseries in compassionate anticipation of theirs, in the self-forgetting pathos of that best by which, amid the torments of the cross he at once secured sympathy and protection to his mother, and bequeathed consolation to his favourite disciple, in the dearest of all memorials, in the prayer of pity and pardon poured over the murderers who nailed him there, in the last terrible cry by which, as his spirit was about to pass, he pierced the heavens with the tidings that the scheme of man's redemption was consummated, in the searching yet tender address, by which, after his resurrection he probes and heals, and abundantly pardons the frailty of Simon, and in the streaming glories of the ascent from Bethany—oh! yes, in exhibiting to the world a spectacle like this, such an assurance of the unwavering love of heaven to man, such an incarnate vision of immaculate purity and unselfish benevolence God pledges and proclaims to us what the perfection of immortal humanity shall be. That life is the key note already struck, hinting of the harmonious anthem, of which every living soul shall be an accordant tone, no discord marring the music of the universal jubilee.

By Christ then, through faith in the revelations he has given us of the character of God, and of the intimate and endearing relation by which he has knit humanity forever to himself by Christ, through faith in the solemn promises he has published, by Christ, through faith in that prophetic life of his, which, unless it points to such an issue as we anticipate, an issue in universal harmony with itself, is an unaccountable anomaly in the great plan of God, and a bitter mockery of all the hopes it kindles, "by Christ have we access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand."

The faith which supports us in the grace wherein we stand! How precious its privileges, how animating its incentives to duty,

weighty the responsibilities it entails! Its privileges are precious, for when hope droops in contemplation of the monstrous ill that waste humanity, sucking the pulp of happiness from so many million hearts, and scattering them as worthless husks upon the thoroughfares of life, how consoling the vision which reveals the world, worn and weary with the flight and buffings of ages, winnowing its way at last, like an out-tired dove, to seek refuge and rest in the bosom of God the Father. Its privileges are precious, for it proclaims the extinction, total and for ever, of the sin which pollutes, the sorrow which corrodes, the pain which mares, and the death which destroys this mortal being, and the erection on the ruins of this imperfect state, of one how fair how full of God, where no tear shall be wept, no frailty felt, no conflict fought between "low wants and lofty will," but where all shall tread the shining paths of an illimitable progress amid the beauties of holiness, the acclamations of saints, the songs and society of angels, and the overlasting glories of God. Is not this a faith fitted to fire the coldest bosom with gratitude, to shed an added charm upon enjoyment, to touch with tenderest solace the heart raw with anguish, and by the bed of death, to cheer the timid spirit, hesitating to trust itself, naked and houseless, among the shadows of an untried eternity?

But the faith by which we occupy the state of grace wherein we stand; possesses not only peculiar privileges, but high and holy incentives to duty also.

When on some homeward journey we encounter a traveller from whom the next turn of the road is to part us, we attempt no intimacy, we accompany him without interest and we part from him without regret.

But let us learn that our destination is his too, that for days and months, perhaps, he will be our companion, sharing with us the pleasures and the tedium of the way, till with a common joy we shall hail the village spire at last, and rejoice together in the greetings of family and friends; and acquaintance becomes interest, and interest attachment. We grow considerate of his comfort, we sympathize with him in distress, we counsel and assist him in difficulty and danger, we charge ourselves with his welfare indeed, till we arrive with him in safety at the termination of the journey.

Now Universalist brother, your faith assures you there is no single individual now breathing human-breath, who is not linked to you by a still closer tie, than that of such a companionship as this. The vilest wretch who skulks through a life of shame to a grave of guilt is your brother, born of the same love, sustained by the same providence, and to be pardoned by the same mercy; for not less surely than he, do you yourself need the forbearance and the mercy of those compassions which fail not. In the judgment of the world, in the eye of God, his depravity is deeper than yours, requiring a more protracted process of discipline perhaps, a more copious baptism of the spirit of grace. But he is your brother still, he will be your companion for ever. Not through the experiences of this low world only, but when both delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of heaven, side by side, fellow travellers through eternity shall you tread the same paths, unite in the same occupations, mingle your voices in the same songs, and exult in the same salvation;

"Together walk in pure white light;
With kings and priests abroad,
Together summer high in bliss,
Upon the hills of God."

And is not such a prospect better fitted to arouse your interest, to invigorate your benevolence, and to urge you to active effort for that man's well being, than if you believed, that a few stages onward, he would disappear, in the gloom of the grave and the subsequent darkness, from your sight and sympathy for: