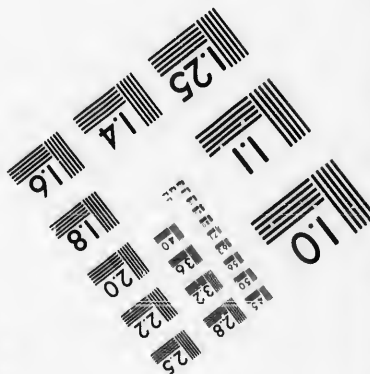
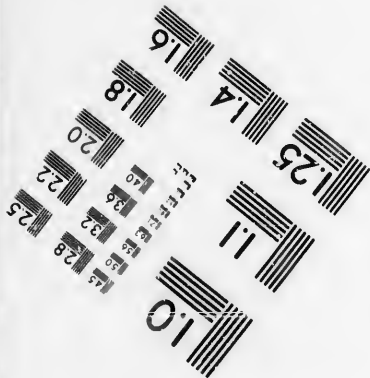
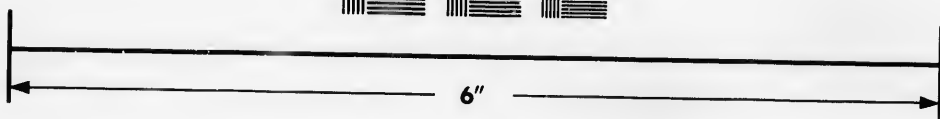
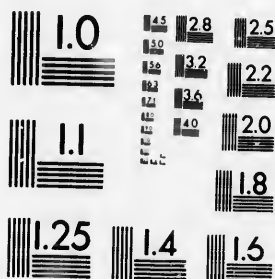


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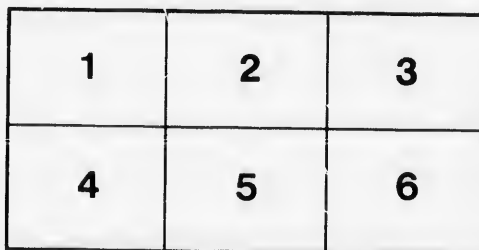
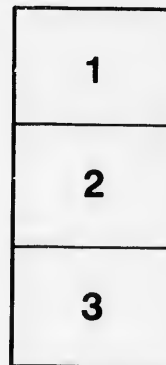
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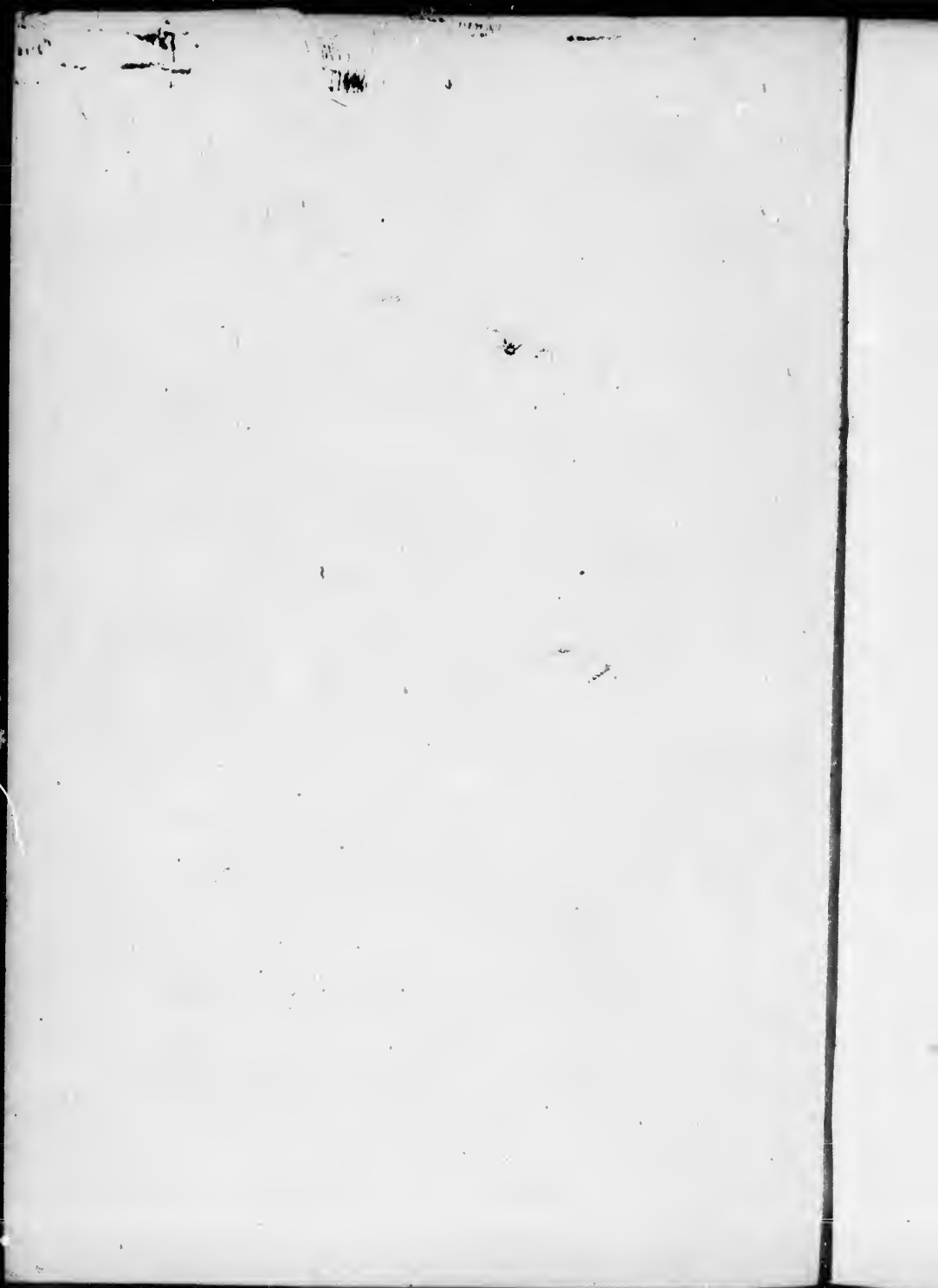
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# LEAVES

FROM

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BY THE

REV. D. FRASER, A.M.

MINISTER OF THE FREE CHURCH, MONTREAL.

LONDON:

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## PREFACE.

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THIS little book contains no elaborate exposition or treatise. I have grouped together sundry short papers on religious themes, meditative and illustrative, which may prove suitable reading, as I trust, for a Sabbath afternoon or evening at home. Anxious to avoid prolixity, I have not attempted fully to discuss, far less to exhaust my topics. If one may borrow the title given by a great writer to a remarkable book, I have wished to supply "Aids to Reflection"—hints, suggestions, and outlines—rather than complete forms of truth. Here, therefore, is no great mass of matter, but a "little dinner of herbs."

D. F.

MONTREAL, 26th March 1858.

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## I.

*Meditation.*

A PLEASANT glimpse of "the heir of promise" we get from those simple words of Scripture, "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide."\* It is an example which we might profitably follow. Isaac, it is true, had advantages which we have not, for religious retirement and reflection. Heir to a rich inheritance, he was exempt from worldly care and the spirit-chafing struggles of modern busy life. He enjoyed rural quiet, in a country and a climate that invited to walk abroad. Withal he doubtless was largely endowed with those powers of abstraction, contemplation, and introversion, which have ever been characteristic of Oriental minds. The pattern of a man of so much leisure and peace does not deeply impress our bustling generation. Nevertheless it is just in such an age as this, that meditation is most needful to the religious mind; and to the neglect of this duty may safely be attributed the

\* Gen. xxiv. 63.

light, fickle, and immature character of much modern piety.

Vain are the excuses offered for such neglect. To urge that we have no time for quiet meditation on the wonderful works and words of God, is virtually to say that we have no time to attend to the very objects for which time was given to us—the knowledge of God, and the edification of our own souls. To say that we have very little opportunity of retirement and quiet in our occupied urban life, is only to state a reason for our avoiding over-business, and studying to redeem time for godly exercise. To confess that we cannot sustain an interest in religious themes, is to betray our insufficient conversion to God. The language of a devout heart is this, “My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord.”\*

If the unquiet spirit of the times disadvantageously affects our religious habits of thought, we also, in these last days, have advantages for “increasing in the knowledge of God” far superior to those enjoyed in the early ages of the world. In Creation we may see, more clearly than the ancients, the traces of Jehovah. Inheriting the studies and discoveries of all preceding times, we have a greatly increased acquaintance both with the vastness and with the minuteness of “the things that are made;” and so have matter of meditation on the being, wisdom, and power of the Divine

\* Psalm civ. 34.

Maker, more ample than any former generation possessed. In the observation of Providence, too, we possess a marked advantage. Century after century, the history of the Church and the world becomes more fruitful in instruction; and he who studies history with a serious mind, and marks in our own time the course of life and of events, may discover abundant traces of a presiding God, and have solemn and "sweet meditation of Him" who moulds and fashions the lot of man, and ordains and controls all things after the counsel of His will. The like superiority of advantage have we in regard to God's Holy Word. In our hands is the completed canon of Scripture. Isaac had no Bible at all, and David had one of far less extent and clearness and fulness than we possess. Our pastures are wider and richer than the flock of God of old time enjoyed. And in all parts of the large field of Scripture—the field that the Lord has blessed—we, if spiritually-minded, may have sweet meditation on His perfections, and on His most good and holy will.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Leader and Pattern of Christians, was much given to meditation, and loved communion with the Father in heaven. He was much abroad in grassy solitudes—in corn-fields—on high mountains—on the shore and on the bosom of the Galilean Lake—and everywhere looked on nature as an expression of Deity, and a vast parable of spiritual truths. He also mused on Providence, and taught His

disciples to do likewise, to the comfort and confirmation of their souls:—"Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? . . . Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?"\* Our Lord also meditated much on God's written Word. His human mind grew in wisdom and knowledge by His familiarity with the Word—that "volume of the book" in which it was written of Him. And every one must observe, that in His conversations with the twelve, and His replies to the rulers and the people, quotations from, and references to the Old Testament abound. This command of the Scriptures the man Christ Jesus acquired by study and reflection. In perfection He combined thought and duty, meditation and activity, and was at once the most occupied and the most devout Being that ever dwelt among men.

The Christians of the present day appear to fail in meditation, more than they do in activity. But it is unsafe to neglect, in any particular, the example Christ has given.

Lack of meditation keeps the mind always poor, the

\* Luke xii. 24, 27, 28.

bulk of what is read or heard being suffered to slip away unnoticed, and making no part of the permanent possessions of the soul. There are many who have enjoyed such advantages that they ought to be teachers rather than learners, who yet have their minds unfurnished, and their thoughts loose and scattered, just because they have never formed the habit of pondering well. They receive, but they do not retain knowledge, or apprehend the scope, beauty, order, and mutual connexion of great truths. Many a valuable thought they have had, but the thought is transient, and leaves no lasting impress on the soul—like sheet-lightning playing on the horizon, then passing into darkness, or the glance of a sunbeam on a dark wave of the sea.

The subject also intimately affects the progress of piety. All the powers and virtues of the "new heart" pine and are enfeebled, unless there is time given to meditation with watching and prayer. Faith fails, and hope grows dim, unless we dwell on the "precious promises," and on the faithfulness of the promising God. And love waxes cold unless our hearts muse on Him who "first loved us." To use the language of Jeremy Taylor, "This is a very great cause of the dryness and expiration of men's devotion, because our souls are so little refreshed with the waters and holy dews of meditation. We go to our prayers by chance, or order, or by determination of accidental occurrences, and we recite them as we read a book; and sometimes we are

sensible of the duty, and a flash of lightning makes the room bright, and our prayers end, and the lightning is gone, and we as dark as ever. We draw our water from standing pools, which never are filled but with sudden showers, and, therefore, we are dry so often; whereas, if we could draw water from the fountains of our Saviour, and draw them through the channel of diligent and prudent meditations, our devotion would be a continual current, and safe against the barrenness of frequent droughts." \*

In every wise and pious heart religious musings kindle a solemn joy. It is "sweet" to meditate on the Loving and Holy One—

" Sweet on Thy faithfulness to rest,  
Whose love can never end ;  
Sweet on Thy covenant of grace  
For all things to depend !

" Sweet, in the confidence of faith,  
To trust Thy truth divine ;  
Sweet to lie passive in Thy hands,  
And have no will but Thine !"

The heathen poets fabled that the top of Olympus, the seat of the gods, was always quiet and serene. And this we may say, not in fable but in truth, of the top of the mount of meditation, where the believer is with God, and comes even to His seat. It is not easy to climb the hill. A hundred distracting thoughts, and worldly

\* Life of Christ, Part I. Disc. iii.

cares, and devilish temptations, impede our way; but if we persevere, our meditation shall be sweet; on the top of the mount we shall say, "'Lord, it is good for us to be here,' for we behold Thy glory"—a cloud hides the earth from us, and we have a prospect upward, so clear and calm, that we could almost think ourselves in heaven.

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## II.

*The Analogies between the Old and the New Creation.*

ON the first page of the Bible we read of the old creation. A new creation is mentioned in other parts of Holy Writ, as wrought upon the souls of men. We think that in the order of the old, the course of the new may be traced. For our purpose it matters not whether the six days of the first chapter of Genesis are understood to be ordinary periods of twenty-four hours, in which, ages after the matter of the universe had been called into existence, this world was arranged, and furnished, and garnished for the habitation of man; or whether they be supposed to express long periods of time, corresponding to the "geological periods" of science, revealed to Moses in a sublime vision, and by him optically described—the fading light and the growing light of the successive dioramic scenes making an evening and a morning to the eye of the seer, and the divisions of time being therefore called by him "six days." Whatever be the interpretation of the term "days," our use of the Mosaic narrative is the same—to mark in it

a picture, or rather a sketch, of the order of that inward creation which "avails in Christ Jesus" to eternal life.

Before any change, natural or spiritual, there must needs be a groundwork laid. Now, before the changes of the six days began, a basis of change existed. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Before the change of regeneration begins, a basis is also laid in the sensitive and moral nature of man, the intelligence, the conscience, the emotions, and the will, whereon God's grace and truth are to work mightily. "By Him, and for Him, we are and were created."

Where, however, we might look for beauty and order, lo! there is chaos, disorder, with darkness on the deep. "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." No gray cloud was there, nor blue sky, nor green field, nor silver sea; no shores, no vales, no mountains. What a figure this of the dark and disordered soul of man before his new creation! He has no calm peace, nor lively hope, nor clear apprehension of spiritual religion—tossed by surging waves of fear and doubt—restless, dissatisfied—chaos and darkness in his breast!

Had the world been left to itself, it would, so far as we know, have continued in perpetual chaos, having no inherent power to mould, and vivify, and adorn itself. But lo! a Power of God was there. The life-giving "Spirit moved—brooded—on the face of the waters."

Thus there began to be warmth, with some token of a happier time; but as yet there was no light—darkness hung upon the deep. So, on the soul that God is about to regenerate, there is a moving of the Spirit, with solemn brooding wing—there is an awe from the Lord, a beginning of conviction, before any distinct ray of light has come to guide, and gladden, and transform.

The time had now arrived for God's good and beautiful work in the heaven and the earth. Then the first gift He bestowed, the first influence He introduced, was light—commanded to appear in words often noted for their sublimity, "And God said, Light be; and light was."

"Let there be light, said God; and forthwith light  
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,  
Sprung from the deep."

Who can imagine the startling change? On the great chaos light arose—all things began to be new. In like manner, God begins His new creation of the soul, by causing light to arise. The ignorance and self-deception which pertain to the state of darkness are rolled away, and truths break on the mind as they really are. The "Shorter Catechism" rightly teaches, that the beginnings of "effectual calling" are the conviction of sin and misery, and the enlightenment of the mind in the knowledge of Christ. And the words in which the apostle Paul describes his own spiritual enlightenment contain a distinct reference to the original

Divine gift of light to the world. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." \*

At the close of the first day or period known, the light shone on a chaos still. It was on the second day that order began to reign. A firmament appeared, and the waters were divided—watery vapours above, in thick, massy clouds, and waters beneath, covering the earth; for as yet no dry land was seen. Surely a change analogous to this takes place in the soul that God has enlightened—a new order begins where chaos was—the waters are divided—there is a separation of the higher affinities and capacities of the human spirit from those that are lower and more earthly. Whereas all hitherto was on one level, now there is elevation and aspiration in the character; there is a firmament in the soul—a change (if one may so speak) of its atmospheric conditions, so that there is a sky or a heaven as well as an earth. The unregenerate man has only an earth; but the regenerate has also a sky—a nether and an upper department of character—an earth and a heaven in the breast.

The third day continued the progress of order and revealed the dry land, and covered it with abundant specimens of vegetable life. Such also is the progress of the new creation in the mind and heart of man. A

\* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

new and various beauty is given to the character; where there was barrenness, there comes fertility; where there was nothing, life appears. Now is there tender grass of devotion, with the sweet herbs of pious desire, and the fruits, varied after their kind, of a new and loving obedience.

The fourth day disclosed to the eye of the seer "the lights in the firmament," which thenceforth were to illuminate the earth—the sun by day, and moon by night, and the stars also. It was the period of the organisation of light. So, in the continued progress of the soul's new creation, there ensues an habitual reign of light—light that may, indeed, be obscured thereafter by passing clouds of error or unbelief, but that can never be quenched in thick and hopeless gloom. Every man in Christ Jesus is a child of light, illuminated from above with light to rule the day, and light to rule the night. If he has the bright sunshine of God's favour in the day of success, he is not left in his night of sorrow without the gentle moon of consolation and the glistening stars of promise.

When the world was lit up with its heavenly lamps, it was made more and more to abound in creatures of life. This was the event of the fifth day—the great development of organic life. To this there is an obvious parallel in the increasing vitality of the new-created soul, which has received the light of life, and in all its character and powers becomes more alive unto God.

The enlightened Christian has life more and more abundantly, develops new energies, and, in all the higher relations of his being, gives signs of new activity.

The same development of life continued on the sixth day: then came Adam in the image of God, with dominion over all the earth, and all that lived on its surface. So with the soul which God has made the subject of His new creation; when it is enlightened, ordered, vivified, Christ the second Adam, the new man, the image of the invisible God, is formed within. This crowns the work of grace. "Christ in you, the hope of glory," takes possession of the soul, has dominion over all its parts and all its living powers, is the acknowledged Monarch of the character, the welcome Ruler of the clean heart and right spirit that God has created within.

In this the mighty change is complete. As in nature so in grace, the Lord will not at any point of imperfection forsake the work of His hands. He looks on His accomplished work, and behold it is very good. Then, as from Him came all the power that wrought such effects, to Him redounds all the praise. What hath God wrought! Every instance of His new-creating grace glorifies His name, gladdens His militant Church on earth, and His triumphant hosts in heaven. Then the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout for joy.

The figure of a man working and resting is employed

in Scripture to denote the procedure of Almighty God at the first creation. "God rested from all his work which he had made." After the same manner, the work of the new creation issues in sweet sabbatic rest. God, having "fulfilled all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power,"\* rests in His love, watching over the continued moral elevation and culture of the renewed heart. The people of God cease from their works as God did from His, and enter into rest. Then cometh the end—the new creation is consummate—Grace, grace unto it! It opened in Chaos, it ends in Paradise. It opened in a confused and dark abyss, it ends in Eden, a well-watered garden of "pleasures, at God's right hand for evermore."

\* 2 Thess. i. 11.

## III.

*The Lost God.*

LOST soul—lost peace—lost hope—lost innocence—lost happiness—lost heaven ; these are the terms often used to express the woe of man. A view of that woe, more sad and awful still, is suggested by the words, “a lost God.” When sin entered and made its home in the human breast, God departed—withdrew the strength and joy of His presence from the seed of evil-doers. Not only is man lost to God, God is lost to man—a stranger to his thoughts. It is true enough, that the human race has not been, in any place or time, devoid of religious ideas and instincts ; but such theologies and rituals as men have devised only serve to shew how darkened are their minds—how utterly they have lost the true light of God. They feel after Him, and know not how nor where to find Him. In the worship of many gods, and goddesses, and demigods, the heathen nations have sought to pacify their own accusing consciences, and to connect themselves with the unseen Infinitude ; but they could not reach to the Most High,



or by searching find Him out. The imaginations of philosophers, priests, and people, born in the most palmy days of heathenism, were vain, and their foolish hearts were darkened. The Gentiles, as an apostle affirms, had "no hope, and were without God in the world." \*

Alas! what more or better can we say of many in modern Christendom? This darkness is on their path, even as on the paths of the heathen. God may be honoured with the lips, but He is outcast from the thoughts and affections of a wicked and perverse generation. Now, it is in the tone of life and conversation that this fearful fact is betrayed. The "course of this world" moves without any serious reference to God. The current of life flows on without religion, which, indeed, is regarded, if not quite as an intrusion and burden, still as an exceptional and secondary thing. Business and study, toil and pleasure, politics and literature of this world—all are without God. The mind of man is averse to humble recognition of a Divine Being, or resignation to a Divine will. Busy thoughts people his brain, but no devout thought of God! Warm affections glow in his heart, but no thrill of love to God!

The life of the natural man may, indeed, be carefully guarded from all stains of gross, disreputable vice; and yet it lies open to the charge of utter ungodliness. God

\* Eph. ii. 12.

## THE LOST GOD.

is unknown, absent, lost. Earth seems the only reality, while heaven is regarded as a shadowy land, and the existence of heaven's Holy One little better than a shadowy imagination. This is the practical atheism which abounds: men live as they list; they are "without God in the world." This is the great woe of the human race. Men, so long as they continue irreligious, must suffer disorder and misery, for they have lost the Supreme Order and the Supreme Source of happiness. They have the name of God, the Word of God, and the house of God; and yet they have no God.

This is all the more shameful to man, since the surrounding creation, animate and inanimate, is not without God. The heavens declare His glory; the firmament shews His handywork. The earth displays His riches; so does the "great and wide sea." The countless creatures that people the land, and air, and waters, wait on God who gives them their meat in due season, and, in the ways appointed to them, render praise to Him. The stars in the sky, and the little flowers of the field, unite in witnessing for God.

*"The headlong torrents, rapid and profound,  
The softer floods that lead the humid maze  
Along the vale, and the majestic main,  
Sound His stupendous praise."*

There is not the same disjunction between God and creation, as there is between God and the chief of that creation, man. But here is the poignant misery. It

is man who was formed and qualified for communion with God; and now he has lost all—he has lost time and eternity, he has lost his better self—since he has lost God.

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him *while he is near.*”\* How has the lost God drawn near? Not with a voice of terror, shaking earth and heaven—not with thick clouds, hailstones, and coals of fire—not with sharp arrows or a glittering sword. His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. He came in a holy babe at Bethlehem, nursed in a virgin’s arms. He came as a gentle Teacher and Healer of men, walking to and fro through Judea and Galilee. He came very nigh to us in Jesus, the crucified Man of Calvary. At the cross God may be found, the lost Jehovah is near.

\* Isa. lv. 6.

## IV.

*The Soul Asleep.*

THE soul of the sinner is asleep. The spiritual powers and susceptibilities are deadened and benumbed. However awake and alert in earthly relations, the whole character is lethargic toward God and His eternal truth. The man who abides in sin has eyes but sees not, ears but hears not, neither does he understand with his heart. He is like one overtaken by intolerable drowsiness, who sleeps, amidst the snows of St Bernard, a quiet but fatal sleep.

He who sleeps is oblivious of the past, and ignorant of the present. So is the sinner—forgetful of the good impressions of days gone by, and heedless of the value of the time that now is—not knowing it to be “the accepted time.” His sleep is not altogether undisturbed. Natural conscience sometimes alarms, and the sleeping man turns and tosses on his bed; at times appears almost certain to awake, almost persuaded to be a Christian. But he mutters, “A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to

sleep," and stretches himself again upon the bed of irreligious indifference and sloth. There may be dreams of great activity, but still there is no movement; or a mere somnambulism, an outward mechanical activity, as of one who walks in sleep, while the spirit within is still torpid and insensible.

Some awake from spiritual sleep only to perish. Refusing to be wise in time, they discover their danger, with a start, when it is too late to seek salvation. In the very agony of their awakening they are lost. So is it with one who sleeps securely in his cabin at sea, and the ship suddenly founders, and he is drowned before he can even reach the deck.

"He wakes at the vessel's sudden roll,  
And the rush of waters is in his soul."

So it is with the somnambulist, who is comparatively safe while sleep continues, but may perish in the moment of sudden awaking. A young girl walked one night in sleep, came out through a window upon the house-top, and walked up and down the sloping roof with fearless step. No one knew how to rescue her from the fearful peril. Once and again she walked to the very edge of the roof, still asleep, and appeared to look over the verge. At that moment a light from an opposite window flashed across her eyes; she woke affrighted, and with a scream fell lifeless to the street. Such a waking of fear may await many who now walk

gaily and fearlessly through the world, locked in spiritual sleep.

There is a better awakening when the soul hears and obeys the effectual call of God—an awakening, not of fear but of faith—not of despair but of hope—not of horror but of joy and love. To know this by experience is the privilege of the sinner saved by grace; to awake and arise—to be startled in conviction, and to be raised into “newness of life.”

Alas! the soul of a saint, while on earth, may fall asleep. Drowsy influences creep over the Church, and overcome many that were truly awakened and converted to God. The three disciples who slept in the garden of Gethsemane are but sad types of Christians in every age, who cannot watch one hour. At times a languor or faintness creeps over pious hearts—the mind becomes torpid and forgetful, and its former zeal decays. On the bed of overmuch security the unwatchful Christian stretches himself, and soon falls fast asleep. And the Church stands still because of the self-pleasing lethargy of her members.

It is high time to awake out of sleep—to be alive to all the great interests of Immanuel’s kingdom, and to be intent on the hope and joy of His appearing. It is time to arise to the activities of the day of grace, and watch for the splendours of the day of glory. “Watchman! what of the night?” Our prophetic watchman, in the “burden of Dumah,” answered, “The morning

cometh, and also the night."\* But the apostolic watchman, in the service of Christ and the Church, cheerily answers, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."† These words ring like a morning bell, bidding us wake and work. All things begin to stir—the heavy clouds rise—the shadows flee away—the sun will soon be up—

"The shining day, that burnish'd plays  
On rocks, and hills, and towers, and wand'ring streams,  
High gleaming from afar!"

Would to God that the people of Christ were more wakeful than they are, and more sensible of the sweetness and dignity of living in and to their Lord! Is our salvation, in its final triumphs, drawing nearer every day? It is an argument for an increasing ardour of soul. As the runner strains every nerve and limb when he nears the end of the course, and the goal is in his eye—as the sailor forgets the hardships of his long and weary way across the sea, and works the ship with new zeal and sleepless care so soon as he scents the land breeze, or sees afar on the horizon the long expected shore—so should we, having hope in Christ, increase our diligence, hold ourselves on the alert, and press into the kingdom of God. So let us watch, and walk, and work, and wrestle, and pray, as those who are nearing the "inheritance of the saints in light," and would not lose it for worlds.

\* Isa. xxi. 11, 12.

† Rom. xiii. 12.

## V.

*The Threefold Conviction of the World.*

THE Holy Ghost, the Comforter or Paraclete, is sent to the Church, but His work is not confined to the hearts of believers. When He is come, He operates, as the Lord Jesus foretold, on "the world," convincing it "of sin, righteousness, and judgment."\*

The world is preyed upon by sin, and groans under its weight; yet indulges it, and dislikes to be reprov'd. Restraints there are for the prevention of flagrant offences—restraints of law, of conscience, of public opinion, and of self-respect. Yet by none of these is the world convinced of sin. It may condemn crime and bewail misery, but it has no sense of the base and dreadful character of sin as committed against the Throne of God and of the Lamb. The soul of the world is not pierced with contrition, nor the stiff neck of its will taught to bow, without the action upon it of a power from on high—the power of the Holy Ghost.

\* John xvi. 8-11.



Our Saviour, in speaking of the conviction of sin, avoided vague general charges, and specified the sin of unbelief. Human law can take no cognisance of this—natural conscience is slow to perceive any great evil in it; and were it not for the demonstration of its wickedness by the Divine Spirit, it might pass for no sin at all, whereas it is a root and mother of all sins. Unbelief is divinely exposed in its true character, as a sin the most base, committed against the love of God and of His dear Son—the most ruinous, as rejecting the very remedy for ruin offered in the gospel—and the most comprehensive, as including all blindness and hardness of heart, barring out the light of God's countenance and the sweetness of His salvation.

As the world knows not its sin, so it fails to form any true conception of righteousness. All the world's wisdom, before the descent of the "Comforter," knew nothing of this. Philosophy, poetry, the modes of religion, and the aspects of life, all were unable to teach or exemplify righteousness. The Divine law, indeed, prescribed the will of the perfectly Righteous One, and rebuked all unrighteousness of men. Yet they would not learn—the world was not convinced.

The Comforter has come to shew righteousness to the world; not its own righteousness, for it has none, but the righteousness of Him who has "gone to the Father." And as the sin of the world has been its want of faith, so it can obtain righteousness only

through faith. Unbelief and unrighteousness go together ; so do faith and righteousness.

Excellent are the words of the late Archdeacon Hare : —“ As the sin of which the Comforter came to convince the world, is of a totally different kind from every thing that the world calls sin—as it is a sin which the world, so long as it was left to itself, never dreamed of as such, nor does any heart, left to itself, so regard it—while yet it is the one great all-in-all of sin, the sin by which men are cut off and utterly estranged from God, the sin through which they grow downward toward hell instead of growing upward toward heaven ;—so, on the other hand, is the righteousness of which the Comforter came to convince the world, totally different in kind from every thing that the world accounts righteousness—a righteousness such as the world, in the highest raptures of its imagination, never dreamed of ; a righteousness, moreover, by which the effect of sin is done away, and man, hitherto cut off and estranged from God, is reunited and set at one with Him. The Comforter came not to convince the world of its own righteousness ; one might as fitly convince a cavern at midnight of light. The Comforter is the Spirit of truth, and can only convince of the truth. But the world’s righteousness is a lie, hollow as a whited sepulchre, tawdry as a puppet in a show. . . . Christ’s going to the Father was indeed the fullest, completest, most damnatory of all proofs of the world’s

unrighteousness and iniquity. It was the proof that Him, whom the world condemned, God justified; that the stone, which the builders rejected, God made the Head-stone of the corner; that Him, whom the world had lifted up on high on a cross of shame, God lifted up on high to a throne of glory in the heavens; that Him, whom the world cast out, nailing Him between two thieves, God took to Himself, and set Him in the heavenly places far above all principality and power. But, while Christ's going to the Father was a proof of the unrighteousness and desperate wickedness of the world, it was also a proof of righteousness—namely, of His own pure and perfect and spotless righteousness. It was a proof that He was the Holy One who could not see corruption. It was a proof that he could not possibly be holden by death any more than it would be possible to hold the sun by a chain of darkness; and therefore that, as Death, the ghastly shadow which ever follows inseparably at the heels of Sin, fled from His presence, He must needs be also without sin. It was a proof that, while the world 'desired a murderer to be granted to them,' He whom they denied was the Holy One and the Just."\*

To these sentences we need add nothing. The Comforter has come to demonstrate to the world the righteousness of the ascended Saviour—righteousness alike in His personal character and in His public

\* Mission of the Comforter, pp. 129, 130. American edition.

representative position as the Substitute and Surety of sinners. He is "the end of the law for righteousness to every believer"—righteousness to clothe, as with white raiment, those who now pine and shiver in the nakedness of their sins.

The world also needs to be convinced of judgment—to feel that God cannot be mocked—that under His government evil has no impunity—that the evil will inevitably be condemned and cast out, while the good shall prevail and triumph. The world has not, of its own wisdom, reached this conviction. No terrors of Divine or human law—no miseries of the vicious—no testimonies of past history, have sufficed to convince the world of judgment. But the Holy Spirit convinces by this evidence—"The prince of this world is judged." The prince of this world is no rightful sovereign, but a usurper and tyrant—"the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." His commands are these—"Thou shalt have as many gods as thou wilt, or no god at all, according to thy pleasure. Thou shalt have images, and any mode of worship that thou wilt, provided only that Christian simplicity be corrupted. Thou shalt take the name of God in vain. Thou shalt break the Sabbath. Thou shalt dishonour thy parents. Thou shalt kill. Thou shalt commit adultery. Thou shalt steal. Thou shalt lie. Thou shalt covet." Such are the ten commands of the prince of this world. Especially he opposes himself to Christ, the Prince of Life; and

as God has uttered a New Testament command—"That we believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ"—the prince and god of this world has dared to utter a counter-command, saying, "Ye shall not believe!"

But this prince is judged. The whole manifestation of Christ, in His birth, in His holy life, and in His miracles, especially His mastery over unclean spirits, was a discomfiture of the prince of this world. At last, the lifting up of the Redeemer to die—which seemed to be a victory for the Evil One—proved to be his utter defeat. "Through death, Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."\* It is too true that the prince of this world is still at work in the hearts and homes of men; though judged, he is not yet bound, as he is to be; but the contest between good and ill is virtually decided. The Seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head.

Now, to minds convinced of the sin of unbelief and of the righteousness of Him who has gone to the Father, the Holy Spirit carries home this lesson also—that the prince of this world is judged, and that all who walk after the "course of this world" are included in the same condemnation.

On these three points—sin, righteousness, and judgment—the world now, as much as ever, needs strong and deep convictions. Religious sermons, and books that please the taste, but do not search and enlighten the consciences of men, are preached and written in vain.

\* Heb. ii. 14.

Preaching and writing should be faithful and fearless, and prayer should be made continually for the arresting and convicting operations of the Holy Ghost.

It is interesting to observe that conviction is attributed to the Comforter; so has it comfort, if not wrapped in its bosom, certainly close upon its steps. Are we convinced of unbelief? There is no cause to despair. Christ freely pardons all who truly repent of that sin, and grants His grace to every one who says, with sincerity, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." The conviction of righteousness carries consolation too. Jesus is "the Lord our righteousness;" and if we cast away the sin of unbelief, His righteousness is ours by faith. The conviction of judgment, too,—the judgment of the prince of this world—has strong consolation for those who desire deliverance from his cruel yoke. As the conviction of righteousness connects with the justification of believers, so the conviction of judgment connects with their sanctification. They are tempted to evil by the prince of this world, and are at times so sore beset that their hearts begin to fail, and they almost despair of ever being holy. What comfort, then, in the conviction that the prince of this world is judged! The king of the house of bondage is defeated. Jehovah hath judged him. Jesus hath destroyed his power in the Red Sea. The friends of Jesus shall partake of all His victory. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."\*

\* Rom. xvi. 20.

## VI.

*The Divine Education of the Church.*

THE education of the Church has been gradual. Long time she was treated as "under age," placed under restraints, subjected to a minute ritualistic training, taught by line on line, precept on precept, initiated by slow degrees into "the mysteries of God." It is true that piety of disposition was attainable in a very high degree, and actually attained, in the days of old; but even in pious minds religious knowledge was limited, for the Church was yet in her elementary education. Many things might have been told to her which were not told, for the Lord perceived that she could not bear them then.

When the Old Testament education was fulfilled, and devout persons—alas! too few—were "waiting for the consolation of Israel," John the Baptist appeared to prepare the way of the Lord. Then Jesus came, acknowledged even by such a one as Nicodemus to be a "teacher come from God;" and immediately the higher and more spiritual education of the Church began. In

the sermon on the mount—in the parables—in His answers to His enemies—in those occasional sayings of His wisdom and love which distilled as the drops of dew—and in the discourse delivered after the Last Supper, the Lord Christ gave to the Church an immense supply of new thoughts, of truly Divine conceptions. Yet the disciples who heard Him were slow of heart, and the multitude still more dull and prejudiced. Accordingly, the Master saw meet not to express all the truth, or bearings of the truth, but to inclose much in figures and enigmatic sayings, not to be understood till after His death and resurrection. So long as His followers were children in understanding, Christ fed them with milk, not with strong meat. With calm penetration of their mental and moral state, He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." \*

The unfinished education of His Church our Lord has committed to the Holy Spirit. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." † This continues from age to age—the Spirit, who abides with the disciples, ever developing and revealing more and more truth, out of the Word, bringing latent or neglected doctrines to the vivid apprehension of Christian minds, carrying forward to perfection the Divine education of the Church.

It cannot be denied that gross heresies have arisen,

\* John xvi. 12, 13.

† Ibid.



and that the Church has again and again lost hold of truths once firmly grasped. But gross heresies have never been accepted by minds that were spiritually taught, and truths lost by Christendom have been lost only for a time. The history of great doctrines amply sustains the general statement, that the Church is educated by degrees. These doctrines all are inclosed in the Bible, but did not at once shine out before the eye of the Church. The Christian Church could not bear them all at once—had not sufficient breadth of capacity, or ripeness of spiritual judgment. Accordingly, they have been evolved, one by one, generally in connexion with severe controversies, and through the instrumentality of individual men, to whom the Spirit gave a special insight into particular truths. Thus the calling of the Gentiles into the fellowship of the Church was not apparent to the minds of the first disciples till it was divinely revealed to Simon Peter, and thereafter clearly established by the arguments of Paul, and by the decision of the Christian Council of Jerusalem.\* In like manner the doctrines of the Holy Trinity, of original sin, sovereign grace, the atonement, and justification by faith, though easily pointed out by us on the pages of the Bible, were not so clearly seen there from the beginning. But the Spirit of truth enabled and employed Athanasius to bring out the teaching of Scripture regarding the Tri-Unity of God—Augustine

\* Acts x., xi., xiii., xv.

tine to expound and establish the sovereign grace of God and the original sin of man—Anselm to elucidate the nature and necessity of our Lord's propitiatory sacrifice—and Martin Luther to revive, with power, the ancient doctrine of the apostles regarding justification by faith.

The Divine education of the individual follows the same general rule. The soul cannot bear to know all truths at once; and he who thinks he knows all, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. The mind of the true Christian must never lose its docility; for only on the docile and submissive mind the most sublime truths are evolved, in due order and course, out of Holy Writ, by the Spirit of truth sent down from heaven. New light falls on old truths; and others, never perceived before, shine out to view, often for the first time, in some night of weeping—

“ Night brings out stars, so sorrow shews us truths.”

The chief function of the educating, enlightening Spirit of truth is to shew “the things of Christ,” in which are included all our Lord's personal excellences and saving qualifications. These are declared in the Bible, but are never deeply known or appreciated until shewn by the Holy Ghost. He discovers Christ, in His person, as very God and very man; in His Messiahship, His love, His power, His gentleness, His zeal, His sin-bearing, His victory, His resurrection, ascension, intercession, and coming again to judge the quick and dead.

These things are not taught at once, and once for all. The Spirit leads us farther and farther into the knowledge of Christ, while we undergo the discipline and training of an actual religious life. Are we crushed under a sense of sin? He shews us the wounds of our Propitiation on the cross, and the power of our Advocate on high. Are we in sickness? He shews us the grace and skill of our good Physician. Are we in tribulation? He shews us the faithful Promiser and unfailing Friend. Are we drooping or downcast in heart? He bids us lift our eyes and see the Beloved leaping on the mountains, hasting to our help. Are we at the Lord's Supper? He enables us to discern the Lord's body, and to know our Master in the breaking of bread. Are we on our deathbed? He shews us the Conqueror of death, and bids us hear His voice, saying, "Fear not; I am the First and the Last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades and of death."\*

There is yet more to be said regarding the "things of Christ" shewn by the Spirit of truth. Thus spake the Saviour: "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew unto you."† The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; nevertheless, they are described in Scripture as

\* Rev. i. 17, 18.

† John xvi. 15.

observing a gradation, or even subordination, one to the other, in the plan and work of human redemption. Such subordination is not of any inherent necessity (so far as we may judge), but by arrangement; not essential, but economical and manifestative. In this manner the Son is represented as receiving from and submissive to the Father; the Spirit as receiving from and submissive to the Son. The Divine Father is the source, the Divine Son is the channel, and the Divine Spirit is the applier or impartor of redemption. The "all things"—the plenitude of grace—we read of as primarily possessed by the Father: "All things that the Father hath;" "My Father worketh hitherto." In the fulness of time the Father sent the Son, commissioned Him to be the Saviour of men; and then committed to Him the "all things," that He might be the representative of the Father, work the Father's works, and accomplish the Father's will. This was often expressed by our Lord: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father;" "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."\* The Son came to save: as the messenger of the Father, announcing His will; the servant of the Father, finishing His work; the gift of the Father, evincing His love; the witness for the Father, glorifying His name; and the trustee of the Father, holding and exercising His plenitude of power and grace. The words of Paul, "It pleased the Father that in him

\* See also John v. 19, 20, 26, xii. 49, 50.

should all fulness dwell," are in exact harmony with our Lord's own words, "All things that the Father hath are mine."

When the Son had finished His work, and gone up to the excellent glory, having received of the Father all power in heaven and in earth, He sent the Paraclete—the Holy Ghost was "shed forth." Then the "all things" committed by the Father to the Son were by the Son committed to the Spirit, and by Him are now shewn to the Church, and imprinted on the minds and hearts of individual believers. "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Thus the education of the Church is accomplished after a manner truly sublime. All grace and truth descend from Father to Son, from Son to Holy Ghost, and by the Holy Ghost are immediately revealed and imparted to human souls, elect of God. Then glory ascends, praise redounds from the Church of the enlightened and saved by the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father. In the glory of the Father all the results of the redemptive dispensation are gathered up, as from the love of the Father they flowed. "Then cometh the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father."\*

\* 1 Cor. xv. 24.

## VII.

*The Isolation of the Heart.*

EVERY human being is new, without exact precedent or counterpart. No two human histories, no two human characters, entirely correspond. So vast are the resources of the Creator, that He never repeats Himself, even in forming generation after generation—millions of men. As every face or every form, so also every mind, every heart is a new product, and no copy of any that pre-existed or that co-exists. Every one has a course of experience and a way in life special to himself—his own, and not another's. There is such a community between man and man as lays a basis for confidence, friendship, sympathy; but even where there is a very cordial reciprocation of feeling, there is, there must be, an individual inviolability, without which, indeed, there could be no liberty, no dignity—perhaps no personal virtue.

Unreserved confession to a fellow-man is not only an impropriety, but an impossibility. I might tell to a "ghostly father" all the sins my memory retains or my

language can express; but there is in me still that which is incommunicable. I cannot expose my quivering heart; and, if I could, my fellow-man could not look upon it. Jehovah only knows the heart. To search the hidden recesses of man is His prerogative. As John Foster finely said, "Each mind has an interior apartment of its own, into which none but itself and the Divinity can enter. In this secluded place the passions mingle and fluctuate in unknown agitations. Here projects, convictions, vows, are confusedly scattered, and the records of past life are laid. Here, in solitary state, sits Conscience, surrounded by her own thunders, which sometimes sleep and sometimes roar, while the world does not know."

"The heart knoweth its own bitterness"—but one heart cannot adequately express its grief to any other.

"Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,  
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh."

The heart thirsts for sympathy, yet feels that it must sorrow alone. Did not this appear in the "Man of sorrows acquainted with grief?" He sought the society and sympathy of His familiar followers, Peter, James, and John, when in the garden "He began to be sore amazed, and very heavy." And yet He was alone in His agony. The disciples understood Him not. They even fell asleep while He, isolated from all men, went forward a little space alone, and, in the "bitterness" of His soul, fell on the ground and prayed.

Bitterness of grief such as Jesus felt no one knows, or can possibly endure. But in every serious distress we, too, have a craving for sympathy, and yet a necessity to be alone. And, indeed, the more intense the grief, the more we have it to ourselves. Let the spirit be pierced to the quick, or stirred to its depths, and no human being can suffice to be its comforter. Hannah knew her own bitterness, but Eli knew it not; and instead of comforting, gave her a rash, unjust rebuke. Job knew his own bitterness; but the friends who came to visit him in his affliction little knew how his wounded spirit should be healed. Perhaps there is no man of a deep emotional nature, who has been in much affliction, that has not found the sympathetic expressions of fellow-mortals, though perfectly well intended, yet hackneyed and unsatisfying—just because entire reciprocity between heart and heart is, in the present life, impossible.

“One writes, that ‘other friends remain,’  
That ‘loss is common to the race’—  
And common is the commonplace,  
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

“That loss is common would not make  
My own less bitter, rather more;  
Too common! Never morning wore  
To evening but some heart did break!”

No sympathy is sufficient for the human heart but that of the Lord Jesus. He knows what is in man;



He looks upon the heart ; He never misunderstands our case; and, whatever our peculiarity of temperament, He is skilful to provide the very relief or consolation that we need. The depth of His tenderness is not more wonderful than its perfect adaptation to minds of different orders, and of different degrees of strength and sensibility. For a sorrow that utters itself in words, there is the Saviour's open ear; for that which may be soothed by words, there are the Saviour's lips, pouring out "gracious words;" for that which cannot speak, which is silent, tearful, Mary-like, there are drops of consummate sympathy—there are the Saviour's tears !

The heart is isolated, not only in its sorrow, but also in its joy; no "stranger intermeddled" therewith. Especially is this true of the "joy in the Lord." It cannot be known without personal religious experience. Unconverted persons may read of the "pleasures of piety," but are unable to form any just opinion regarding them, and very often sneer at them, out of sheer ignorance, as delusive or fanatical. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."\* But one who traverses the field, and lights on no treasure, cannot understand that joy of the treasure-finder—sympathises not, intermeddles not therewith.

Sometimes the young Christian is surprised to find

\* Matt. xiii. 44.

that he seems to stand so much alone; his ardent feelings are not shared by others. But it is with the heart's joys as with the heart's bitterness. One needs not look for any perfect sympathy. It is no new thing for those who rejoice greatly in God's service to be misunderstood. King David's own wife scorned and mocked his pious exultation. She despised him in her heart, and she mocked him to his face. Michal had "loved David," but she was a stranger to the highest and deepest joys of the royal Psalmist's heart.\*

Every one who has any real spiritual experience knows that he has something which he can, something also which he cannot tell. For the glory of God and the good of the Church let there be an avowal of mercy received; but let it be made discreetly, delicately, humbly. Such declarations are not for the ears of the ungodly. These are strangers, who must not intermeddle with our joy. The often-quoted language of Psalm lxvi. is addressed to those only who could understand the feelings of a devout mind: "Come and hear, *all ye that fear God*, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." But when the declaration is made, there remains much untold. As great griefs are silent, so also are the greatest joys. The most sacred emotions are not to be "wrapped in coarse weeds of words," and paraded before every curious eye. An awe of God casts a chastening veil of silence over the most perfect

\* 2 Sam. vi. 16, 20-23.

bliss. The joy that flows through the new heart is not a babbling, shallow brook, but a deep, placid stream, moving softly beneath the shady trees.

In joy as in sorrow we find the only consummate sympathy in Jesus. Thus the Church describes Him, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem! . . . I am my Beloved's, and his desire is toward me!" \*

\* Cant. v. 16, vii. 10.

## VIII.

*The Mysteries of God.*

“MYSTERY” is a Greek word. In our language it is employed to characterise something strange, dark, incomprehensible; but this is not its meaning in the New Testament. No passage can be quoted where this word denotes a curious or inscrutable secret; and no Scriptural warrant exists for the superstitious application of the term to religious rites, as when the elements in the Lord’s Supper are called “the Holy Mysteries.” Indeed, the term “mystery” belongs not to rites at all, but to facts and truths; and it has been correctly defined as “a sacred thing, hidden or secret, which is naturally unknown to human reason, and becomes known only by the revelation of God.” The Scripture calls that truth a mystery which it entered not into the human heart to conceive, and which was for ages hid from human cognisance, but in due time Divinely revealed. The essential idea is, not inscrutable difficulty of comprehension, but discovery to human minds by superhuman wisdom; and the “mysteries of God,”

of which the ministers of Christ are "stewards,"\* are not the unrevealed, unfathomable depths of the Divine being and perfections, but the revealed truths concerning God, His government, and all His ways of justice and kindness with the sons of men.

At the same time, so much of the popular idea regarding mysteries is to be retained, that we apply the title, not to all religious truths, but to those of a grand and impressive character—truths that transcend the unassisted human conceptions, and which, while revealed and understood in the *fact* of them, are yet, in the *manner* of them, far above us, and out of our sight.

Men have been, and are, who reject all mysteries as superstitions, and repudiate all supernatural religion. This is strange enough; for the same men are compelled every day to believe things the *rationale* of which they do not understand. Who among us really knows how a blade of grass springs, or how each herb preserves its peculiar scent, or how the sunlight stimulates the growth of plants? Yet the facts are believed on sufficient evidence. There is mystery in a flower that blows as truly as in a star that burns. The old schoolmen said, "Omnia exeunt in mysterium;" and truly there is nothing known which does not reach out into the unknown—nothing exists the absolute ultimum of which is not lost in mystery.

\* 1 Cor. iv. 1.

Let us distinguish between the "Quid" and the "Quomodo." We must needs ascertain the "What," the import of that which we are asked to believe, and the evidence by which it is attended ; but the "How," the *rationale*, may not be within the range of our present mental powers. Let reason have all her due province in relation to revealed religious truths. No man can be asked to receive or reject a doctrine alleged to be from God until he understands the terms of the proposition in which it is conveyed ; but the understanding of the proposition does not necessarily imply that we can define with mathematical exactness all its terms and boundaries. Reason is an inquirer, and has an important function to perform in investigating the force of evidence and the import of documents, but is not to decide on the truth or falsehood of what is taught or revealed by its own preconceptions and alleged intuitions, which may be no better than prejudices. Let reason reject whatever is found to be without adequate evidence, or to involve a contradiction in terms ; but let it not presume to reject any doctrine or fact on the ground that the *rationale* of it is not comprehended, as if it sat on the bench in a Supreme Court of Appeal. Human faculties cannot grasp infinite relations ; the mind of man cannot "by searching find out God."

This is not all. Mysteries are not only admissible, but necessary to a true religion. It is vain to say that they are not characteristic of true religion ; because all

religions, even the most corrupt and degrading, have set forth mysteries to impress and control the multitude. Such a mode of attack on the Christian mysteries is grossly unjust. No analogy exists between the pretended mysteries of Paganism and Popery on the one side, and those of Christianity on the other. The mysteries of ancient Paganism were secrets jealously preserved, to maintain the influence of the idols and the priesthood; and they were very often celebrated with rites and practices of vile impurity. What is there in common between such abominable inventions and the mysteries of the pure and holy Christian faith? Equally unfair is it to compare the latter with the false mysteries of Popery, of which the most prominent is the astounding dogma of Transubstantiation. This is not a mystery at all, but an arrant contradiction. The Council of Trent thunders forth: "*Si quis negaverit, in venerabili sacramento eucharistiæ, sub unaquaque specie, et sub singulis cujusque speciei partibus, separatione facta, totum Christum contineri; anathema sit.*" But that the body of Christ—a body having "flesh and bones," having a definite extent, circumference, and finitude—is literally and actually, at the same moment, in heaven and in earth, on a thousand altars at once, in every crumb of every consecrated wafer, and every drop of consecrated wine,—all this is no mystery of faith, but a contradiction which has and can have no evidence, and which no "anathema" can

compel a sane man really to believe. One may shut his eyes to its real nature—may bow himself to acknowledge it—may say “Yes” to the dogmatic assertion; but no man can force his own spirit to believe self-contradictory ideas. The mysteries of the Bible are not so. They claim belief on evidence, as contained in a well-authenticated revelation from God; and they involve no contradiction, bidding no man to receive them at the cost of violating the first principles of his intellectual and moral nature.

Such are the mysteries, which we affirm to be essential to a true religion. Man cannot give a religion to himself, transparent and complete; he cannot find his way up the awful steeps toward the Divine Perfection. Religion is learned by revelation of God, by the voluntary communication of the Infinite with the finite. The idea of God as “infinite” necessarily involves the existence of mysteries. From Him they proceed; in Him they centre. And in so far as we have religion, or come into relation to the Infinite One, we must walk on the margin of the incomprehensible—we must sail on the bosom of a sea whose depths our longest plummets cannot sound.

Religious truths have not sprung to light in the mind of man, but have been radiated forth from the God of truth, at such times and in such measures as have seemed good to His inscrutable wisdom. Hidden from the Pagan world—hidden, in a great degree, even



from the Church of the Old Testament—they were brought to light by the Gospel. Such are the cardinal doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the work of the Holy Ghost, and the resurrection of the dead. They are so numerous as to check the presumptuous mind; they are not so numerous as to discourage any humble inquirer. The mysteries and the simplicities go hand-in-hand in Revelation. To use the words of Chateaubriand, "Ce qu'il y a de véritablement ineffable dans l'Écriture, c'est ce mélange continuuel des plus profonds mystères et de la plus extrême simplicité, caractères d'où naissent le touchant et le sublime."\*

For the study of "the mysteries of God" we need a humble heart, since nothing is more blinding than pride. Every one knows that the most successful students of God's works have been men of a lowly and childlike spirit. The same observation applies to the study of God's Word. The most truly enlightened and religious spirits are the most ready to acknowledge ignorance, and the most impregnated with sincere docility.

We also need a loving heart. Love is the wisest interpreter of the revelation of God. The sky—to take an illustration well employed by Vinet on this very point—is garnished with millions of stars, sparkling through the night; but a blind man sees them not, and forms no conception of their beauty. Another

\* Génie de Christianisme.

sky overshadows us in Holy Scripture, with stars of truth shining from the azure depths; but the blind and carnal heart perceives them not. There must be an eye of the heart, and that eye is *love*. The loving heart beholds the mystic stars.

## IX.

*The Rod of Christ's Strength.*

THE deliverer Moses, called of God in Midian, went down into Egypt without pretence or pomp, leading the ass that bore his wife and little ones. But though he seemed a poor weak old shepherd, he was mightier than all Egypt, for the Lord was with him. He came to scourge the most powerful kingdom of the world that then was, and to set an enslaved nation free. Warranted to do this by a Divine command, he was equipped with Divine might and strength. "And Moses took the rod of God in his hand."\* This rod was no other than the simple shepherd's crook, which Moses had with him on Mount Horeb when he tended Jethro's flock. It pleased God to connect with that rod a miracle-working power, saying, "Thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs."† From that hour, Moses regarded his pastoral crook as invested with sacred dignity and worth, and called it "the rod of God." This rod he stretched over the Red

\* Exod. iv. 20.

† Exod. iv. 17.

Sea, and the waters were divided; he stretched it out again, and the waters returned to their place. With this rod he smote the rock in Horeb, and a copious stream gushed forth. This rod also he lifted up to heaven till the going down of the sun, when he abode all day long on the top of the hill, sustained by Aaron and Hur, till Joshua had defeated Amalek with the edge of the sword, and from the tents of Israel rose the shouts of victory, echoing among the rocks, and resounding far over the desert plains.

Herein is illustrated a principle on which all Divine deliverances proceed. The means and instruments are, to outward appearances, feeble and inadequate, but "the excellency of the power is of God," and the results which He intends are sure. The shepherd's crook was a feeble thing as "the rod of Moses," but it was mighty as "the rod of God." In like wise, the gospel is a feeble thing as the word of man, but it is mighty—even omnipotent—as it is, "in truth, the word of God."

As Moses came without pomp on an errand of judgment and mercy, on a mission of redemption, so came Jesus to the world, so comes Jesus to the heart—without noise or ostentation, but mighty to save. Do you ask for a sign that He is sent of God? Ask it not. While He dwelt and ministered on earth, He indeed wrought signs and wonders before many witnesses, and appealed to them in attestation of His Divine mission, saying, "Believe me for the very works' sake." But no longer

are such signs given. No miracles are wrought on outward nature, or on the bodies of mankind. We have that which is better and greater than signs. "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."\*

The doctrine of His Holy Word, especially the truth of His "dying love," is that rod of Christ's strength which does exploits. It is "sent out of Zion"† for judgment and for mercy. It is to subdue Christ's enemies, and to rule His willing people in His day of power. "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."‡

Though preachers of the Gospel are weak, their weapon is mighty through God. It was no power of Moses, but the power of God with Moses, that punished Pharaoh, and delivered Israel. So with the rod of Christ's strength. It is administered now by feeble hands, wielded by sinful men. But it is none the less a rod of strength, a divider among men, for it is the truth of the Most High, and is accompanied by "the demonstration of the Spirit and power."§ It is that

\* 1 Cor. i. 22-24.

† Isa. xi. 4.

‡ Ps. cx. 2.

§ 1 Cor. ii. 4.

instrument whereby the Holy Ghost, applying the redemption by Christ, works mighty changes in the moral world, devastating the kingdom of evil, and rescuing from cruel bondage the Church of the First-born—the "sacramental host of God's elect."

## X.

*The Urim and Thummim.*

THE high priest in Israel bore the names of the twelve tribes on his shoulders and on his breastplate, engraved on precious stones. The Lord Jesus, "our High Priest over the house of God," sets His people as a seal upon His breast, and a seal upon His arm. He bears the Church on the shoulders of His strength, not only before the face of man, but even before the face of God. He also carries the Church upon his breast, as the object of His love—binds believers to Himself with the golden chains of His everlasting faithfulness.

On his breastplate, the high priest in the ancient sanctuary bore the "Urim and Thummim." What these precisely were no one knows; but it is certain that, through means of these, the Divine will was communicated to the high priest in solemn emergencies. In the days of the theocracy, the Most High, as the King of Israel, gave audience to His chief minister in the secret place of His pavilion, and transmitted through him His commands to His loyal subjects, the thousands

of Israel. The words, "Urim and Thummim" ("lights and perfections"), appear to have denoted the clearness of the directions given to the high priest, and the perfect rectitude and wisdom of the decisions he was accordingly enabled to pronounce.

In the highest sense, the Urim and Thummim are possessed by the "High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." To this very symbol St Paul may have alluded when he wrote, "In whom (Christ) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."\* Among other names of grace and glory, our Lord has this from the pen of the prophet, "His name shall be called, Counsellor."† His counsels are all good and perfect. He had and has the most complete insight into the purposes of Heaven, and into the cares and wants of all the children of men. He needs not that any should testify of man, for He knows what is in man. He needs not that any should tell Him what is in God, for He knows what is in God. His knowledge is infinite, His wisdom is consummate; and we are to receive, not only healing by His stripes, and pardon through His blood, but also the law at His mouth; we are to learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, that we may find rest to our souls.

The guidance which Israel's high priest obtained by Urim and Thummim, and communicated to the people, was confined to great national occasions. But Christ

\* Col. ii. 3.

† Isa. ix. 6.



is able and willing to give to His people who humbly ask Him, Divine direction in all the detailed difficulties and perplexities of personal and family life. As many as rest upon the value of His sacrifice, and hope in His continual intercession, receive freely the light of His Spirit, whereby they understand the Scriptures, and are moulded in disposition, and speech, and conduct according to the will of God. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps ; but the Christian man has Christ, the Wonderful Counsellor, on whom to lean—has in Christ, the Urim and Thummim, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, at his prayerful command ; so that he cannot fatally err from the way of truth and rectitude. Safely he is guided through the trials of the outer and the temptations of the inner life, till he is taken up, through death's dark gate, into the presence of the High Priest, to join the fair ranks of those whom He has made kings and priests to God, even His Father—who shall reign for ever and ever.

## XI.

*Offence in Christ.*

THE Rock of salvation has ever been to many minds "a stumblingstone and rock of offence." The blessed Redeemer, while He dwelt among men, knew perfectly that many were "offended in Him"—was well aware of the opposition to His character and claims—and yet was not careful to reply to all objections—was content to appeal to those positive evidences of His healing power and saving grace which might suffice to convince an honest judgment—leaving opportunity to others to question and cavil as they pleased. In this lies an obvious analogy between the Incarnate Word and the written Word of God. Neither in the manifestation and life of the one, nor in the structure and language of the other, has provision been made against all possible offences. On the contrary, the claims of Jesus Christ, like the claims of the Bible, are so put forth as to try the spirit of man—not compelling assent as by a mechanical necessity—not rendering cavil and objection impossible—but clothed in such evidence as

will test the moral fairness of each responsible human mind.

The offence in Christ taken by the ancient Jews is carefully recorded by the Evangelists for our admonition and warning; for men of the same dispositions with those Jews exist among us, and are as much offended as ever in the Lord Jesus. There never were more Pharisees and Sadducees than now. The Pharisees are they to whom religion is a matter of self-righteousness, or churchmanship, or laborious routine. The Sadducees are they by whom religion is frittered away in scepticism, intellectual vanity, and "philosophy falsely so called." To them must be added the large class of men to whom religion is a deathbed shadow, and temporal success the only substance; for the most numerous sect in Christendom is the sect of the worldlings, and the heresy most in vogue is the practical one of secularism in all the feelings of the heart, and all the aims and labours of the life.

The following were the chief causes of offence found in the blessed Saviour of old time, and they are the same in substance as those which prejudice many minds and hearts against Him at the present hour:—

1. *The constitution of His person as the God-man.*  
—At whatever time the truth concerning our Lord as "the only-begotten of the Father," or as "God manifested in the flesh," was affirmed, the Jews were offended in Him. When, on a certain day, they "took up stones

to stone Him," it was on this charge, "For blasphemy, because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." There is evidence that almost any other claim on our Lord's part would have been admitted, if He had suppressed the claim of Divinity. The people received Him as a great prophet, and were more than once ready to make Him their king. But His assertion of His Divine Sonship ruined His popularity, and finally occasioned His condemnation to death in the court of the high priest. Before Pilate He was accused of treason;\* but before Caiaphas, the charge on which the Redeemer was condemned was blasphemy. "The high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes," &c.† Thus the Jewish ecclesiastics were offended in the Lord Jesus, because of the assertion of the truth regarding His person as at once the Son of the Blessed and the Son of man. But He went to death rather than compromise that truth.

Is not this an offence that continues to the present hour? If we now say that Jesus Christ, the Son of man, was and is the Son of the blessed God, and that the Son and the Father are one,‡ are there not some ready to charge us with folly, perhaps with blasphemy?

\* Luke xxiii. 2.

† Mark xiv. 61-64.

‡ John x. 30.

Do not the Arians and Socinians, the whole body of those who have assumed the title of Unitarians, just prolong the very "offence" taken by the unbelieving Jews? Ask them to say precisely "who the Son of man is," and their answers will vary as much as did those of the Jews reported by the disciples.\* Make any claim for Christ other than that of Deity, and many of them will hasten to concede it, and vie with you in eulogistic and almost adoring language applied to the Holy Jesus. But let us affirm that the Son of man is the co-equal Son of the Blessed—let us say, with the Apostle John, "This is the true God, and Eternal Life," and straightway they resist us, and are offended in Him. The apostle of Unitarianism is Caiaphas.

2. *The lowly state in which the Lord Jesus lived, and in which the Christian Church took its beginning.* The meek and lowly Saviour, walking through the land in humble guise, unnoticed by the magnates of this world, attended by a few fishermen and peasants and poor women, in no respect met the ambitious wishes of His countrymen, and they were "offended in Him." In "His own country," they said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, and his sisters, are they not all with us? . . . And they were offended in him."† Now it had been easy for the Son of the Blessed to have chosen His human birth in a higher station of life than that of

\* Matt. xvi. 14.

† Matt. xiii. 55-57.

"the carpenter's house," and His early human home at Jerusalem, rather than at the proverbially despised town of Nazareth—but He did not see meet to obviate all occasion of offence. It pleased Him to take the form of a servant, though He was Lord of all. It pleased Him even to be of Galilee, out of which "cometh no prophet."

The obscure condition of Christ's first disciples increased this occasion of offence. The Jewish ecclesiastics and the whole sect of the Pharisees were especially influenced by this; for they felt, and took no pains to conceal, an arrogant contempt for the common people. Witness their reply to "the officers," who had refrained from arresting Jesus, because never man spake like Him—"Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed."\*

This prejudice against a lowly Saviour, a companion of the poor, a friend of the common people, has never ceased. Advantage was taken of it by the early heathen opponents of Christianity. Thus Celsus, who anticipated so many of the scoffs and gibes of modern infidels, remarked with a sneer—men, "woollen manufacturers, shoemakers, curriers, and the like, the most uneducated and boorish men, are zealous advocates of this religion—men who cannot open their mouths before the learned."† In fact, nothing could reconcile

\* John vii. 45-49.

† Quoted by Neander.

the proud Jewish sectaries, and equally proud Gentile sceptics, to the thought, that from a "carpenter's house" should issue the Saviour of the world, and that poor and unlearned men should persevere to convert nations, and establish on earth a "kingdom of heaven." In our own times, this old offence continues to be felt. It is shewn in the boastful language of some who affect an air of superiority and patronage toward the apostles of our Lord, if not our Lord Himself. It is shewn, too, in the foolish desire to connect the Church with a social exclusiveness—to set apart particular Christian circles or places as fashionable or patrician—placing the "lower orders" at a distance and disadvantage in religious privileges—despising the churches of the poor.

3. *The strictness of our Lord's doctrine and precepts.*—Many were offended by the bold, unsparing, and holy ministry of Jesus. The evil conscience of His generation was wounded by His fidelity, and its self-indulgence chafed under His absolute claims. When He preached of the heart's depravity, as flowing forth and defiling the man, His disciples said to Him, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind."\* This was His unflinching spirit. Let who would be offended, our Lord spared

\* Matt. xv. 10-14.

no sin, recognised no hypocritical form of godliness, allowed no compromise between God and Mammon, demanded the surrender and devotion of all the heart; and, alike in the precepts He delivered and the examples He shewed, presented to His contemporaries, and to all generations, the highest standard and purest model of holiness. Had He been content to prescribe a ceremonial strictness, a rigorous observance of external religious usages, the Pharisees would have applauded His zeal: had He, on the other hand, encouraged a latitudinarian spirit, the Sadducees would have lauded His charity, complimented His superiority to the vulgar superstitions: but the course that He took—the inward holiness and righteousness that He inculcated, displeased them all, because it condemned them all; and with one accord those carnally-minded men were “offended in Him.”

Assuredly this remains a cause of offence to the present hour. The strict sanctity of Christ’s character and precepts can never be congenial to the selfish, evil heart of man. And men refuse to be Christians, or become bad and inconsistent Christians, because, however desirous to be saved from hell, they are not willing to part with their besetting sins, or to deny themselves, and daily take up the cross, following Jesus.

4. *The manner and object of His death.*—The Evangelists describe, with all plainness of speech, the ignominy to which our Lord was subjected, the coarse de-



rision, and the tree of shame. The apostles also speak of "His body on the tree," and His "being made a curse for us." To enlightened Christians this has always been cause of glorying; but to others an occasion of offence. Even the eleven disciples, truly loving Jesus, could not bear that He should die as He did. They laboured to dissuade Him from going up to Jerusalem to suffer; and though they went up, resolved to "die with Him," they all flinched in the trying hour. "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night."\* The thought of salvation through a despised and rejected Sufferer was strange to all minds, and confounded all expectations.

We have been wont, from our youth up, to think of the death of Christ with thankfulness as a sacrifice for the expiation of sins. But this continues to be a stumblingblock to many. The modern Jews, when they would express their contempt or hatred of the Lord Jesus, call Him "the Hanged One." The Deists, and Unitarians, and Universalists, and a multitude who have not formally ranged themselves under these denominations, but whose sentiments are very far from the evangelical standard, continue stoutly to resist the doctrine of atonement or propitiation. The offence of the Cross has not ceased.

5. *The afflictions of His people.*—Our Lord never concealed from His followers that trials and deaths

\* Matt. xxvi. 31.

awaited them ; and that certain hearers, not having root in themselves, would be offended whenever "tribulation or persecution should arise because of the word."\* He evinced the most tender desire that His chosen disciples might stand firm in the day of rebuke, and promised to them the support of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

The like open persecutions do not ensue on our confession of the name of Jesus ; but tribulation in some form is appointed to all who are His. Many who name His name incur an obloquy and derision very hard to be borne. For this cause, some who are persuaded of the truth refuse or delay to take Christ's yoke upon them, and are even "offended in Him."

6. *The discords and divisions of His Church.*—In the earliest times this was not so great an objection as now, for the primitive Church, though no stranger to factions and disputes, presented one front to the heathens and the Jews. But, in modern days of controversy and division, it is common to allege that it is impossible to know who is right, and what is true ; and on this ground to be offended in Christ. But it should be considered that the discords and dissensions complained of come not of the Spirit of Christ, form no part of our holy religion, but spring out of the misunderstandings, imperfections, and wilfulnesses of the human mind. It should be noticed, too, in all fairness,

\* Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

that many of the existing diversities affect not at all the essentials of the faith in Christ, but are connected with views of Church polity, or with national or local preferences, or with varieties in the forms of worship. This at least we can say: In every Church, worthy of the name, Christ is preached—the same Christ; and it is worse than folly, on account of subordinate questions and variations among Christians, to reject Christ Himself, or be “offended in Him.”

So long as, for any one of these reasons, or on any other account, we hold aloof from Christ, conjuring up difficulties and doubts, we shall never be without occasions of offence; we can never know a calm and settled peace. But whenever, heeding them not, we go straight to Christ, and rest on Him as offered to us in the Gospel, all perplexities become plain, all theoretic questionings find their best solution in our gracious experience, and every day convinces us more deeply that “Christ is all and in all.” Wisdom is thus justified of her children. And while the children of that worldly Wisdom, which is foolishness with God, continue to cavil and object, the children of heavenly Wisdom are not confounded world without end;—the dwellers on the Rock sing a new song, even praise unto our God.

## XII.

*The Pre-eminence of Jesus Christ.*

As "the Image of the invisible God," our Lord Jesus Christ has the pre-eminence. His is the glory of the only-begotten of the Father. He is the manifestation of the inscrutable Jehovah—declaring the Divine nature and will—administering the Divine government; God with us, and God over all, blessed for evermore.

As the author of creation, and the upholder of all that He has created, our Lord Jesus Christ has the pre-eminence. Creation existed as an idea or plan in the infinite mind of God: in due time it was carried into effect by the power of the Logos, the only-begotten Son. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."\* To us, all the beauties and sublimities of creation, and all the harmonies and intricacies of Providence, attest His pre-eminence, and celebrate His praise. The bright worlds that move in their courses, observing their times and seasons, are made and ruled by the Christ of God. The

\* John i. 3.

vast universe reverently declares His pre-eminence; and the praise of the First-born is set to the music of the spheres. By the angels in their majestic order, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, He is acknowledged ever pre-eminent; for "all the angels of God worship Him."\* His glorious name is written, too, on this fair earth—its woods, and flowers, and gems, and fruits, and wonders of the deep. In the order and history of our earth, let us read the praise of Christ—Christ in all present—Christ over all pre-eminent. "All things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."†

As the Source and Head of the Church, in His capacity of Lord of the resurrection, Jesus Christ has the pre-eminence.

He is the Ruler of the Church—governing the individual Christian, as being "the Head of every man"—governing also the Catholic Church, as its King and Head. The pope is not head of the Church—the sovereign is not head of the Church—the *vox populi* is not head of the Church. No bishop nor archbishop is primate of the Church of Christ. All such claims are at variance with His own inalienable prerogatives. He is the Head, holding all the members in subordination and harmony. He is also the Primate, the ἀρχὴ of the new creation—having both priority and superiority; the Founder of the Church, the beginning of

\* Heb. i. 6.

† Col. i. 16, 17.

its existence, and source of the blessed influence whereby it lives; and also the Chief, the Lord, the Leader and Commander of the Church; and so the Primate, the only Primate, the first in authority and rank.\*

He, too, is the Saviour of the Church; and in this pre-eminent, unapproachable, alone. "Neither is there salvation in any other." In the exercise of His saving powers and prerogatives He manifests this pre-eminence. He sends to the Church the Holy Ghost, by whose operation the world is convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment; the anxious are led to peace in believing; the saints are edified; and the mourners in Zion consoled. He reconciles sinners to God; for in Him, the pre-eminent One, the sin-polluted find cleansing blood—the lost have redemption—the guilty have justification—and the far-off are made nigh. He keeps His own from perishing. Other shepherds may lose some of their flock; but the pre-eminent One, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, has said of His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand."† At last He brings His own to heaven. The Church is in many struggles and infirmities; but her Lord guides her by His counsel, and will receive her to glory. The life of the Church is in the Head, and the Head is "pre-eminent." With the Head, the members shall be glorified together. "When Christ,

\* Col. i. 18.

† John x. 28.

our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."\*

To take up the strain of Samuel Rutherford—"Oh but Christ is heaven's wonder, and earth's wonder! What marvel that His Bride saith, 'He is altogether lovely'? Oh that I could invite thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, of Adam's sons to flock about my Lord Jesus, and to come and take their fill of love! Pity for evermore, that there should be such a One as Christ Jesus—so boundless, so incomparable in excellency and sweetness—and so few to take Him! Ho! why will ye not come hither, with your empty souls, to this huge, fair, deep, sweet Well of Life, and fill all your vessels? Come all and drink at this living Well, and satisfy your deep desires with Jesus!"†

\* Col. iii. 4.

† Rutherford's Letters.

## XIII.

*A Word in Season to the Weary.*

A GOOD word is always a weapon of power, doubly so when spoken at the right time in the right place. It is a proverb of Solomon, "A word fitly spoken (*marg.*, 'spoken upon his wheels') is like apples of gold in pictures (network) of silver."\* The beauty of the silver basket gives a heightened attraction to the golden fruit. So does the seasonableness of a true saying much enhance its value and effect. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"—a word apt to the occasion, not forced or formal, but running as on chariot wheels! This was characteristic of the sayings of the Lord Jesus. They had an aptitude to some present event or want, or rose out of a conversation; not dragged in of set purpose; but, running on in a manner of inimitable ease and dignity, they were words upon the wheels. Thus the discourse against covetousness and worldly care rose out of the saying of "one of the company," "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide

\* Prov. xxv. 11.



the inheritance with me."\* The successive parables of the lost sheep, the lost drachma, and the prodigal son, are all "words on the wheels," starting from that murmur of the Pharisees and scribes, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."† The "gracious words" in regard to the "living water" sprung from the simple circumstance that a woman of Samaria came to Jacob's well to draw water, and Jesus, sitting by the well, said to her, "Give me to drink"‡ From the beginning, His words of spiritual instruction ran "upon wheels." One instance more. Our Lord's discourse on "the bread of life" followed the miracle of multiplying loaves in the wilderness, and took its rise most appropriately from this saying, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth," &c. § So the word ran speedily.

The words of our Lord were sometimes swift and sharp reproofs. The Holy One of God could not live in this world for thirty years without finding much to deplore and reprehend; and nowhere can be found language of more uncompromising denunciation than that which the Lord Jesus employed against pretentious, hypocritical, carnally-minded men. Yet, mainly and characteristically, the work of Christ was a work of gentleness—His mission, a mission of kindness—and

\* Luke xii. 13.

† John iv. 7.

‡ Luke xv. 2.

§ John vi. 26, 27.

His words distilled as seasonable dew on parched and weary souls. The Man of sorrows was no stranger to weariness, and he had compassion on the weary and heavy laden. He knew how to speak to their hearts, for "the Lord God had given him the tongue of the learned."\* He did not strive or cry in the streets. His ministry was not one of clamour and noisy notoriety, of "lo! here, and lo! there." But, after the whirlwind, and earthquake, and fire, He spoke with "a still, small voice." He uttered terrible things to the proud; but His ministry to the humble was mild, patient, encouraging, with a mighty secret power—soul-moving, soul-melting, soul-healing, soul-cheering, soul-winning—not understood by the stout-hearted, but well suited to all the weary ones.

Reader! Are you weary under the burden of *sin*? Has the pressure of a guilty conscience borne you down to grief and shame? The Lord, "with the tongue of the learned," has a word in season for you. "Know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Reader! Are you weary under vexation of spirit? Have you been deceived, disappointed, chagrined? Has the wretchedness of an unsatisfied heart fallen upon you? You detect the hollowness of worldly hopes and joys, and yet have no better portion; so are you jaded, desolate, ill at ease. Weary one! the "tongue of the

\* Isa. l. 4.

learned" has a word in season for you. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."\*

Reader! Are you weary under the toil and care of life? Early and late do you labour for daily bread? Or, do difficulties rise before you, like threatening spectres, and you know not how to face them? All day long you are embarrassed, and even by night, upon your bed, you are vexed and sick at heart. Harken to "the tongue of the learned:"—"Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."†

Reader! Are you weary under a weight of afflictions? Have bereavements and sorrows fallen on you till your eyes are dim, and your heart is faint? Have earthly consolations failed you, and even dear earthly friends proved miserable comforters all? There is One who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, who loves to "comfort all that mourn," and who knows how to speak a word in season to the spirit desolate.

"A bruised reed shall he not break."‡ We are not as the solid rocks, or hoary hills; rather as the blades of grass, or as the reeds in a fen or by a river bank—short-lived, slender, and susceptible. If we stand erect in our seeming prosperity and strength, affliction, sent

\* Matt. xi. 28.

† Luke xii. 29, 30.

‡ Isa. xlii. 3.

in mercy, reveals the frailty of our frame. Pressed with disquietudes, bent with sorrows, man is a bruised reed. But then, when the reed is bruised, how delicate the touch of our Saviour's hand! He does not break, but sustain; He does not upbraid, but upbind; He does not discourage, but revive. It is man who is harsh to man; but the Lord "healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."\*

The intercourse of Christians should be marked by the gentleness as well as the faithfulness that dwelt in Christ. That is the most truly "learned tongue," which speaks in season healing words to the wounded, guiding words to the anxious, reviving words to the weary. A feeble Christian may, by a "word upon the wheels," give comfort to one much stronger, who for the time is harassed and faint. Martin Luther said, "The word of a brother, pronounced from Holy Scripture in time of need, carries with it an inconceivable weight. Thus Timothy, and Titus, and Epaphras, and the brethren who met St Paul from Rome, cheered his spirit, however much they might be inferior to him in skill and learning in the word of God. The greatest saints have their times of faintness, when others are stronger than they."

\* Psalm cxlvii. 3.

## XIV.

*Compensation.*

A LAW of compensation pervades all nature. All things that exist, organic and inorganic, in the explored universe, are, with extreme niceness and delicacy, ordered, proportioned, collocated, and balanced, so as to maintain the conditions necessary to the life and happiness of the creatures, and effect, without flaw or failure, the Creator's comprehensive and benevolent designs.

Beautiful is the working of the same law in the life of individual man, producing a balance of natural well-being, wonderfully equal in all countries and ranks. No man is so ill off, but has something in his favour. No man is so fortunate, but has some worm gnawing the root of his enjoyment. Poverty is relieved by a cheerful spirit—wealth burdened with many cares. Hard toil is recompensed by sturdy health—luxury punished by a feeble constitution. “The choicest pleasures of life lie within the ring of moderation.”

No wise man will give place to discontent, when he surveys the conditions of his fellow-men, and sees how

easily advantages and disadvantages are balanced. He who has eminence is exposed to envy. He who lives in great state, foregoes the simple comforts of a home. The honoured warrior leaves wife and children dear, to face danger and death. The man of thought and learning bows beneath a spirit overstrained. Truly, obscurity has its compensations: and he is wise who, desiring not high things, seeks the prize of happiness within the charmed circle of content.

Consider even the undoubted sores and trials of this mortal life. "Sweet are the uses of adversity." With all pains and losses, there are sent blessings, or remedies, or, at the least, alleviations, if we will only receive them. Of old time was it not found, that what the Church lost by martyrdom was more than repaid by new accession of converts and new fervour of zeal? The Church lost a Deacon, Stephen; but how rich and strange the compensation!—as from the *Deacon's* martyred dust there sprung an *Apostle*, Paul. For the individual, too, as well as the community, disease and calamity have their uses, their alleviations, even their ample compensations. *Uses*—forasmuch as they serve to refine, humble, and hallow the character. *Alleviations*—since "God stayeth His rough wind in the day of His east wind."\* And even *compensations*—for some help, some vantage, not seen at first, is sure to reveal itself to those that are watchful and wise.

\* Isa. xxvii. 8.

When Paul came to Macedonia, his "flesh had no rest"—"without were fightings, within were fears;" but God comforted him "by the coming of Titus."\* Thus, often, when we are in great straits, some unexpected Titus comes—some friendly compensation—and we are not weaker, rather stronger; and after our tears—sometimes in our tears—we are happier than before. It is true of life, as of nature, that with the dark cloud God sets a rainbow in the sky.

Alas! indeed, there is an awful incubus lying on the life and happiness of earth and earthly beings. There is a disorder that was not in our world when the Creator pronounced it "very good." There is a darkness that may be felt. There is an anguish at the heart of humanity. In one word, there is moral evil—there is sin. Because of this, man aches, and fears, and dies. Because of this, the whole creation groans and travails in pain. But God hath not left us without help. There is a remedial plan revealed in the glorious Gospel. There is a redeeming blood—there is a renewing power. There is a Divine provision, whereby man, though evil and wretched, may be made a new creature, and with him all sin-stained things made new.

The more we consider human life, the more vast appears the action of the law of compensation. Evils are permitted for a season to oppress the good; but the good are saved by hope, and the things hoped for

\* 2 Cor. vii. 5, c.

bring the abundant recompence. One cannot think, even from present appearances, that this is the final state. Human life is evidently cut short—broken off, fragmentary, and incomplete. The sowing time is now but the reaping time, for the most part, after death. The faintness of the long wilderness has compensation in the milk and honey of the promised land. In fact, the doctrine of compensation applied to men, both the evil and the good, involves “the doctrines” of judgment and future states.

“ This world shall burn, and from her ashes spring  
New heaven and earth, wherein the just shall dwell ;  
And, after all their tribulations long,  
See golden days, fruitful of golden deeds.”



## XV.

*Lessons from Winter.*

IN our Canadian climate, winter is not so gloomy as in many other regions of the world. With bright skies by day and night, crisp snow, and bracing air, the season is cheerful, notwithstanding its inexorable severity. Would that another Cowper were among us, to sing of "The Winter Evening," "The Winter Morning Walk," and "The Winter Walk at Noon"! Meantime, in such poor prose as we command, we inquire what occasions of human life, and what lessons for those occasions, the winter months suggest.

1. Is not the winter an obvious emblem of old age—not necessarily cheerless, but chill, rigid, decayed? The trees are dry and bare—with no sap in their boughs, and on them no foliage. So baldness comes on the old man's head, his limbs stiffen, and the fire passes from his blood, telling that life's last season has arrived. Now, he who is wise will be careful not to repine under the pressure of age, but, looking up to God, will say, in submission of faith, "Thou hast made winter." Is He

the God of youth only? Nay; but of old age also. He has ordained the withering of age as truly and lovingly as the budding and springing of youth. Nay, more. Winter does not extinguish Nature's life, but secretly husbands her powers for a glorious revival. It is so with the winter of old age among the people of God. In their roots is the sap of immortality. In their old age and dissolution there may seem to be a decay of their life and hope; but this is only preparatory to their glorious resurrection, and to an existence that shall never feel the icy breath of winter again. "Thou hast made summer and winter."\* And the summer that God makes to follow the last winter of this earthly life is the summer of eternal joy at His right hand, under the beams, not of sun, or moon, or stars, but of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb!

This thought need not be confined to actual old age. It may comfort every believer who has by any cause waxed early old, and lost the bloom and glow of life. Let him submit himself unto God, who makes both winter and summer, and let him cleave to Christ, in whom all the saints shall be made alive: so will he renew his youth after a manner that eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard on earth; his "heart shall ever live; and his very body, that dwelt in dust, shall awake to sing, having a dew from the Lord as the dew of herbs, when the earth shall cast out the dead."† His

\* Psalm lxxiv. 17.

† Isa. xxvi. 19.

winter shall be followed by the bright springtide of the heavenly summer, that is never ended, never blighted, in the promised land.

2. Is not the winter, bleak and bare, also a figure of those times of bereavement and affliction, whereof almost all have some experience? The leaves have fallen, the woods are stript, the flowers are dead, the open country is a waste of snow, and the flowing waters are a frozen mass. So is it with the sons of sorrow. As fade and fall the leaves, so "friend after friend departs." Some that had children and relatives thick around them are now alone, like naked trees, shivering before the wind. <sup>1</sup> Life now seems a wintry waste—no landscape, no flowers, no flowing streams—and the heart lies chill and hopeless.

But who hath done these things? Surely it is the Lord who made thy winter, O son of sorrow! and made it for His glory and thy good, since "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."\* He, also, He only, can make thy winter pass away. Only be patient, prayerful, and of good cheer, and He who made the winter will make a summer too! The Lord knows how to turn sorrow into joy, and shivering, cheerless feebleness into cheerful godly confidence: and as for those dear ones of whom we are bereaved, He knows how to give them back to us in a home that sorrow never enters, in a fellowship that death never

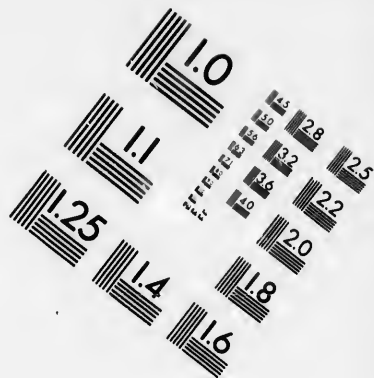
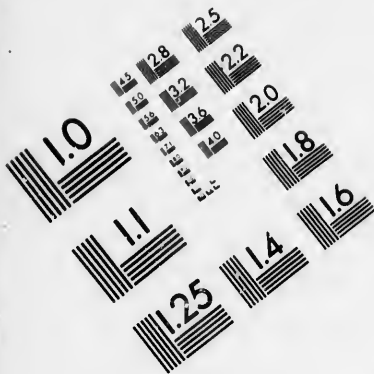
\* Lament. iii. 33.

divides. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."\* In the coming summer, the trees of righteousness shall be clothed anew with more than they had ever lost, and the gentle flowers shall lift up their heads to bloom again in an immortal youth.

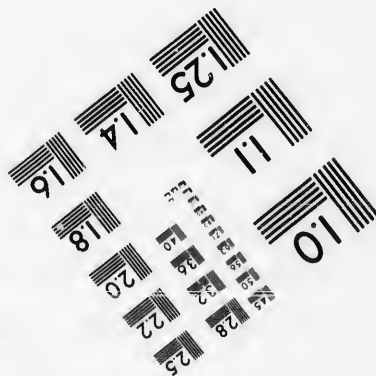
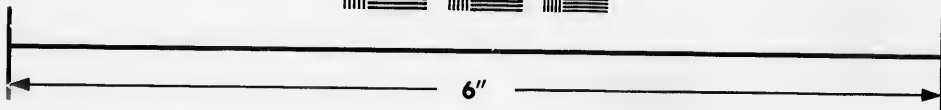
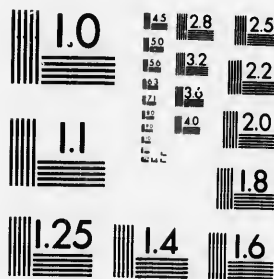
3. May not the winter also illustrate those times of spiritual hardness and coldness, through which even godly persons sometimes pass? It is rare to spend all the Christian life under warm sunshine and among clustering flowers. Seasons there are, in the experience of many, when the pious affections seem to be congealed, if not extinct; hope languishes, love waxes cold, and the very Sun of righteousness appears low on the horizon, and greatly shorn of His power. Whenever this chill comes upon the soul, through unwatchfulness or relapse into sin, it is to be penitently bewailed; and it will not pass away without the softening of contrition and the ardour of prayer. When it comes, not as the penalty of specific sinfulness, but according to the sovereign will of God, who permits the feelings of the human heart to undergo a sharp reaction after religious joys, as though they fell from summer into the cold bosom of winter, it is to be borne as the good pleasure of Him who hath made summer and winter, and it is to be accepted as a season, if of painful, still of useful discipline. Provided always that there is grace in the heart, that there is union with the Prince

\* Matt. v. 4.





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of life, such a winter of the soul as we now indicate can be no more than the outward semblance of death. It may kill noxious weeds that are not of Christ, but cannot kill any plant that His heavenly Father has planted. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."\* Whatsoever hath life spiritual from God will live through the winter into spring. Whatsoever hath a root in Christ will also have a flower.

One of the Olney Hymns gives expression to the thought:—

" Winter and spring have each their use,  
And each in turn God's people know;  
One kills the weeds their hearts produce,  
The other makes their graces grow.

" Though like dead trees awhile they seem,  
Yet, having life within their root,  
The welcome spring's reviving beam  
Draws forth their blossoms, leaves, and fruit."

Happily these winters are not periodical; and the more buoyant and diligent of God's people have them much less frequently and severely than others. Nay, one may "grow out" of them altogether. As in the progress of a new country's settlement, there is an amelioration of climate, and the winters become less severe; so, in the progress of piety, the inward climate ameliorates, and it is rare for an advanced Christian to undergo a long, unbroken winter of spiritual heaviness. More and more does the Light that lighteneth every

\* 1 John v. 4.



man exert His powerful influence—kindling, reviving, and rejoicing the heart, until the last wintry month is over and gone, the snows are melted, the storms are hushed, and there opens on the saved soul an endless summer of joy in the Lord.

Some have no sensitiveness to spiritual climate. It is because there is no life in them. Life shrinks in the cold, and basks in the sunshine; but lifeless things heed not the changes of the rolling year. The stores shew no distress in winter, and in summer evince no joy. Their surface may be slightly chilled or warmed, but no more. So insensible to spiritual climate are all they who have a heart of stone, and not a heart of flesh.

After all, to those who are Christ's, this earth must ever be a bleak, wintry place; for they contrast it with that heaven to which they hasten, where there is no chill, no grief, no fading away. As Rutherford said, "The land of Immanuel is an excellent soil. Oh but His heaven lies well and heartsofely, nigh to the Sun, the Sun of righteousness! The fruit of the land is excellent; glory grows in the very outfields thereof. Oh, what pure, unmingled joys lie on those eternally-springing mountains, and in those gardens of spices! And what do we here? Why toil so much in gathering sticks to our nest, when to-morrow we shall be gone out of this?"\* Well for us all to think less of our earthly nests, and more of our heavenly home!

\* Rutherford's Letters.

## XVI.

## Christ among the Wild Beasts.

THE Evangelist Mark, referring to our Saviour's sojourn of forty days in the wilderness, affirms that He "was with the wild beasts."\* This is not a mere incident mentioned without purpose. It is characteristic of Mark, who is no mere copyist or epitomiser of Matthew, to record great matters in short clauses, and give hints and glimpses of large truths in few and simple words.

The Lord Jesus was tempted in solitude. No human being was near. Satan, the wild beasts, and the angels, are said to have been with Him in the dreary wilderness. It was at the outset of His ministry: the Seed of the woman was about to begin the work of restoration. Satan came to Him, not, however, in the disguise of a serpent, but as prince of this world. The scene was no garden of pleasures, but a wilderness; and the beasts, once submissive to man, were "wild." But Satan, and the wild beasts too, were made to feel that the second Adam was there.

\* Mark i. 13.

On the foiling of Satan we may have often reflected—not so on the mastery over the wild beasts. Herein we have another glimpse of Christ's restoration of Paradise. When man lost the favour of God, he lost his control of the creatures. A certain temporary subjection of them, indeed, appeared again in the times of Noah, who prefigured the Saviour. But after the Deluge, they cast off the fear of man. If Daniel in the den was unharmed, it was only because God had sent His angel to stop the mouths of the lions. But Christ was with the wild beasts, ruling them by the energy of His own will. The angels did not come to Him to minister till after His wilderness trial was successfully past.\* He ruled the creatures as the second Adam. As the Son of man, He had dominion over "the beasts of the field," and all things were "put under His feet." †

A golden age is promised to the Church, wherein Satan shall be bound, and the lower creatures shall serve man in peace. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." ‡

Meantime, in the victorious progress of the Gospel, the devices of Satan are constantly being baffled, and they that would rage against Christ are quelled. Strong "bulls of Bashan," and ravening lions, are made to hold their peace. Every knee shall bow to the Lord Jesus

\* Matt. iv. 11.

† Psalm viii. 6-8.

‡ Isa. xi. 6-9.

—every tongue shall swear by Him ; “ and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed.” \*

All this, on a smaller scale, takes place in every converted soul. When into the wilderness of an unrenewed heart Jesus comes in the power of the Spirit, unruly passions are tamed by His presence. No longer can there be the glare of hate, the sting of malice, the ravening of violence or revenge. The wild beasts in the human breast are mastered by grace. There also the Devil, who riots in misrule and violence, is foiled. The New Man gains the victory ; and ministering angels spread a feast of joy within the soul that believes, obeys, and loves. “ The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them ; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” †

\* Isa. xlv. 23-25.

† Isa. xxxv. 1.

## XVII.

*Forgetfulness.*

THE Almighty entered this grave charge against His ancient favoured nation, "My people have forgotten me days without number."\* The same charge lies with too great force against all Christendom. Habitually the objects of human vanity and ambition are in view and in recollection, while the Lord God is utterly forgotten. The true secret of this lurks in the obstinate ungodliness of the carnal mind of man. This hinders the recollection of God in one or other, or all, of the following modes:—

1. In habitual inattention to Divine truth, when presented to the mind. The Bible confessedly treats of momentous themes, and affects our highest interests; yet it is opened with apathy, and read or heard with many wandering thoughts. It follows that no lasting impression is made. Yet some try to excuse their ignorance of God and His inspired Word, pleading, "I have such [a bad memory," when the memory is quite good

\* Jer. ii. 32.

enough, if Divine truths were once well lodged in it by due and fixed attention. No memory, however excellent, can retain that which was never allowed to make an impression. As it is written, "We ought to *give the more earnest heed* to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."\*

2. In neglect of reflection on Divine truth read or heard. It is to the want of after-thought, of mental rumination on holy things, that much spiritual leanness must be traced. Where there is little meditation on God and His Word, it is vain to expect a rich experience, or a solid religious character. Those who add to attention reflection, and in whom the Word abides, are always the healthiest, and strongest, and wisest among the children of grace.

3. In the occupation of the mind with comparative trifles. Remembering a great deal that we ought to forget, we forget a great deal that we ought to remember. Filling our measures with chaff, we leave no room for good and solid grain. The maid thinks of her ornaments, and the bride of her attire. The young—and not they only, but many to whom increasing years have brought no wisdom—fill their thoughts and conversation with the fashions and *on dits* of society, the equipages, and amusements, and entertainments of the season; and so can have, in their foolishly-occupied minds, no grave recollection of that God with whom they have to

\* Heb. ii. 1.

do. One of the first conditions of godly wisdom is the riddance of the soul from the bondage of trifles. We must hear many things as if we heard them not, and learn to forget that we may learn to remember. It was a judicious answer of Themistocles to Simonides, who had offered to teach him the art of memory, "Rather teach me the art of forgetfulness; for the things which I would not I remember, and cannot forget the things I would."

4. In excess of worldly cares. The minds of men, forgetful of God, are not occupied entirely with trifles and gaieties. There are grave anxieties regarding success in business, or the attainment of a coveted position, that so press upon the soul as to preclude the earnest recollection of religious truth. Hence it happens that shrewd men, who easily remember whatever affects the markets and business of this world, cannot remember how to "buy the truth;" and readily quoting the stocks and share lists of commercial enterprise, cannot accurately quote the verses of the blessed Word of God. No one can have a religious memory who does not check and moderate his worldly cares.

To shew the evil of forgetfulness, let it be considered how much a religiously stored and exercised memory tells on the development of the Christian mind and formation of the Christian character. It constitutes knowledge, it deepens repentance, it fortifies faith, it supplies comfort, and moves continual thankfulness.

It is a solemn thought, that every man's memory holds more than it tells. In every mind it is secretly at work, laying up its stores, to minister hereafter either to eternal pain or to eternal joy. The memory of God's mercy refused, God's Sabbaths broken, God's Word despised, God's love trodden under foot, shall smite with anguish the lost in hell. And the memory of God's goodness and forbearance on earth—of the warnings and the winnings, the bereavements and the benefits, that He sent in love—shall contribute largely to the joys of saints in heaven.

Yea, we surely shall remember  
 How He quicken'd us from death—  
 How He fann'd the dying ember  
 With His Spirit's glowing breath.  
 We shall read the tender meaning  
 Of the sorrows and alarms,  
 As we trod the desert, leaning  
 On His everlasting arms.

And His rest will be the dearer  
 When we think of weary ways;  
 And His light will seem the clearer  
 As we muse on cloudy days.  
 Oh! 't will be a glorious morrow  
 To a dark and stormy day!  
 We shall recollect our sorrow  
 As the streams that pass away.



## XVIII.

*Looking at Things not Seen.*

THIS, which seems a paradox, is the daily habit of religious minds. They are intent on objects that the eye of the body has never seen—objects that have on them the stamp of endurance, and that shine in the beauty of holiness. No man has this elevation of mind by nature. It is given to the Christian in his “effectual calling.” And indeed no man, though effectually called, forms at once the habit of looking at things not seen. All habits are formed by steps and degrees; and this is eminently true of the habits of the spiritual mind, which must be progressively formed under sanctifying grace, and confirmed and braced by the discipline of actual Christian life. It is true that in the ardour of young piety there is much looking upward—much “converse with the skies.” But impulses are not to be relied on as habits; and the habit of looking up, of eyeing God’s will and glory, of aiming at spiritual ends in temporal concerns, is one that characterises mature, well-exercised believers. Young Christians need not be discouraged because they have not such a habit.

Having the right impulse and desire, they will acquire the habit in due time, if they cultivate vigilance and prayer. To borrow a simile from Dr Cheever: An albatross rising from the sea, runs upon the waves at first; but once risen and soaring, how sure and easy the movement! There is scarce a perceptible undulation of the broad white pinions of the majestic bird. Such are the wings of holy habit, wrought out by Divine grace, and bearing the regenerated nature, after its first struggles, calmly upward to the things not seen, and to the very throne of the eternal God.

The habit of looking at the things not seen as yet, confers great benefits on the Christian.

It lifts him above a base, unworthy life. He who is religious in the habits of his mind and heart, cannot but live well. Whatever charges may lie against men professing religion whose profession is false, it can never be—it would contradict the surest laws of the human mind—that one should really and habitually look to the things that are pure and heavenly, and yet live in base vices, defiling his own conscience, and belying the firmest convictions of his soul. Assuredly, in whatever condition or rank of life he is placed by Providence, a certain purity and dignity must attach to that man's character, whose "citizenship is in heaven,"\* and whose eyes, anointed with eye-salve, look within the veil.

\* Phil. iii. 20.

This habit of mind also ministers comfort and guidance to the Christian in changes and adversities. The Apostle Paul felt his affliction to be light, and but for a moment, while he looked at things not seen.\* The same consolation will come to us from the same spring, if we draw. The same pole-star will guide and cheer us, if we, like Paul, look up. We may learn a lesson from the good helmsman in a storm making for a safe harbour. His eye is steady on the light that shews the entrance. If the ship can keep her head to that light, he is of good cheer. It is no matter how the wind shrieks, and the vessel trembles in the heavy sea, and the breakers thunder on the rocky beach. Not at these dangers the helmsman looks, but ever at the port of hope, and steers steadily on for the light, till, with a throbbing heart, he takes his ship across the bar, and gliding past the lighthouse, drops anchor in the smooth water within. So should it be with the Christian, when storm-tost and agitated among the cares and pains of life. Looking at the things that are seen, he looks only at waves and rocks, and cannot be comforted. But let him look at the things unseen and eternal: let him steer straight for these—steer by that light—and his soul, like a weather-beaten but well-guided ship, shall ride over the rough foaming waves, and at last drop anchor in the harbour of eternal rest.

Let it be added, that the habit referred to tends

\* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

greatly to prepare the Christian for his summons to die. To die without forethought and preparation is the part of a fool. It is appointed unto men once to die; and he who has any claim to be numbered with the wise, will form and cherish the habit now of looking forward to death, and the things that are after death,—

“ Walk thoughtful on the silent, solemn shore  
Of that vast ocean we must sail so soon.”

## XIX.

*Seven Wonders.*

GREAT marvels meet in the character and life of a man of God. Seven of these we shall mention. However paradoxical they may sound, they are matters of solid experience among the godly.\* We speak throughout not of the nominal, but of the converted, spiritually-minded Christian.

1. His life in the flesh is a life of faith.† The disciple of Jesus Christ must not "walk after the flesh," in the sense in which it is opposed to "the Spirit;" yet he must live *in* the flesh even as others; and in this sphere he manifests the practical value and power of faith. The Christian life is one; and faith in the Son of God must animate and guide that life, even in the most homely and prosaic pursuits.

The object of faith is not a dead letter or prescribed dogma, but the dying, living, loving Saviour—the Son of God, the suffering Surety for men. Him faith appre-

\* See Mason's *Select Remains*—"The Mystery of a Christian."

† Gal. ii. 20.

hends, and, indeed, appropriates, prompting the words, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." On Him, by faith, the Christian lives, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man;\* and in the strength so received, overcomes the world, and quenches the fiery darts of the Wicked.

2. He sins, and yet he cannot sin. It is written, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."† But it is also written, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth (is sinning) hath not seen him, neither known him."‡ The most pious men on earth confess that they sin daily. Any other allegation would contradict both Scripture and conscience. Yet he that abides in Christ is characteristically, and in his style of thought and practice, not a sinner but a saint, a new creature, "is not sinning," lives not in habitual neglect of duty, or wilful transgression of the right. Compassed, indeed, with imperfections and infirmities, and bewailing his frequent failures and inconsistencies, he yet sincerely follows the Lord Jesus in the way of holiness, and cannot do otherwise; for the seed of his regeneration remaineth in him, vital, influential, incorruptible, indestructible—he is "born of God."

3. The less his burden grows, the more he feels it. We refer to the burden of indwelling sin. Every man who is regenerated parts with the love of sin, and

\* John vi. 53-57.

† 1 John i. 8.

‡ 1 John iii. 6.

not only obtains the blessing of pardon, but is cleansed from inherent corruption. Yet the less the load of this corruption becomes, the more does it vex and oppress his soul. The reason is plain: his conscience has become tender; his spiritual sensibility is more delicate than before. As a little weight bearing on a tender part of the body is more irksome than a much greater load pressing where bone and muscle are firm, so does a comparatively small measure of sinfulness bear heavily on the tender conscience of a godly man—more heavily than heinous evil oppresses a man unrenewed. One does not hear boasts of sanctity from truly enlightened and godly persons. They are more ready to bewail remaining corruption and hardness of heart, the body of sin and death. Sighs of contrition rise from the purest lips; and confessions of hell-worthiness sincerely issue from men whose souls are on the edge and verge of heaven.

4. He is in the world, and yet not of the world. The Christian is not only born into the world, as other men, but also sent into the world by the Lord Christ. He is not to shrink from duty in the world, and yet is not to be of the world, as his Master, Jesus of Nazareth, was not of the world. He is to mingle with general society, and actively occupy his due position, and pursue his daily avocations among men; and, at the same time, must not be "conformed to this world;" must act on unworldly principles; must follow, in midst of the

agitations and competitions of this nineteenth century, the unchangeable mandates of his Bible—a man with his hands busy on earth, but his heart with his treasure in Heaven.

5. When he is weak, then is he strong. The heroes of faith, in the days of old, “out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”\* The Lord Jesus Himself was no stranger to this experience. The hours of His exhaustion proved to be the hours of His triumph. It was when worn out and an hungered by long fasting in the wilderness, that He encountered and defeated the tempter. It was when sitting by Jacob’s well, wearied with His journey, that He awakened and instructed “the woman of Samaria.” It was when fainting on the cold ground in Gethsemane, that He quelled all reluctance to drink the bitter cup, “and there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.”† Yet once more, it was in the hour of apparent exhaustion and defeat, when stretched, pallid, and bleeding, on the cross—it was then that He was strong to bruise the serpent’s head, and destroy the works of the devil. The same rule applies to all who follow Christ. Weak as they are for the conflicts and distresses to which they are ordained, they are supported by an invisible arm. Sometimes, when they seem to be in extremity, ready to faint and fail, they find themselves endowed with a strength that nothing can bend or break. This is the

\* Heb. xi. 34.

† Luke xxii. 43.



power of Christ. This is the might of the Spirit in the inner man. This it is which gives firmness of principle, coherence of religious character, fortitude and patience in adversity. The Lord said unto Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."\*

6. His afflictions are his best friends. We have adverted to the strength with which afflictions may be borne. We now point to the good uses they subserve.

No affliction lights upon a child of God without a merciful appointment. It is sent as a fatherly chastisement or correction; for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."† Or, it is sent without reference to any particular fault, to promote the believer's general sanctification. Thus it helps the crucifixion of the flesh. It is needful that the flesh, as the opponent of the Spirit, be mortified and crucified with its affections and lusts; and every affliction, sent and blessed of God, drives another nail into the slowly-dying "flesh," enfeebling and exhausting its strength. Further, the discipline of trial exercises, and so improves, the Christian graces and virtues. It gives an edge to conscience and a fervency to prayer. In prosperity and ease, the powers of the "new man" begin to languish; but tribulation develops and braces the nobler powers of the regenerated soul. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."‡ Afflic-

\* 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. † Heb. xii. 6. ‡ Rom. v. 3, 4.

tion also tends, under the grace of the Spirit of God, to wean the heart from this world, and prepare it for that which is to come. In loving-kindness, the Lord puts some bitterness into the cup of earthly pleasure, lest we drink it to our ruin. In very faithfulness, He cuts away the tendrils of our affection and hope from the earth, and, gathering them in His hand, trains them to twine and clasp around His heavenly throne.

Sustained by such considerations and mercies, the godly man faints not in adversities; he can smile through his tears. In the deepest distress, the Comforter is with him, and assures him that the smiting rod of God is among the best of the "all things" that co-operate for his good.

7. He is content to live, yet wishing to die. Content to live!—to accomplish his appointed work, to do his Lord's will, to promote His cause, and "abide in the flesh" among His people for mutual "furtherance and joy of faith." But he is willing to die—

" A pilgrim, panting for a rest to come ;  
An exile, anxious for his native home !"

He must not in impatience or petulance call for death, but he may welcome, and even desire it, whenever God may see meet to send it, because it shall introduce him to the very presence of the Lord Christ in paradise. "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."\*

\* 2 Cor. v. 8.

## XX.

*Hand in Hand.*

THE wicked join hand in hand, encourage one another in evil modes and practices, concur in paths of sin. The individual emboldens himself in ungodliness and worldliness of life by the consideration that he is one of a multitude, and that his friends are no better or more godly than himself.

Even children greatly strengthen one another in disobedience and sin; so much so, that many parents are almost afraid to allow their sons and daughters to have any associates whatever. Playfellows, of course, they must have, but these cannot be too carefully selected; for children will soil one another's hearts, harden one another's consciences, educate one another in evil thoughts and words, deceitful or profane. They join their little hands together, the strength of many overbearing the scruples of any single one. In public schools, in street rambles, and in playgrounds, evil communications corrupt the manners and defile the hearts of those who are mere children.

In the days of wilful and impetuous youth, the same mutual encouragement in evil has a most powerful effect. Impatience of control is characteristic of that stage of life. Regardless of the advice and experience of their elders, the young, especially young men, delight to cast off restraints, to walk on the edge of precipices, or, cutting the moorings of their boat, without oar or rudder, to go wildly down the stream, little thinking of the rapids below in which so many have been lost. This gross folly is seriously aggravated by the combination and clubbing together of youth, by hand joining in hand. Does a young man, into whom good principles were instilled, begin to make light of them; does he begin to garble his speech with a few oaths, or saunter through the streets or fields on Sabbath-days, rather than attend the house of God; or take pride in the reputation of being "a little wild," and of "staying out late o' nights;" or look on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup? He has not arrived at this perilous state of his own inclination merely—companions have led him on; they joined hand in hand, laughed at his scruples, took him by the arm, and cried, "Come on, and be a man!" "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant!" He went with them, and now is become a fool even as they. Alas! he is also a tempter to others, persuading them also to join hands, eager to have as many as possible in the same wickedness as himself.

In manhood, too, hand joins in hand. A conventional morality is formed, to which individuals, not presuming to be singular, are contented to conform. It is held, that what one does another must do, else he cannot cope with the world. So men corrupt each other, countenancing one another's disingenuousness and clever selfishness. Sometimes, in associations and "companies," they carry out schemes with joined hands which individually they would never undertake or justify.

The aged are more reserved, and in their habits more isolated than the young. But they also encourage one another in old sins, and join hand in hand—making a covenant with death that it shall not smite them, and with "the overflowing scourge," that it shall not come unto them.

Holy Scripture says, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished."\* Numbers gain no impunity from the Lord; union is not strength against Him. The sinner is not excusable because he is one of many. However men form confederacies against Jehovah, they shall be judged and punished one by one.

Let the children of God learn a lesson, and join hand in hand for the truth. If there is so much combination of the wicked in their wickedness, let there be combination of the righteous in their righteousness.

\* Prov. xi. 21.

Those who have entered at the strait gate, whereto they have attained, should walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. Those whom the Lord Jesus "is not ashamed to call brethren," must not "fall out by the way," but "strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees,"—help and encourage one another in the path of life. How fair the sight of the affectionate children of an earthly family walking hand in hand, the elder assisting the younger over the rough places of the way! We, too, as little children, hand in hand, loving and helping each other, must enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Union against the Lord is nought, but on the Lord's side is strength. Souls prosper and gain victories by sympathy and alliance with other faithful souls of God's redeemed. How can religious people be cold or unkind one to another—ready to suspect, to whisper evil tales, or take part against brethren? "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."\*

\* 1 John iv. 7, 8.

## XXI.

## A Lesson in Spiritual War.

THERE is a passage in the life of King David which may teach us a great lesson in the art of spiritual war. When the Philistines, burning to avenge a former defeat, invaded Palestine, the devout king "inquired of the Lord." He had recourse to Divine counsel and strength. He sought the Lord to be on the side of Israel, "when men rose them to slay." The answer to his inquiry bade him both *do* and *wait*.\* He was to muster his armed men to attack the enemy from the most advantageous quarter, making a forced march in their rear, and falling upon them at a probably unguarded position. But, while acting to the best of his military skill, David was to bear in mind that the battle was the Lord's, and that He must give the victory. Therefore, after reaching his post under cover of a grove or wood, the king was to wait and listen for a sign of the Lord's presence and help—"the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees."

\* 2 Sam. v. 22-25.

Obedient to the word of the Lord, David had a glorious success. He did his part, gat him with his troops to the place of watching and prayer: the appointed sign failed not; and the king, "bestirring" himself, while giving the glory to God, "smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer." It was their last struggle in the land of Israel. David carried the war into the enemy's country, and completely subdued those restless and dangerous neighbours.\*

In every emergency of the soul, in every hour of temptation, it is our wisdom to inquire of the Lord; and in every new trial, to inquire again. David, though a brave and skilful general, inferior to no captain of his age, moved not without prayer against invading foes. So in the spiritual war, the contests of the inner man: the Christian, however well trained and well furnished in his own mind, needs not fight, cannot succeed, without prayer. Moreover, he who prays will, like David, get the victory through his own endeavour, and yet not by his own wisdom or strength, but by the counsel and might of Jehovah. In the struggles and conflicts of the spiritual life, victories are won not by doing only or waiting only, but by doing and waiting—waiting and doing. We must do our best, or God will not help us. We must wait on God for guidance and help, or our best doings will miserably fail. The ten-

\* 2 Sam. viii. 1-12.



dency of the present times is to foster the working rather than the waiting dispositions, and so to induce a bustling, showy Christianity, that lacks the secret of success.

One should learn also to seize opportunity and push advantage, when God indicates a favourable time, so that there is "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees." In this way the apostles gained their mighty victories. Though armed with "the whole armour of God," they went not up at once to the great contest with Jewish prejudice and Gentile ignorance and unbelief. They tarried in the appointed place "for the promise of the Father;" and when, on the day of Pentecost, they heard "the sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, they knew that the Lord was with them, and went on boldly" in the Christian cause. So is it in all the progress of the Church. There are periods of apparent inaction, which yet are far from lost. The Church is then waiting at the mulberry grove. When the "set time to favour Zion" comes, she "bestirs" herself, and makes advance. It is so, also, in the life of the individual Christian. There are favourable opportunities for which he must watch, and on the due improvement of which his religious progress depends. He who arms himself will yet do nothing unless he watches and prays.\* But he who both arms and waits, listening for prayer's answer, will hear a rustling of the tree tops, the sound of the Lord going

\* Eph. vi. 10-18.

before. Bestirring himself then, he will beat back his foes, and in God's name do exploits.

Be admonished then, O Christian! to be at the place of prayer, and have your arms and armour on, that you may take advantage of the favourable hour, and rout your spiritual foes. Have your sails spread, that when the fair wind comes you may elude the pirates, and stand well out from the quicksands and the rocks, and speed forward to the safe harbour of your eternal rest.

## XXII.

*The Healing of Humanity.*

SICKNESS and sin are closely connected together. They are disorders marring the original goodness of creation. In the primitive state, which was "very good," physical and moral perfections were united. In the present condition of the human family, physical and moral imperfections and evils are combined. Society, corrupted by many vices, and ravaged by many diseases, presents a terrible contrast to "the first estate."

We must distinguish, however, between a general fact which we know, and particular individual applications of a wide principle, such as we are not competent or warranted to make.

It is the general fact, that disease is one of the results of the entrance of sin. Death is by sin: and what is disease but a partial or approximate death? It is sin that, like the box of Pandora, has scattered direful pains and woes over the whole world. Some forms of sin lead by direct natural consequence to disease. Such are intemperance and unchastity, which

waste, degrade, and sometimes horribly torment the human frame. Some offences have provoked the Lord to inflict diseases as penalties. Thus Miriam was struck with leprosy because she murmured against Moses; \* the men of Ashdod, and other Philistines, were smitten with "emerods" because they desecrated the ark of God; † King Jehoram, the unworthy son of Jehoshaphat, was visited with an incurable disease for his wickedness. ‡ In the New Testament, also, St Paul teaches that disease and death are sent upon a Church when the Lord's Supper is administered or observed without due reverence and godly fear—"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." §

Specific applications of the general principle, however, it is not for us to make. We are not to pronounce judgment—that sickness enters this house, or lights on that individual, as a judgment for a certain specified offence. We are incompetent to draw such conclusions, and in venturing upon them may violate both charity and truth. We look on outward appearances, and cannot have the materials for judging God's ways with our fellow-men. One who enjoys robust health and undisturbed prosperity may be an enemy of God, who is secretly "reserved to the day of judgment to be punished." Another, who is sorely and variously

\* Numb. xii. 10.

† 1 Sam. v.

‡ 2 Chron. xxi. 12-19.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 30.

afflicted, may be not punished at all, but "chastened of the Lord" in love.

Sickness has its uses and its alleviations; nevertheless it is a disorder, and humanity cannot be blessed till sickness with sin is utterly abolished. Such an abolition is hoped and longed for by the Christian heart, and it is to be accomplished only through Christ the Physician-Saviour. When He was on earth, our Lord shewed Himself able and willing to cope with all the forms of disease, and remedy all the outbreaks of human misery.\* Christ refused none who came or were brought to Him to be healed.

"The dumb began to speak, the blind to see,  
And the lame leap'd, and pain and darkness fled;  
The mourner's eye grew bright with glee,  
And from the tomb awoke the wondering dead."

Christ, however, was no mere physician, but a Physician-Saviour. He dealt with sin as the radical disease of the human race. When He declared, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," He further explained His meaning in the words, "For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," † Our Lord's cure of the paralytic at Capernaum is a familiar instance of the removal of sin and sickness together. "He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Again, He "saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto

\* Matt. iv. 23, 24; Mark i. 32-34, vi. 54-56.

† Matt. ix. 12, 13.

thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."\* It may be added, that the same connexion between sickness and sin, the same linking together of the removal of the one with the removal of the other, appeared in the ministrations of the primitive elders of the Church. As it is written, "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." †

The power of<sup>1</sup> Christ is put forth still to soothe and relieve human pains, and to restore the disturbed harmonies of our physical and moral nature. His disciples, indeed, are subject to disease as other men; but it is disease without the sting of unforgiven sin, suffered for a season, that their patience may be proved, and God glorified in them. Even if their sickness be unto death, they are sustained by the hope of that which is beyond and after death. They look for a city which hath foundations, as it is promised, "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation." ‡ A few more pangs, a few more groans, and the sufferer who is in Christ enters the gates of pearl, and shall never suffer any more for ever. Why? There shall be no sin there. "The people that dwell therein are

\* Mark ii. 5-11. † James v. 14, 15. ‡ Isa. xxxiii. 20.

forgiven their iniquity.”\* No more shall they be tempted or inclined to commit iniquity. This is the law of the city—“There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”†

This is the key to the future blessedness, just as the entrance of defilement and untruth into the world that now is, is the key to our present wretchedness. In the new dwelling-place there will be no spot, no wrinkle, or any such thing—no guilt, no stain, no lie, and therefore no curse, no pain, no grief. The heirs of the kingdom, “the nations of the saved,” healed by the leaves of the Tree of Life, and rejoicing in its fruit, stand before the throne in the health and vigour of immortality—in holy beauties that never fade away; “and the inhabitants shall not say, I am sick.”‡

\* Isa. xxxiii. 24.

† Rev. xxi. 27.

‡ Isa. xxxiii. 24.

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## XXIII.

*The Vivifying Power of the Gospel.*

PERHAPS there is in nature no better expression of exuberant life and strength than the flow of a mighty river. The rocks, and forests, and giant mountains, suggest ideas of power, but of power restricted in place, without motion, without impetus. But what beauty in the shining river, what grandeur in the rolling flood! —ever moving as of some living will in itself, never exhausted or faint; without weariness pouring itself by day and night down wild ravines, and through quiet meadows; now watering a green valley, where trees skirt its banks, now passing through villages or towns, with houses and gardens on either shore, but never resting, ever rolling on to the bosom of the deep sea! Indeed, the great rivers of the world have so impressed the untutored mind with awe, and so blessed and enriched the lands through which they have their course, that they have been personified and worshipped. It has been so with the Nile, the Ganges, even the turbid Tiber. Living, as we do, on the bank of a nobler river



than any of these—the St Lawrence—we can sympathise, not certainly with superstitious worship, but with a warm enthusiasm in favour of a mighty stream, that fills the eye, and gives wealth and beauty to the land.

The Bible tells of a river that “went out of Eden to water the garden,” and parted, and became four streams;\* throws a sacred memory round the little river of Jordan, and even the soft-flowing rill of Siloam; and not only so, but celebrates a river above all Greek, above all Roman fame—a river, “the streams whereof make glad the city of God.”†

“The river of God is full.” We mean by this not a river of pleasures far away in heaven, but a river of heavenly grace on earth, the grace of salvation—a living, flowing stream, useful and pleasant to all who frequent its banks, and a river that gives life whithersoever it comes.‡ The source of this river is in the sanctuary of God, or place of His abode. Its increase, as it rolls, is obtained not from tributaries flowing into it, but entirely from the fulness of its original fountain. Its course is through a barren land, illustrating the efflux of Divine grace on a dead and sinful world. As the barren soil through which the river in Ezekiel’s vision passed became fertile, so, under the vivifying, fertilising, and healing grace of God, the wastes of human nature, human society, human life, are made to live again, and flourish in holy beauties.

\* Gen. ii. 10.

† Psalm xlvi. 4.

‡ Ezek. xvii. 9.

What is the life of a nation without this grace? Let history speak. The powerful nations of antiquity are powerful no more. They had genius, courage, letters, even art and civilisation; but having no moral health, and no spiritual life, they had no real endurance, and have proved no better than brilliant failures at last. In so far as any modern nations have more vitality than the ancient, it is due to their possession of a true religion—their contact with the flowing water of life. True it is, that a nation unvisited by the stream from the sanctuary of God may obtain a certain extension and eminence; but it is frivolous, or treacherous, or ferocious, or immoral and corrupt; and no form of political constitution, or change of political rulers, will remedy the case of such a nation, so long as the mass of the people continue ungodly, and the highest motives are not brought to bear on the private and public conscience and will. We are well convinced that, even in countries which present the most favourable religious aspect, the most serious public danger comes from the ungodliness of the people at large. The true health of nations is in virtue; the true wealth of nations is in moral culture and the fear of God. History will corroborate the doctrine of Scripture, that the only inexhaustible spring of public life, powers, dignity, and self-government, is in the knowledge and acknowledgment of our Lord and His Christ. Flowing through the heart of a people, the stream of pure religion will heal

that which is bitter or corrupt, will cause everything to live, impart soundness to all the internal relations of the body domestic and politic, and will gradually give rise to good government, equal laws, just institutions, a pure literature, a warm benevolence, a diligent attention to the arts of peace,—in a word, will ensure a high and broad and graceful civilisation. If it is not practicable to have a truly national Church, we still must have, for the public weal, a sincerely received national religion. Through the deep courses of a nation's convictions, "let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."\*

Let us reflect, not only on the life of nations, but on the life of the Church. The most orderly and orthodox Church on earth is a formal, almost useless institution, unless it be vivified by the touch of the waters flowing from Mount Zion—the present grace of God, the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus. There was no charge of disorder or heterodoxy against the Church in Sardis, yet it is written, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."† That Church maintained a good reputation; the ordinances of the gospel were therein regularly dispensed, and, we presume, the doctrines of the gospel accurately avowed. No heresies of Nicolaitanes or others are reprehended at Sardis, as at Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira. All things were there but the one needful thing—life. The form of godliness was

\* Amos v. 24.

† Rev. iii. 1.

complete, but power thereof there was none. There was a full-length shadow of religion, but the substance was not there. With the credit and semblance of life, the Sardian Church was spiritually dead.

A Church thus dead cannot long remain really orthodox, but it may continue to profess a sound traditional creed. First piety declines, gives way before the encroachments of a cold, secular spirit; then the doctrines of grace are disliked, concealed, or corrupted, while yet the old standards of belief are not formally and openly renounced. But the word of Christ is not there in power; and without this word in power, without the quickening Spirit, a Church has no energy, no beauty, no fruitfulness, no vitality; whereas, with this, the waste place becomes as a well-watered garden, and a field which the Lord hath blessed.

It is the way of our Lord to keep His Church in constant dependence on Himself for life and godliness, and so to draw forth the prayers of all faithful ones for quickening grace—a grace which flows from His seat, and, instead of spending itself, still swells and deepens as it flows, diffusing its healing waters from house to house and heart to heart, and covering all its banks with unfading and fruitful trees.

The life of the individual soul is imparted and maintained by the same grace. The blessed man “shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not

wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."\* It is the root in the river that sends sap and vital force through all the tree, even to its utmost boughs, yielding rich foliage and abundant fruit.

Every tree of righteousness must have its own connexion with the river of life through its own roots; every Christian must have connexion and communion with the Lord in the grace of the Spirit, through his own faith. A pastor's roots will not draw up enough for the flock, or a father's enough for his children. One by one, the Christian people must have their roots in the river of God. There is room enough for all of them on the banks thereof. Paul desired that the Colossians might be "rooted in Christ," and that the Ephesians might be "rooted and grounded in love." This desire have all they who know the Lord's grace, that others may obtain like precious faith, and like spiritual strength, till the river of God's pleasure on earth is thickly lined on either shore with good and pleasant trees. As it was in the prophetic vision already alluded to, "By the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruits according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."†

\* Psalm i. 3.

† Ezek. xlvii. 12.

In Paradise restored, the river shall flow clear as crystal from the very throne of God and of the Lamb, and pass no longer through a salt and waste land, but through a region and city of holiness, where there is no more curse.\*

“ O happy harbour of God’s saints !  
O sweet and pleasant soil !  
In thee no sorrow can be found,  
No grief, no care, no toil !

“ Quite through the streets, with pleasant sound,  
The flood of life doth flow ;  
Upon whose banks, on every side,  
The trees of life do grow.

“ These trees each month do yield their fruit,  
For evermore they spring ;  
And all the nations of the world  
To thee their honours bring.

“ Jerusalem, God’s dwelling-place,  
Full sore I long to see ;  
O that my sorrows had an end,  
That I might dwell in thee !”

\* Rev. xxii. 1-3.

## XXIV.

*The Unbroken Bones of Jesus.*

WHOSOEVER has a broken heart shall never have a broken bone. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."\* In various psalms, the pious in affliction speak of "bones vexed," "bones consumed," "bones waxed old," "bones burned as an hearth," and "cleaving to the skin." But the righteous, though cast down, are not destroyed; their bones may be "vexed," but "not one of them is broken." It is true that David in a certain place refers to his bones as broken.† But it was thus with him when he sinned, when he fell from his steadfastness, and thereby forfeited the privileges of a righteous man. So soon as he is penitent—so soon as he gets from God, and presents to God, a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—he prays for restoration, and expects even his

\* Psalm xxxiv. 18-20.

† Psalm li. 8.

broken bones to come together again, and "rejoice" in God his Saviour.

Not only in providence does God keep His people from harm, sending His angels to encamp around them, but He also succours and sustains them in His grace. Though at times their "bones are vexed"—*i.e.* their hearts are disquieted and distressed—a word of gracious promise comes to them, that their bones may not be broken; in other words, that their souls may not despair. Christ knows well how to give health and quiet to His disciples in the inner man. His "pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."\*

Of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, it is emphatically true that "Jehovah keepeth all His bones; not one of them is broken." This was prefigured in the passover, and fulfilled on the cross. At the first institution of the paschal rite, this Divine command was given regarding the lamb, the type of Jesus Christ, "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof."† In the wilderness of Sinai the Lord repeateth this injunction: "They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it."‡ This was strictly fulfilled on the cross, when "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." In His sacred body, His flesh was pierced, and His blood shed; but not one of His bones was broken. The fact is explicitly narrated in the Gospel of John: "The Jews

\* Prov. xvi. 24.

† Exod. xii. 46.

‡ Num. ix. 12.



therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that Sabbath-day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs. . . . For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.\* Thus the "Lamb of God" died, a complete and unbroken sacrifice for sin. Jesus, having power to lay down His life, willed to die, gave up the ghost, before the soldiers came.

This is not all. The Lord Christ has also a mystical body, all the members whereof are kept by the grace and power of God.

Like His physical body, the body mystical of Christ is divinely formed. In remote eternity it was designed or "prepared," according to the election of grace. The members were written in God's book when as yet there was none of them. The body thus prepared is fearfully and wonderfully made. It is not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. In its formation there is an overshadowing power of the Highest. The grace of the Holy Ghost, in the regeneration of sinners, is continually making and moulding a

\* John xix. 31-33, 36.

body for Christ. The "new birth" is a birth into the spiritual being and body of the Redeemer. All who are truly born again are united to Jesus Christ, as "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."\*

This mystical body is ever growing. Christ must increase. There are constant accessions to the Church, which is His body; and by the grace flowing from the Vital Head, and the continual and harmonious exercise of the various parts and members, the growing body strengthens day by day, "increasing with the increase of God." As it is written, "From the head, even Christ, the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."†

The mystical body of the Lord, thus formed and increased, is a suffering body on earth. Like His natural body, it is lightly esteemed, wounded, even crucified." All that are Christ's are made to feel the strangeness of the world, the malice of the devil, and the sharpness of the cross. His spiritual members suffer with Him, if so be they may also be glorified together.

But here we perceive another point of analogy. The mystical body, like the natural body of Christ, though pierced is not parted, and comes through all its tribula-

\* Eph. v. 30.

† Eph. iv. 16.

tion without a broken bone. That which took place literally on the cross of Calvary, takes place spiritually in universal Christian experience. However severely afflictions bear on the people or members of Christ, they cannot separate them from Him, or destroy their hope of glory. The bones may be sore vexed, but "not one of them is broken."

The doctrine of the union of believers to their Lord involves, as a consequence, the doctrine of their preservation unto eternal life. If in Holy Writ this union is represented as a betrothal, it is "for ever;"\* and when it is likened to a body with joints and limbs, it is a body not to be mangled or divided. Christians must have discipline, suffering, chastisement; but "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."† We rely on the sure word of the Lord, that not one, not the least member of Christ, shall be lost; not one of Christ's bones, not the smallest, not a little finger of His body, shall ever be broken.

In the great day of the Lord, all the living body that has come through tribulation, death, and resurrection without a broken bone, shall be revealed. When the Head shall appear, all the members shall appear with Him in glory.‡ A glorious sight indeed!—Mystical Christ complete! and the Redeemer and the redeemed rejoicing together in the fruition of the promises of God!

\* Hos. ii. 19.

† Rom. viii. 1.

‡ Col. iii. 4.

## XXV.

*The Lord's Vineyard.*

THE Lord God has planted his Church as "a choice vine" in the earth. During the first ages of the world, His vineyard was not hedged in—there was no organisation of a religious community. But the calling of Israel out of Egypt marked a very important epoch in Church history. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land."\* This vine never perishes. There are diversities of dispensation. The Jewish aspect of religion has been abrogated; but the vine planted of old shall never die out. Every plant which the heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up, but this vine flourishes and puts forth tender grapes.

This is due entirely to the Divine care. Jehovah demands, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"† For the preserva-

\* Psalm lxxx. 8, 9.

† Isa. v. 4.

tion of the truth through centuries of the world's gross idolatry, religion was connected with the Jewish polity. Even the geographical position of Palestine hedged in the people and Church of Israel—guarded as was that good land by the Jordan and the two lakes on the east, the desert and mountainous Idumea on the south, the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and by Anti-Libanus on the north. Besides this, the peculiar ecclesiastical system, the Theocratic polity of Israel, strongly fenced in the vineyard of the Lord. With this external fence of separation and protection, everything essential to the internal completeness of a vineyard was also supplied. The Owner thereof made a wine-press, digged a wine-vat, and built a tower from which watchmen might guard the fruit. In other words, God furnished to His Church, even in the Old Testament times, all the advantages needful in those times for life and godliness. If fruits were not duly rendered to the Divine Owner, the blame lay, not on the appurtenances of the vineyard, as though they were defective, but on the misconduct of "the vine-keepers," and the negligence of the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. "For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant : and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry."\*

\* Isa. v. 7.

The vine-keepers in ancient times were the priests, Levites, and rulers of the people. The interests of the Church and of true religion were confided to them; the vineyard was let out to them that they might cultivate it, and obtain a yield of good fruit, as a revenue for their Lord. When the keepers of the Old Testament vineyard proved unfaithful in their office, so that nought was yielded but wild grapes—when they at last became so wicked, as not only to stone the prophets, the servants, but even to kill the Son, the Heir—God made a great change in His vineyard. Taking down the fence of Judaism, He planted the vine in the lands of the Gentiles. At the same time He changed the keepers thereof, the husbandmen.\* In lieu of the Jewish priests and elders, the Lord has given charge of His vineyard, in New Testament ages, to apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. In our own time, as many as “labour in word and doctrine,” walking in the steps of apostolic belief and example, are not only builders under the Master-Builder, and shepherds under the Chief Shepherd, but also vine-dressers under the Great Keeper of the vineyard. There is need of them. The vine is a plant that cannot endure neglect, that requires constant and minute attention. In every season of the year it must be watched and tended with assiduous care. In like manner the interests of religion, of the kingdom

\* Matt. xxi. 41-45.

of God on earth, demand the watchful and untiring assiduities of faithful men, who will give themselves wholly to the work of the vineyard.

This is not all. The Lord himself from heaven watches over His choice vine. He makes the Sun of righteousness to shine, and the rains of grace to descend, that His "pleasant plant" may grow and fructify. It is God who "gives the increase." "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."\*

The Divine "keeping" is rendered necessary by the serious dangers to which the Lord's vineyard on earth is exposed. Scripture mentions three such dangers:—

1. The boar out of the forest. As it is written, "The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it."† This is a figure of the violent persecution by which the Church of God has suffered. From the forests of heathenism the invader rushed again and again on Palestine, and the foot of the wild boar trod down the ancient vineyard of the Lord. In Christian times, the same violence has often been repeated. The havoc made of the primitive Church by Jewish and Pagan enemies—the suppression of the truth after the Reformation, in various European countries, by the sword drawn at the instigation of Papal Rome—and the cruelties inflicted on young

\* Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

† Psalm lxxx. 13.

Christian communities on heathen shores in our own time—are all so many rushes of “the boar out of the wood,” enraged against the heritage of Christ.

Yet the Lord has proved a faithful protector of His “pleasant plant.” His vine, trodden down by violence of persecution, has often revived with more vigour and beauty than before. History contains many instances in which injustice and attack have tended to the furtherance of the gospel. God, at such time as pleaseth Him, stays the oppressor; but even while the oppression lasts, and the boar out of the wood seems to work his will, Jehovah, restrains his wrath, and overrules all for good. The experience of this in the early Pagan persecutions of the Christian Church is boldly expressed in the words of Tertullian—“Plures efficimur, quoties metimur a vobis; semen est sanguis Christianorum.”

The Divine Keeper of the vineyard has defeated, and will defeat, the cruelty of “the boar out of the wood.”

2. A second danger lies in the ravages of “the little foxes.” These make no crashing sound like the wild boar, give no sign of their approach or presence, but enter unobserved, and soon spoil the vines, by preying on the tender grapes. “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.”\*

Foxes represent all cunning deceits of error and sin; and the “little foxes” are those so-called little sins

\* Cant. ii. 15.



which eat away the tender grape, the good promise of religion in youth. Great and glaring offences are more easily watched against and resisted ; but the little foxes glide in, and are in the heart of the vineyard, busy in destruction, before we know ; in other words, minute acts of inconsistency grow insensibly into habits, and work great mischief while we are unaware. The little foxes creep in at the smallest hole in the fence ; little sins creep in at the smallest crevice of unwatchfulness, and, once in, make sad havoc of young religion, of the tender grape. Therefore the Lord, who watches over His vineyard, cries, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes !" Let these little ones of Babylon be dashed against the stones !

3. The third danger comes from unfaithful pastors or false husbandmen : "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my portion of desire a desolate wilderness."\*

In the days of old the Church was wasted and corrupted by false prophets and unworthy ministers of religion : hireling shepherds, that fed themselves, and not the flock—lying prophets, telling "visions of their own heart"—keepers of the vineyard, unfaithful to their trust ;—such were the men to whom Scripture ascribes the declension and corruption of the Jewish religion. The New Testament also contains frequent warnings

\* Jer. xii. 10.

against false apostles and teachers, "deceitful workers," "seducing spirits;" and the history of the Church since the Christian era has shewn how much these warnings are needed, in the baneful effects wrought in the Church by men who have alleged themselves to be its only trusty guardians. Heresies, strifes, persecutions, and bigotries have commonly entered the Church through irreligious and unworthy clergy. Not even the boar out of the wood has done so much harm to the vineyard as popes and priests, and unconverted or cold-hearted Protestant ministers have done. Clerical pretensions and ecclesiastical garments may be wrapped about men who are no true keepers of the vineyard. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."\*

The end for which the vineyard exists is the production of fruit. All the plantation, culture, defence, and care are pointed to this result—"much fruit." "Solomon had a vineyard in Baal-hamon," and from each of the keepers received a thousand pieces of silver as a return for the produce of the vine.† Christ our King has, by the ministry of His servants, a rich vintage, a grateful return for His manifold grace, so that His soul "is satisfied." The entire dispensation of saving mercy, the culture of the vineyard, and the labours of all faithful husbandmen therein, unitedly tend to one good

\* 1 John iv. 1.

† Cant. viii. 11.

result—the increase of godliness, to the glory of the Father in heaven, and the joy of the ascended Saviour. In the time of vintage, when the clusters of ripe grapes shall be gathered in, all heaven shall ring with the shout of praise—“Grace, grace unto it!”

## XXVI.

*The Bright and Morning Star.*

ALL thoughtful men have revered the stars. The mind is soothed and awed by the expressive quiet of a starry sky. Not the poets only, but all men of reflection and sensibility, have imitated the son of Jesse in the night watches: "I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained."\*

In the noble imagery of Scripture, the lights of the firmament are made preachers of righteousness: "The Lord God is a Sun;"† the Church is to be "fair as the Moon."‡ One beautiful emblem in the sky the Lord Jesus has appropriated to Himself—the steadfast dayspring from on high: "I am the Bright and Morning Star."§ Many are the stars in the sky, one differing from another in glory, but this excelleth them all—the chief among ten thousand, and "altogether lovely."

\* Psalm viii. 3.

‡ Cant. vi. 10.

† Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

§ Rev. xxii. 16.

Two days are given to the Church—a day of grace, and a day of glory. The dayspring of each is the appearing of the “same Jesus” in His first and second advents.

From the sad era of the Fall, darkness settled on the human race. Losing original righteousness, man lost the light of life. The promise, indeed, of a victorious Seed of the woman, given to our first parents before they left the garden of Eden, relieved the gloom of their expulsion. The hope kindled by this and other promises was a light in darkness to the Church of the Old Testament, while thick clouds yet covered the sky. The ancient believers were “saved by hope,” the hope of the Lord’s appearing. So one of them wrote, “My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.”\*

The ancient Pagan world lay in gross darkness. It was unhappy, indeed, and restless: for human souls were all made for light, and its philosophers, and priests, and people alike groped and stumbled in the gloom; now glorying in some poor lantern of this world, as if it were a planet in heaven—now rushing after some *ignis fatuus*, till they lost their way more hopelessly than before.

The fulness of time brought the world’s second daybreak, and the Church’s first daybreak in Judea. We know that in nature the morning star appears at its due

\* Psalm cxxx. 6.

time in silence, without clamour or ostentation—no thunder peals through heaven to herald its approach. So did Jesus come. In Bethlehem-Judah, and in the very stable of the inn, was the nativity of the Son of the Highest—the dawn of redemption, the rise of the Bright and Morning Star.

“ For Thou wert born of woman ! Thou didst come,  
 O Holiest ! to this world of sin and gloom ;  
 Not in Thy dread omnipotent array,  
 And not by thunders strow'd,  
 Was Thy tempestuous road ;  
 Nor indignation burnt before Thee on Thy way ;  
 But Thee, a soft and naked child,  
 Thy mother, undefiled,  
 In the rude manger laid to rest  
 From off her virgin breast.” \*

Obscure as was the nativity, there were signs and tokens sufficient that a good era for man had arrived. A multitude of the heavenly host sang praises when the Star of our redemption rose. The shepherds, angel-taught, saw the Babe in the manger, and wondered. Magi from the East, star-guided, fell down before the Divine Infant, and worshipped ; and aged Simon in the temple, holding the virgin's Child in his arms, spake of Him as the “ light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people Israel.” †

Signs of calamity soon appeared from the powers and lovers of darkness. These could not love the Lord

\* Milman.

† Luke ii. 32.

Jesus, and wished Him extinct because He disturbed them with His light. The attempt was made to destroy Jesus in His infancy. Murderous Herod tried to quench that Morning Star in blood, when first it faintly rose in Bethlehem. The demons, too, whose element is darkness, complained that the Star had appeared too soon, exposing their malignant tyranny: "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"\* Wicked men were no more glad than the very demons to see the day break. By long habit men become so inured to moral darkness, that it is painful and irksome to them to look on heaven's pure light. It was thus with the elders and chief priests, the scribes and Pharisees. They felt the presence of the Lord Jesus a constant rebuke to themselves; hence their plots to weaken His influence, to blacken His reputation, to eclipse the provoking radiance of that bright Star, and, if possible, extinguish it utterly in the darkness of death. These plots had their consummation and apparent triumph in the crucifixion. But from that hour, when all seemed lost, there was given a brighter lustre and a more extended radiance to our exalted Morning Star.

It must be acknowledged, that the day ushered in by the first advent of the Saviour has not been a

\* Matt. viii. 29.

day without clouds. The brightness has been intercepted and concealed from many; the powers of darkness struggle hard and long to impede the growing light.

The Church looks forward to another and more perfect day, to be ushered in by the second advent of the Son of man. Simon Peter has given directions to Christians how to walk "till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."\* He points to the time of Christ's appearing in the resurrection morn—"Behold! he cometh with clouds," but the clouds shall not hide His radiance from the eyes of angels or men, for "every eye shall see Him."† "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."‡

Ungodly men and unclean spirits may fear that dawn of day, but it is an object of earnest hope to believers. Not more ardently did the Old Testament worthies wait for the first, than the New Testament Church ought to wait for the second coming of the Lord. "Joy cometh in the morning." Reunion of the long-parted cometh in the morning. Crowns of righteousness come in the morning to all who love the Lord's appearing. Thereafter no clouds or dark-

\* 2 Peter i. 19.

† Rev. i. 7.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 29, 30.



ness shall fall upon the Church. The children of light shall be gathered before the throne, "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."\*

\* Rev. xxii. 5.

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