THE LORD JESUS, IN JOHN I. 43-11. 25.

The Lord may be traced in this scripture, as One who ranges, if 1 may so express it, *through different regions of divine glory*, in the calm and perfect sense of this, that they all belong to Him, and are *fully and properly His own*.

In His intercourse with Nathaniel, the Lord Jesus shews Himself to be the One who touches the deep springs that are in man, conversing in power with the spirits of all flesh, re-making man also, re-creating him after His own mind, and stamping a new character upon him, as for eternity. He lets this Israelite know, that He had been with him under the fig-tree, ere Philip had called him, and that He was there with him, remodelling his mind and character, giving him, as it were, a new condition of being, making him, according to the divine oracle in Ps. xxxii., "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

It was the Spirit of God that alone could thus converse with Nathaniel's soul, and form him anew, as was done under the fig-tree. And thus it is, that Jesus here rises on the conscience of that Israelite in the glory of God; and under the weight and sense of that glory he worships Him,

This is a very wondrous moment. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Jesus, the power which Jesus uses in divine sovereign grace. The Lord Jesus is before us here, as the Jehovah of the day of Gideon. Jehovah addressed Gideon according to

His own counsel about him, or as such an one " Thou as His own Spirit was making Him. mighty man of valour," says the Lord to Gideon, though at that time he was but a poor man of Manasseh, threshing wheat in his father's threshing floor at Ophrah. But, in the counsel of God, and by the energy of the Spirit, Gideon was the leader of the host of Israel against Midian; and the angel spoke in divine intelligence to him, or as the One who knew the purpose of God respecting So is it here. Jesus addressed Nathaniel, him. as Nathaniel was under the operation of the Holy Ghost, imparting to him the character of a guileless Israelite. This operation had been going on with Nathaniel in the solitude of the fig-tree, and that operation Jesus was divinely acquainted with.

Jesus was thus visiting the soul as God alone can visit it. He was touching the very springs within, and forming man after a new model. And in this most blessed and wondrous way, we track Jesus through one peculiar region of divine glory, and see Him there, in the power of His own Spirit, doing divine work. And He is there, as at home, as One who had the title to be there, without wrong or robbery. For what, I may ask, of divine prerogative is not His? What region of divine power may He not survey and measure as His own? Be they deep or high, be they where the *Spirit* of God alone can work, or be they where the *finger* of God alone can work, where the *strength* of God alone can be felt, or the *wisdom* of

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God alone can enter, Jesus will occupy them all, as all His own. And thus we find Him, as we pass on through this fine scripture.

There was a marriage in Cana, and Jesus is invited. He goes—and He is there in His despised, rejected form, as among men. Man has objects worthier of his regard, and Jesus is nobody in the presence of the bride-groom, and the guests, and the governor of the feast. But, though the world knew Him not, it was made by Him. And accordingly, He touches the springs of nature here, as afore, in the person of Nathaniel, He had touched the spirits of men. He re-creates, He reforms, the material found in the kingdom around, as He had already done with the materials found in the kingdom within. He turns the water into wine, at this marriage feast in Cana.

This was what the finger of God that once garnished the heavens, alone could do—the voice of God that once said, "Let there be light, and there was light." But in this, Jesus is seen in another region. He is God still, but God acting in another place or sphere of power, in the kingdom of nature, and not in the secret place of the spirits of all flesh. But it is the same unspeakably blessed God of glory that we track, whether here or there, and Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Stranger on earth, Jesus the Guest of the marriage at Cana, is He.

But do we, I ask, delight to see the Lord Jesus thus traversing regions where God alone could

find and know His way? Is this sight of His glories grateful to us? With all the grace which the thick veil of His humiliation casts over it, our spirits should have the same communion with the *person of Jesus* as with the *presence of God*. For it is God, though manifest in the flesh, we know in Him—and faith, therefore, worships. Man He was in deepest, fullest verity; of flesh and blood partaker; but He was the Word made flesh. And there is no region of the divine glory that He does not tread in the calm, assured power, and conscious right, which alone befit that only One to whom they all belong.

But, again, He purifies the Temple, His Father's house. But He does this as the *God* of the Temple: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This was building houses as God alone could build them: "Every house is builded of some man, but He that built all things is God." To build by creation, or by resurrection, as here, is *divine* architecture, and Jesus is a *divine* Builder: "He spake of the temple of His body."

He had touched, as we saw, the springs of the *spirit of man*, and of *nature*, and now He touches the very sources or foundations of the *power of death*. And this is another region which belongs to God —part of *His* dominions. And Jesus, after this manner, as we still track Him through this scripture, is still God, God in the mighty strength of God down in the place of death, as before He had been God with the voice or finger of God abroad

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in the realm of nature, or with the Spirit of God, in the place of the spirits of all flesh. "In John's Gospel," as one has said, "Jesus is God come down from heaven." Nature is not too wide a region for Him, the spirit of man that is in him is not too secret a region for Him, or death and the grave too deep or profound or mighty a region. He visits each and all of them in divine grace, divine power, or divine triumph, and leaves everywhere the same witness that God Himself had been there.

We have, however, another path of the glory of Christ, still to follow in this scripture.

He had been doing miracles; and it is said, "Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles that He did"—but then it is added, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Here is God again. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart."

Jesus did not know man, or the springs or energies of corrupt nature, by reason of any fellowship with them, for He had no such fellowship. The prince of this world had nothing in Him. He was "that holy thing "---" holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." But still, as this passage tells us, "He knew what was in man." He knew it all, and that it was deceitful above all things. He searched the hearts and tried the reins of the children of men. He knew all men, not one more than another, but he tried the reins; He knew what was in man. He, who by His prophet, had long ago declared that man was deceitful above all things, now (when He stood in the midst of men) "would not commit Himself unto them."

This was *divine* acquaintance with man. This was full, radical, perfect understanding of man, after the manner of the divine mind. Jesus was *God* in His knowledge of man. What Jehovah declared Himself to be by His prophet, Jesus is now declared to be by the evangelist. Jesus knew nothing of *revolted* man, or of the heart's corruption by sympathy, but He knew it all as God, who searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men, to give every man according to his ways; as He does here; for He denies man His confidence, as "deceitful above all things," and thus, according to his ways, unworthy of that confidence.

Here again, then, the Lord Jesus takes the way of God, and ranges again through another region that belongs only to God.

We see Him thus, beloved. God He is, whereever God may be known or tracked. God, in the place of the spirits of all flesh; God, in the kingdom of nature; God, in victor-strength over death and the grave; God, as searching the hearts and reins of the children of men.

Jesus is there where God *alone* could be; there, in all the settled ease and certainty of One who li si tr is of O co

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an sea is, knew those regions as His own. In grace unutterable He has known the homestead of the human family, and been an inhabitant of the village of Nazareth—the Son of man, He has lived and walked with the children of men, eaten of their bread and drunk of their cup, known their toils and their sorrows in all their reality, and at their hand suffered reproach and rejection and death, but He was equally at home where the Spirit of God alone could work, and where the voice of God alone could be heard and command, where the strength of God alone could prevail, and where the light or knowledge of God alone could enter and search.

He ranges all the dominions of God, and is no trespasser. There is no robbery of a glory that is another's; it is His own. He is the Former of light, the Creator of the ends of the earth; the One who touches the springs of nature, and they come forth in forms such as His fingers fashion and His voice commands.

This is so; and we can track it all here in this scripture, without doubt or difficulty. But in the midst of all this, there is a thing betrayed, though incidentally, which, in hope of further profit, I will notice.

The Mother, in a general sense, knew the glory and power of the Lord, but she knew not the season or the moral order of that glory; and this is, wherever it appears, a great evil. She said to

Him at the feast, "they have no wine," desirous that He should display Himself. She was as one that said, "shew thyself to the world" (chap. vii. 4). But she greatly erred. His time-for this had not come. He will, indeed, manifest His power in the souls of His elect now; He will, by His Spirit, visit Nathaniel under the fig-tree : He will re-create a sinner, and give him a new character for eternity; and He will own such chosen ones, and know them, and address them in their new place, and read out to them, as it were, the writing that is written of them in the Book of Life, as here in His earliest welcome of the man of Cana. He will do all this now : but He will not as yet shine in a glory that the world can appreciate. "My time," says He, " is not yet come." The Mother, therefore, did greatly err. A common error, and never more common than in this day in which we live. "Shew us a sign from heaven," was the craving of hearts that knew not the Christ, the Son of God, because the god of this world had blinded their eyes. But Jesus gave them another kind of sign altogether, "the sign of Jonas the prophet." He must be known in humiliation in such a world as this, if known aright. The Mother took the place and part of the world in this suggestion, "they have no wine," and she is rebuked. "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Her worldly-mindedness is rebuked. Jesus could have no sympathy with it.

Not only, however, is she rebuked, she fails also,

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to see the glory that the Lord will display; and this has great meaning in it for us.

He makes the water wine. He supplies the table as the divine Lord, or Creator, of the feast. But the governor of the feast knew nothing of this, the bridegroom knew nothing of it, the guests knew nothing of it, the Mother was not in the secret or the vision of it; it was only the servants who had this secret in the midst of them, and the disciples who had this manifestation of glory made to them.

All this has great meaning in it for us. The Mother lost, in spirit, what she had, in the mind of the world sought after. And so with us. As far as we are, in spirit, one with the world, so far must we be left without discoveries of the glory of the Son of God, or communion with Him. For He is not of the world : His time for manifestation is not yet come ; it must be judged and re-fashioned, ere that can be. And according to the moral of such a truth as that, the Mother, on this occasion, is rebuked, and is left without the manifestation of that glory in which the Son could shine and did shine. Those, and those only, who were in the due place, the servants and the disciples, are let into the secret and get the vision; for they filled, morally, the very opposite place of the Mother. She was of the world, but they are nobody in the scene. The governor of the feast had his dignity, . the bridegroom his joy, the guests their good cheer, and the Mother a mother's vanity and expectations ;

but the servants and the disciples are nothing, and seek for nothing beyond what service or discipleship called them to, and they learn the secret of His power, and behold the manifestation of His glory.

What a lesson for us in the midst of these discoveries of Him that was "God manifest in the flesh !" We must awake, we that are sleeping with the world, if we would get more of "the light of the Lord."

RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT WORKS.

(Concluded from page 120.)

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding : whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."

Under the blessedness of transgression forgiven, sin covered, and iniquity not imputed, comes in a new order of guidance; the guidance of the eye of Him who has justified us freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

When it pleased Jehovah to redeem Israel out of Egypt He Himself became their Guide. Israel needed guidance; and Jehovah went before them in a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. He thus went before them to search out a

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But now the very end of redemption is to bring us into communion with the thoughts and ways of God, and such a guidance would not be suitable to our standing : " The servant knoweth not what his master doeth " (John xv. 15). He goes and comes at his bidding, but he knows not the reason of either. Such a character of obedience would not suit those who know the blessedness of transgression forgiven, and are thereby admitted into the very thoughts and counsels of God. "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16). The obedience now suitable is intelligent obedience: "Understanding what the will of the Lord is "-" Proving what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God " (Eph. v. 17; Rom. xii. 2). Now just in proportion as the guidance is of a higher order, so is it more difficult; and there is ever a readiness

in us from this very difficulty, to take the lower order of providential guidance, instead of the guidance of the eve. The "Directorship" practised in the Romish church, may as readily be accounted for, on the principle of being a relief from the exercise of conscience before God, as on the principle of priestly domination. It is far more congenial to the natural heart to have the conscience kept by another, than to have it exercised before God. And the plea of infallibility has a charm in it, because it saves us the trouble of judging before God, what is truth, and what is error-what is right and what is wrong. If the real power against the fundamental doctrine of Popery is found alone in the doctrine of "righteousness without works," the practical use of this truth in leading our souls into habitual intercourse with God, is the alone preservative from the principle of "directorship." It is not the guidance of the eve of God, when we follow an individual Christian, or a congregation of Christians. The provision of God in the blessed truth of righteousness without works, is that the conscience of each individual should be in direct connection with Himself. And is there any instance on record where even Christian legislation for the Church has not trenched on God's prerogative, of having to do with the consciences of individuals. Apostolic authority dare not come in between God and the conscience. I utterly repudiate the idea of each man doing what is right in his own eyes, but I do most strenuously assert

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the truth of God's right to have to do with the conscience; and of the believer's privilege, I say not duty, to have his conscience exercised before God. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. xiv. 5, 23). And is it not the necessary fault of every establishment, that it arrogates to itself the right to settle those things which God has left to be settled before Him. And thus the very obedience of saints is regulated not by God, but by the convention of the religious Society to which they belong. We are members of one body, and members one of another; and our healthful corporate action must be hindered, if we leave out the important truth, that we are members of Christ. How needed is intercourse with God to guide the conduct of a saint. And is it not for neglect of this that we bring much discipline on ourselves? God will have His way with us. But how often are we as the horse and mule, which have no understanding : not understanding the will of God because we study not the guidance of His eye. We are led by circumstances, and not by the Spirit. We walk in a large place when we walk before the Lord ; but how apt are we to turn each one to his own way, and God has His bit and bridle for us. This He is wont to use for His enemies : "Because thy rage against Me, and thy tumult is come up into Mine ears, therefore will I put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest" (Is.

xxxvii. 29). And how constantly do we as His saints, to our shame be it spoken, need the bit and bridle to turn us back by the way we have come. Who is there who has not to confess that the right path has been reached by painful and humbling discipline, which would have been readily found had heed been given to the guidance of the eye. Amidst the manifold proofs of present conscious weakness, this appears to me very prominent, the little confidence which the saints have of spiritual guidance in their several paths. They walk not as those consciously led of the Spirit. Among many, indeed, such guidance is not acknowledged even as a principle ; providential guidance, if so it may be called (for providential control over circumstances, or even our own waywardness, can hardly be called guidance), is alone regarded. But where the principle of intelligent spiritual guidance is maintained as the privilege of the saint, how readily do we take hold of providential ordering as our ground of action. Hence we tread uncertainly: or we follow the steps of others ; but this is walking by sight and not by faith. This arises from the habit of only using our blessedness as a shelter, and not as that which introduces us into the presence of God. It is a beautiful description of the Thessalonians, that their " work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ," was " in the sight of God and our Father."

To Israel God shewed His *acts*, but He made His *ways* known to Moses, the one with whom He co fri ha H

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conversed familiarly, as a man talketh with his friend (Ps. ciii. 7; Ex. xxxiii. 11). Surely God has by His grace introduced us into intimacy with Hinself that we too might know His ways.

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart."

Nothing can be more hollow than the mere conventional righteousness of men ; it is based on human convenience or selfishness; without any regard to the holiness of God at all. It is simply character as man estimates character, the most fatal hindrance to the reception of the truth : " How can ve believe, which receive honour one of another. and seek not the honour which cometh from God only" (John v. 44). And so strongly does this regard for character act, that even when the judgment is convinced of the truth of God, man is too cowardly to avow his conviction : " Nevertheless among the chief rulers also, many believed on Him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue : for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God " (John xii. 42, 43). There is one way in which we find the word of God frequently detecting this hollowness, and that is, by the remarkable contrasts which it draws : " Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved ; but

he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (John iii. 20, 21). Here the human contrast to doing evil, would be doing good ; but that would simply be man's estimate of himself, by comparing himself with his fellow men; but God contrasts man with himself, and "he that doeth truth" forms his estimate of himself from God. This is the thing needed. The light lays man open to himself as he is; naked and open before So again, God will send strong delusion on God. many to believe a lie, because they loved not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thes. ii. 11, 12) And here in the Psalm before us we find "the wicked" contrasted with him" that trusteth in the Lord." And surely the wicked is he who "hath not submitted himself unto the righteousness of God" (Rom x. 3),-the one who will not submit to be saved as a sinner by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. iii. 24), but seeks for righteousness in some other way. To trust in the Lord-how simple, yet how sure-how honouring to God, and yet how happy for ourselves-to give Him credit for having all in Hinself which we find not in ourselves-to go out of ourselves for everything, and to find every craving answered in Christ. God knows our need as sinners, and He has provided for that need in Christ. Yes, "We are the circumcision, which worship God in (' by ') the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil, iii. 3). Such have obtained mercy. -such know their need of it. "God is rich in mercy" (Eph. ii. 4)—He is able not only to add mercy to

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mercy, but to multiply mercy ; yea, to surround them with mercy : or, as it is beautifully expressed in another translation of the Psalms, "mercy embraceth him on every side." This is our truthful place. If we look back, it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us (Tit. iii. 5). And it is " according to His mercy " that He still deals with us: there will be discipline and correction by the way, because it is for our profit ; bat God's rule of dealing with us is according to that which is in Himself, ----- His mercy." And if we look forward, does the thought arise of glory, as connected with our faithfulness or service ?-and the thought does arise sometimes to dispirit, and sometimes to set us on a wrong ground of service-how suitable the word, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). We have earned no title to glory. Glory shall come to us in the shape of mercy. God will " make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He hath afore prepared unto glory " (Rom. ix. 23). When Israel came into possession of houses full of all good things which they filled not, and wells digged which they digged not, vineyards and olive trees which they planted not-then the danger was of their forgetting the Lord (Deut. vi. 10-12), and assuming that as their own right for which they were merely debtors to the grace of God.

This is too true a picture of our own hearts. We take as a right that for which we are debtors to mercy alone. We rejoice in the blessing which we have reached by trusting in the Lord; and then we trust in the blessing and forget the Lord. We only and always stand in grace, we live by faith, we stand by faith, we are constant debtors to mercy; and in glory we shall know ourselves eternal debtors to mercy. And a great part of our most humbling discipline is designed to keep us in our right and no less blessed standing. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."

It is interesting to follow the line of thought of the Spirit of God-if the expression may be allowed -to see the connection between one part of His utterance and another. It is of great advantage to have a solid substratum of Christian doctrine. such as we frequently find in the Protestant confessions of faith But this, however valuable to detect error and to prevent headiness and highmindedness, does not meet the need of the soul. The soul is not satisfied with an accurate theory ; it needs the truth to be applied in its wondrous variety. In this Psalm the Spirit of God is not treating a subject, but rather carrying out into its blessed results the oracle with which the Psalm commences. The "righteous" are not previously mentioned in the Psalm; and if we were to take our own thought of righteous, instead of the thought of the Spirit, we should sadly mistake. But the comment of the Holy Ghost Himself, by the mouth of His apostle in Rom. iv., immediately leads us to connect the last verse of the Psalm with the first verse, and to identify the righteous here spoken of with those whose blessedness is declared in the oracle with which this Psalm commences. And thus, too, we see that the Holy Ghost, throughout the Psalm, is describing the blessedness of those to whom God imputes "righteousness without works;" and closes all, with calling on such to "be glad in the Lord and rejoice." Just as, by the apostle, He says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4). There is a time coming

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when "all the earth " will be called upon to "rejoice before the Lord," even after He shall have made known His salvation, and after His righteousness shall have been openly shewn to the heathen (Ps. xcviii). But we wait not for circumstances. Knowing the Lord, we can and ought to rejoice. And wherefore is it that others judge, through us, of the Gospel, as though it were a system of privation and renunciation, instead of one of the richest acquirements? Is it not that we try to be glad in ourselves, or in circumstances, instead of in the Lord ?--- and thus we are subject to much variableness, instead of living by faith in the Son of God : learning what He is of God made unto us : and what we are, and what we have, in Him. In the most truthful confession before God of what we are, we can still " rejoice in the Lord." Before He shews Himself publicly-before He manifests in glory to the eyes of all what the sons of God really are (Rom. viii. 19)-believing, we can rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. And wherefore our deplorable lack of such joy? Is it not that we fail in discerning and carrying out the blessedness of "righteousness without works?" We do not know it experimentally; we do not see its moral beauty ; it does not shine with increasing lustre on our souls ;--because they are not exercised as they should be before God. We are, somehow or other, more occupied with that which displays us before men, than that which displays God to us. Hence, we drink not at the Spring Head of joy. O that we could practically tell out to others that God Himself had made us happy, that we "joy in God" (Rom. v. 11).

And again, the upright in heart are connected with the blessedness declared in the first verses of this Psalm. We read of one whose "heart was not right in the sight of God" (Acts viii. 21). He had the base thought-"that the gift of God might be purchased with money." Now, no real Christian can entertain the thought that such a gift as Simon coveted is purchasable by money. But the base thought is in our hearts, to earn something from God, and this hinders uprightness Surely, uprightness of heart is to mainof heart. tain our character before God as sinners saved by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and to carry with us that character before men. If we forget what we are in ourselves, or what grace has made us to be in Christ, we are not upright in heart. It is blessed, indeed, not to have a part to act before God (for such is human religion), but to go before Him in the character which He has given to us, in the righteousness with which He Himself hath clothed us. To be upright in heart is not to draw a line between religions and other duties, but to come to the light to learn ourselves, and learn the glory of God in His grace. Where there is human sincerity and human uprightness and conscientiousness, it cannot perhaps, well be said that there is hypocrisy; but, such natural uprightness is apart from God, and may exist, and has existed, where God has not been known or revealed. But now light has come Men may know their real into the world. character in the estimate of God. And the condemnation is, that he "cometh not to the light" (John iii. 20). And before God all will be found hypocrites--that is, acting a character-save those who, coming to the light, and learning what they are in God's judgment, have sheltered themselves under the blessedness of "righteousness without works." Such are upright in heart ; in their spirit is no guile. They may "shout for joy."