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Gleanings From the Book of Life

Henry Law

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PREFACE

Inattention to the 'semblance of religion' is not the failing of the present day. The Church and its affairs occupy large space in thoughts and writings and discourse. While luxury, love of pleasure, the pride of life and selfishness in all its multiple forms, as rank weeds, overrun the surface of society, they choke not lively interest in spiritual concerns. Notwithstanding the chilling blasts of infidelity, and the enervating malaria of superstition, zeal for 'forms of devotion' conspicuously holds its ground.

To look around gives proof. Is money solicited to multiply and enlarge churches and schools, to endow districts, to embellish fabrics, to deck protrusive choirs in emulation of dramatic orchestras, abundance generally responds to the appeal. It must be allowed, then, that unprecedented liberality excludes the charge of cold indifference in sacred matters.

Hope, ever joying in bright prospects, gladly marks these demonstrations, and trusts that

England is advancing to fulfill the prophetic rapture, and to be a "crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God." (Isa. 62:3)

But a truth here cannot be wholly checked. In nature early appearances often raise fallacious hopes. Vernal blossoms may promise more than autumn yields. Means do not constitute the end. Steps may enter the right path, and still no home be ultimately reached.

The application of this thought is obvious. Edifices may exhibit architectural skill in full perfection. Beauties of stone and marble may delight the beholder. Flowers and fruit may decorate the scene. The officiating minister may be splendid in attire. Services may be as ornate as ingenuity can render them. Singers in conspicuous dress, and in conspicuous place, may sound enchanting melody. But after all, the benefit may not extend beyond the charmed eye and ear.

Let it be fully granted, that so long as such elaborations transgress not the chaste proprieties of Reformation-rule, suspicious distrust should not interfere. But there is peril, lest the signs of life be mistaken for realities. Shadows are not substances. Tinsel is not pure gold. Hence, when these signs exceedingly abound, caution will become more vigilant, and wisdom not slumber in its watchtower.

No folly ever yet denied, that religion avails not, if it evaporates in moments of emotion. The long procession and the crowded pew are not necessarily the strait gate and the narrow way. Trivialities make triflers. Solid food gives strength. The current then of modern propensities loudly warns, that the mind preoccupied by 'mere external show' cannot admit essential verities.

Is it not beyond all controversy, that apart from living faith in Christ, there is no pardon for sin, no cleansing from iniquity, no reconciliation with our heavenly Father, no access to Him, no welcome to the sacramental feast, no peace of conscience, no hope of heaven, no escape from hell! Is it not as indisputably true, that outward means are not the link which join the soul to Christ, and that the senses gratified are not the heart converted, and salvation won! We are infallibly taught, that the proclamation of the Gospel is the heaven-appointed instrument to minister such blessings. No substitute can take its place. If Christless sermons fall on Christless crowds, allured by music and bewitching show, the lifeless will remain lifeless, and the bubble burst in woe.

This is no new conviction to the writer of the following pages. Long experience and extensive observation have often awakened the sorrowful lament, that, amid much laudable exertion in the cause of religion, the only remedy for sin is miserably neglected, and well-meaning men expend their energies in sowing chaff. He has heard many complaints of ministerial defect, but few acknowledgments that the main fault is pulpit shortcoming. He sees, that "Christ is All" in the scheme of Redemption, and therefore should be all in the messages of His ambassadors.

Hence in former days he humbly strove to exhibit Christ as All in the pages of the Pentateuch. He concludes this work by selecting scattered passages to show that the same truth pervades the sacred volume.

No defense is made for them, who study not all reverence and decorum in the accessories of public worship. All circumstances should excite the feeling, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. 28:17) But surely greater faults belong to those who place externals on the throne of Christ. If elaborate ritual engrosses thought, and rather diverts from Christ than raises to Him, soul-ruin must be the result. Enlightened wisdom always keeps forms and rites, as the unobtrusive handmaids of things spiritual. The faithful pastor burns with desire to have saved souls as his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. Music and vestments will not be joy and glory in that day.

1. ANGEL OF THE LORD

"The Angel of the Lord appeared to him...And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

–Exod. 3:2-6

An avenue of sacred story leads to this wondrous scene. The prelude is awakening which introduces the grand subject. In the foreground Moses is seen. Forty years had run their course since he fled from the court of the Egyptian king. His burning zeal and patriotic spirit had flared too high. The fears of a suspicious monarch had been roused, and the safety of the reputed grandson necessitated flight. His refuge was the land of Midian. Here he long dwelt in peace, as a shepherd among shepherds. His calm employ would give abundant leisure for communion with heaven. Reflection would review past days. Thus profitable training schooled him for his destined course.

God frequently ordains that early obscurity should lead to most distinguished work. Dark hours precede the break of day. Joseph rises from prison to sit beside the king. From the sheepfolds David is called to occupy the throne.

The set time has now arrived. The deliverance may no longer tarry. The discipline has ended, and the prime instrument is prepared.

Moses, now seeking refreshment for his flock, leads them to Horeb, the mount of God. As he journeyed, his eye is attracted to a bush. Great indeed is his amazement as he surveys this sight! It was bright with fire; but though it blazed, it still retained its substance. Each branch, each fiber, was wrapped in flame; but the flame was harmless to destroy. Each leaf was clasped in the fangs of a devouring element, but still each leaf remained as if untouched. The fiery fury seemed to be in sport. The bush defied the attack. It stood uninjured, as if incapable of losing verdure.

The gazing shepherd would indeed be rapt in wonder. But amazement deepened into awe, when in the bush he saw the form of "the Angel of the Lord." A voice too addressed him, "Moses, Moses." He replied, "Here am I. And the Angel said, Do not come any closer: take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." (Exod. 3:5)

What constitutes the sanctity? Why is the rash approach of mortal foot forbidden? Surely one more than man must now be revealed! Present Deity must hallow the spot. It was so. The voice continued: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." (Exod. 3:6)

We here learn that Jesus is "the Angel of the Lord." The voice announced, "I am God," and the appearance exhibited a human form. Who can be both God and man but Jesus? The Father never appeared as man. The Holy Spirit never thus condescended. But the blessed Jesus, anticipating the time when earth should claim Him as its child, not infrequently assumed our form. Therefore, without hesitation, we receive "the Angel of the Lord" as Jesus the incarnate God.

Here let a pause be conceded, which without digression asks, What brings Jesus to the burning bush? What feelings actuate His heart? The reply lingers not. We hear the voice: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people, who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." (Vers. 7, 8) Exquisite tenderness melts in these words. Assurance of compassion is most sweetly stated. Let no believer faint in the hour of trial. His feet may travel in affliction's road. He may be called to lie on the hard couch of sorrow. Troubles may roll over him as wave upon wave. But the eye of love ever watches him, the heart of love ever throbs sympathetically for him, the ear of love ever listens to his cry, the hand of love will in due season be outstretched to help him. The patient sufferer will sing with David, "He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me." (Psa. 18:19) Thus comfort to the sorrowing is an early lesson from the "Angel of the Lord" appearing in the burning bush.

It is, too, scarcely a digression to note, that this appearance was deeply engraved on the patriarch's mind. His course throughout the wilderness was not external ease. Hard were his toils, and grievous his afflictions. But in his trials thought would fly back and take solace from this scene. The recollection of his Lord's appearance would check desponding fears. Strength

would revive, refreshed by these sweet memories. Thus it is wise to erect Ebenezers in the course of Christian pilgrimage.

The closing scene shows this appearance to have been a life-long comfort. Forty years again rolled on, and the man of God reached the conclusion of his earthly career. Before his lips are silenced, a legacy of precious gifts, brilliant with prophetic luster, is invoked. The treasures of earth are ransacked to find suitable gifts for the tribe of Joseph. But the crown of desired mercy is, "the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush." (Deut. 33:16) Thus, when ready to depart, Moses remembers "the Angel of the Lord," and he recalls Him as the source of blessings to the sons of men. Here let the ready prayer ascend, Good Lord! give us grace ever to bask under the sunshine of Your good will; Your favor is life; Your smile is deliverance from all woe!

The vestibule is now passed, and we are prepared to seek general instruction from this title.

I. It is obvious that the name mainly denotes that Jesus is the channel of communication between heaven and earth. There was a time, but it was very brief, when communion with God was free. In Eden's happy hours charming communion was maintained. A loving child drew near, a loving Father given a welcome. No barrier intervened; no separating obstacle presented checks; access was unimpeded. The garden was the open door of heaven.

But sin comes, and instantly a breach is made. Illimitable distance now parts God and man. Can that distance be removed, and converse be again established? "The Angel of the Lord" appears, and in His mission there is full reply.

Restoration to this blessed communion springs directly from His wondrous person. Jesus, as both God and man, brings heaven to earth, and raises earth to heaven. Thus the mountains upon mountains of obstacles are swept away, and intervening seas are annihilated. Thus a ladder is constructed, resting on earth, and soaring above the skies.

Let each aspect of our Lord's person now be pondered in confirmation of this truth. It cannot be kept too constantly before the mind, that He is very God— co-equal with the Father—His partner in majesty, in dignity, in power, in glory, in all preeminence. For a moment imagine Jesus displaced from the throne of Deity. The whole fabric of salvation crumbles into dust. No expiation can made, no sin pardoned, no soul saved. But on all His acts on earth the impress of Deity is inscribed. His footprints are Deity. The echo of His voice is Deity. The whole gospel-story resounds, "Behold your God!" Of all the truths of revelation, none more brightly shines than that "the Angel of the Lord" is Himself God over all, blessed forevermore. What God is, He is. What God knows, He knows. What God wills, He wills.

If He were only God, the separating distance would still check communion. But all praise to His unbounded love, in the plenitude of overflowing grace He becomes an inhabitant of earth! Without ceasing to be God forever, with no diminishing of essential Deity, He enters the family of man. Without the capability of sin, He is as truly man as any woman-born can be. "As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." (Heb. 2:14) He humbles Himself to be "the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29) As God, He is one with God; as man, He is one with man. On each His hand is placed. In Him as a center they can meet. The link is perfect, an unobstructed way unites our earth to heaven.

II. But as "the Angel of the Lord," He especially reveals God to the sons of men. He visits earth, not only that He may live our life and die our death, and suffer our sufferings, and pay our every debt, and bear our every curse, and make atonement for our every sin, and redeem us from all iniquity, and work out for us a heaven-deserving robe. This is indeed His glorious work, as the Savior of His people from their sins. But He came, moreover, on a sweet embassy—to open out the Father's heart, to tell us the Father's will, to shine before us as the express image of His Father's person.

Let a kindred title here give light. Jesus is announced as "the Messenger of the Covenant." Almost the concluding words of prophecy in the ancient Church proclaim, "Behold, I will send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom you delight in: behold, He shall come, says the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 3:1) It is faith's privilege to know, that before time was, an everlasting Covenant secures salvation. In all its terms Christ has essential

part. He stipulates to God for man. He speaks to man for God.

But not only is He its Surety, He is also its Messenger—its Angel. He reveals its mysteries, and opens out its wonders, and invites to the contemplation of its grace. Let no doubts here intervene. Let all mists of hesitating ignorance disappear. Hear the grand word, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." (Heb. 1:1, 2) Through Him, the Eternal Word, the counsels and purposes of heaven are announced. We are invited to draw near and give heed. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." (Matt. 17:5) We are called to receive the message, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money: come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfies not? Listen diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." (Isa. 55:1, 2)

Sweet promises, also, cheer obedient hearers. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:29) And again, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Rev. 3:20) Rich is the heritage of the listening Mary. She sat at the feet of Jesus to hear His voice, and received the full assurance, "She has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42)

Is not the same access open to us now? May we not at all times and in all places cry, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears?" "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:3) And the gates of this storehouse are never closed. He has come, a light into the world, that those who follow Him should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life. Never is the Sun of Righteousness eclipsed. It is faith's chosen pleasure-ground to come apart from lesser luminaries, and to revel in the rays of this unclouded sun, and to rise above schools of nature, science, philosophy, and to drink lessons from celestial springs of truth. Are our souls athirst for God, for the living God, eager to know Him as He really is? In this ardent desire we may fly to "the Angel of the Lord." He replies, "Look unto Me." "He who has seen Me, has seen the Father." (John 14:9) He is the light of life, and on this brightness we may gaze. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6)

Here we may study, written as with a sunbeam, all the Divine attributes. If we seek such discoveries from this world's school, how blighting is our disappointment! If we ask, "What are the feelings of God's heart?" The world presents a fearful roll, written within and without, with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." (Ezek. 2:10) Misery stalks up and down the earth, wretchedness sits beside each hearth, tears are ever flowing, sighs are ever heaving, pain is a constant visitant, apprehensions are ever banishing repose, earthquakes and storms and floods and famine, and wars and rumors of wars, move on with desolating speed. These dark spots affright, and we ask, Can these be offshoots of benevolence?

"The Angel of the Lord" appears, and all is bright. He gloriously shows that "God is love." The proof is His own mission. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10) "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) "The Angel of the Lord" exhibits Himself as sent by the Father, to rescue immortal souls from misery, to crown them with eternal bliss, to wash out in His blood

their every sin, to robe them with unfading righteousness, to fill them with all the fullness of God, to make them sharers of all the glory of heaven forever. Thus He illustrates the glorious truth, "God is love."

Similarly He commends every attribute. All are conspicuously glorified in Him. Justice is honored; all that is asked is fully given; not one debt remains uncanceled. Much is demanded. Jesus paid all. Truth sits triumphant on its highest throne, not one word from its lips fails, not one promise is unfulfilled, not one threat is put aside. It is declared that without holiness no man can see the Lord; that none but the sanctified can sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. "The Angel of the Lord" assures us, that for all this blessedness there is full provision, that a new creation shall be established in the hearts of the redeemed, that "old things shall pass away, that all things shall become new." Thus "the Angel of the Lord" is the channel of communication between heaven and earth, and gives full manifestation of the Father's essence.

Angel of the Lord! who will not adore You as the way to heaven, and the source of all saving light! We beseech You to enlighten us more and more, to sanctify us daily by Your truth; "Your word is truth;" to fulfill in us Your blessed declaration, "O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it; that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:25, 26) When other teachers would perplex, mislead, beguile; shine forth in all the luster of heaven's own light! From our inmost souls we profess, Angel of the Lord! "we know that You are a Teacher sent from God"—to none other will we go; "You have the words of eternal life."

2. SUN

"The Lord God is a Sun."

—Psalm 84:11

The sun, the noblest object in the material works of God, is here enlisted to represent our Lord. In its beauty and in its effects, whether seen by the eye, or felt in its results, it teaches largely. It shines not in vain on the terrestrial globe. May it not shine in vain, as spiritual instruction! Arise, O Sun of Righteousness! abundant source of joy and gladness, and enlighten our minds by the inspiration of Your rays.

I. In the firmament above, one sun meets our view. From the day in which the Creator's hand hung out this lamp of light, it has admitted no equal or compeer. Lesser luminaries have indeed glittered, deriving their luster from this center; but its seat has always been supreme. No competitor disputes its reign. To this day it rules unrivaled. And the same sun, which gladdened our first parents, shall display its brightness to the last descendant of the race of man.

Thus, in the scheme of redemption, there is but one Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. "As there is one body, and one Spirit, as we are called in one hope of our calling, so also there is one Lord." (Eph. 4:4) "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5) Vast is the family of adopting grace; many sons in faith cry "Abba, Father." Through union with the Lord of Life many are made "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;" but Jesus

alone sits on salvation's throne. The truth is gloriously established: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) A world of lost sinners has one need; one Savior comes rich to supply. Much is required; one is granted in whom sufficiency abounds. Jesus is the one. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:19)

Let enraptured thought expand. Contemplate the multitude of the redeemed around the eternal throne. They are very many; no stretch of mind can count them. They all were once transgressors upon earth, stained by innumerable sins. Now they are all whiter than the whitest snow. How has their loathsome blackness vanished? They have all washed in the one laver of cleansing; they are all pure by the application of the one blood of the one Jesus. Their filthy garments are all removed, they are arrayed in fitness for their high abode. Where was this lovely apparel won? They drew near, and by the hand of faith put on the righteousness which Jesus alone wrought. They all sing one song; it is ever new, it can never weary. It is thanksgiving, honor, praise, and power, unto God who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

While one sun shines to robe the world with light, can men be found so senseless as to exclude the entrance of its rays? Can they deliberately doom their dwellings to the perpetuity of darkness, or grope only by the feeble flickerings of 'candle twilight'?

Such infatuation exists not in things temporal. But in things spiritual far greater madness effects ruin. How many turn from Christ, the one only light of life, and seek to walk by their misguided reason, or the figments of their folly, or the inventions of dark superstition! Let such heed the warning, "Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that you have kindled. This shall you have of My hand; you shall lie down in sorrow." (Isa. 50:11) O Jesus! may we never draw back from You, the one, the only "Dayspring from on high." (Luke 1:78)

II. Of all material works, the sun confessedly commands preeminent admiration. Its resplendent orb is the firmament's grand ornament. Such is its dazzling splendor that no eye can long endure the gaze. In beauty it rises in the eastern chamber, in beauty it pursues its course, in beauty it sinks into the western bed. It shines in day-long perfection. No words can justly delineate its surpassing charms. If thought should endeavor to suggest improvement, vain would be the effort. No skill can picture more embellishment. Thus it shines a fit emblem of the blessed Jesus.

True it is that when He appeared as man, no pomp or parade marked His unobtrusive course. The splendid palace was not His abode. Stately equipage and gorgeous retinue attended not His steps. He moved the lowliest among the lowly, the meekest among the meek. In this sense He had "no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him." (Isa. 53:2) But to the eye of faith how different was the view! To those who believed, His every aspect was preciousness. Through the thin covering of mortal flesh they "beheld His glory—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." The Spirit exhausts terms to set forth His praises. "He is fairer than the children of men." Is not the Father gloriously arrayed in every attribute of perfection? Jesus is His perfect exhibition. As the impressed wax shows the image of the signet, so He represents the Father.

It is delightful exercise to meditate on the glowing raptures of the Song of songs. The charms of earth are called to picture the heavenly Bridegroom. He is "the chief among ten thousand. He is the altogether lovely One." (Song 5:10, 16) Who can portray the beauties of His person, character, and work! He appears as humanity robed in Deity. How enchanting is the tenderness of His heart! His pitifulness and compassion refuse all counterpart. His walk among the children of men was to do good—to cheer, to solace, to dispense blessings. As the sun's rays traverse the vilest hovels of filth uninjured by the contact, so Jesus sojourned in the regions of pollution untainted and unsoiled. His every look reflected heaven. His every word was God's own voice. How glorious in beauty must He be who is thus the very embodiment of God! We praise the sun, as the luster of the skies; so we praise Jesus, as the luster of heaven's glory. To the eye which gazes on the sun, surrounding objects disappear. Thus to all who gaze on Jesus, the charms of worldly things are dim.

III. The sun rises, and darkness flees. What would earth be, if the heavens gleamed not with this light! What would be man's abode, if one dark pall were spread around! If surrounding objects were no more visible, if human features were unseen, if creation's beauties were no more apparent, life would be monotony of woe. Terrified imagination shrinks from the bare thought. "Blackness of darkness forever" pictures the miseries of the lost. But the sun comes forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and robes the world with gladness. Mists vanish from the mountain's brow. Vapors no longer darken the low valleys. The world is bright, and shining objects captivate the senses.

Faith is here taught to see an emblem of its beloved Lord. It is His province to dispel the misery and gloom of ignorance. He is the Light of the world. His faithful followers no longer walk in darkness, they delight in the light of life.

All saving knowledge results from His teaching voice. As the sun is seen by its own light, so Christ is shown forth in Himself. He reveals what nature never could discern—the real character of sin; its filth, its vile pollution, its deluding frauds, its malignity, its demerits, its frightful course, its dreadful end. Men grope in darkness until this light shines; and then the awakened soul sends forth the cry, Who will deliver me—how shall I escape—is there no refuge? Thus it discerns the natural condition, and loathes and abhors itself.

What raptures abound when the day-star from on high presents Jesus in the boundless radiance of His eternal love! The joy is unspeakable and full of glory when Jesus shows the redeeming wonders of the cross. The streaming blood is then discerned as the payment of every debt, the satisfaction of all claims, the obliteration of all stains. The work of atonement is seen as wholly finished in His life and death. Heaven's glories blaze as a purchased possession, and the soul revels in the brightness of the Gospel-hope. As the sun gladdens earth, thus Jesus gives exhilaration. Faith often sings, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning; I say, more than those who watch for the morning." (Psa. 130:5, 6) The morning surely comes, and no disappointment chills the enlightened children of Christ's grace!

IV. Earth owes fertility to the genial influence of the sun. If fields are green and meadows are clad with verdure, if trees put forth their leaves and blossoms bud, and fruits hang down in plenty, and crops ripen and luxuriance fills the gardens, if food abounds for all earth's inhabitants, if seasons in turn cooperate to bring plenty, we owe this multiplied luxuriance to the effects of light. The sun looks down and earth responds in varied produce. Sterility departs, abundance takes its place.

Such is the vivifying work of Jesus. How cheerless and how barren is man's heart until celestial visits fertilize. In nature's soil no grace appears, no fruits of holiness enrich and gladden. But Christ's enlivening presence turns the wilderness into the garden of the Lord. Then precious faith springs up and grows exceedingly. Then hope raises its lovely head, and looks onward to the fullness of delight. The soul flourishes as a well-stocked garden. Beauteous flowers emit enchanting fragrance, and trees of righteousness are richly-laden. The believer under this influence is like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth its fruit in due season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." (Psa. 1:3) "He is as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jer. 17:8) The description is spiritually realized, "How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob; how lovely are your homes, O Israel! They spread before me like groves of palms, like fruitful gardens by the riverside. They are like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters." (Num. 24:5. 6) Behold in contrast the multitude who are strangers to the power of this Sun. They are "like the chaff which the wind scatters away." He is the fruitful Christian who ever pitches his tent on the sunny side of Zion's hill.

V. Warmth is the glad offspring of the sun. How changed is nature's face when shivering winter frowns, and the sun's course is brief, and indirect rays fall powerless! Chilling is the mantle which is spread around. Vegetation droops. The groves are silent. The babbling brooks are

mute in icy chains, and dismal dreariness pervades each scene.

How often is the soul subject to cold seasons! It is prone to relapse into pristine hardness. When the presence of the cheering Lord is absent, duties are inertly performed, prayers freeze on the lips, former lusts exert their deadly influence, indifference checks the flow of spiritual exercise, ordinances no longer nourish, vigor for work is bound by wintry fetters.

Such is the effect when the Sun of Righteousness withholds His visits. Christ only can relax the hardness, and recall refreshing glows of joy. His converse is the summer warmth. Hear the avowal of the disciples: "Did not our hearts burn within us, when He talked with us by the way?" (Luke 24:32) The sun obscured and the sun's blazing warmth, shows the contrast between Jesus withdrawn and Jesus present. Those who dread these benumbing seasons should never cease the prayer, "O Lord, quicken me according to Your Word."

VI. It has been said that healing efficacy resides in the sun, and that diseases are banished by its rays. The Spirit seems to endorse this notion when He depicts the Sun of Righteousness arising "with healing in His wings." (Mal.

4:2) But if doubt veils this healing quality, the cure of spiritual maladies beyond all controversy is exercised by Jesus. Heed His title, "I am the Lord who heals you." (Exod. 15:26) Heed the well-known words, "Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases." (Psa. 103:3) How thankful should we be that there is this "balm in Gilead, this Physician there." For grievous ailments are man's doom. The hereditary evil of inborn corruption, and the long train of maladies received by infection and connected with pollution, besiege our bodies. Truly "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isa. 1:5, 6) But why should our souls thus groan and languish! In Jesus there is remedy for every pain. Is it written in vain that in the days of His ministry on earth "as many as touched the hem of His garment were made perfectly whole?" (Matt. 14:36) Let then the cry approach the mercy-seat, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; for You are my praise." (Jer. 17:14) The answer will not linger, "I will bring health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth." (Jer. 33:6)

Many and obvious are the improvements from this teaching emblem. Suffice to add, those who are animated and cheered and warmed by the bright shining of this Sun will surely reflect His rays. They will obey the invigorating call, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." (Isa. 60:1) They will cause their "light so to shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." They will show that "children of the light and of the day" is no unmeaning title. (1 Thess. 5:5)

3. FRIEND

"This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

—Song of Solomon 5:16

Such is the language of the rapturous spouse. After enumeration of the charms of the spiritual Bridegroom, the boast cannot be restrained, "This is my Friend!" This is He whom my heart loves, my chief delight, my joy, my glory, my all.

The utterance of the collective body expresses the feeling of each component part. Every true believer exults in this happy portion, "This is my Friend."

The very name of friendship sounds as a melodious note. To hear it, is to receive pleasure. It is a theme which has awakened the poet's sweetest song; and on it moralists have instructively enlarged. The glowing pen has rapturously extolled it as the charm of life, the solace of the earthly pilgrimage, the balm of sorrow, the delight of early days, the prop of declining age, the unchanging joy in every changing scene. It is a true saying, Happy is the man who has a friend. He possesses what wealth could never purchase, what prosperity could never really win. What then shall be said of his supreme felicity who can in truth aver, My Friend is Jesus, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" "God over all, blessed forevermore;" "the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One"—the Lord who has all power in heaven and in earth, who wields the scepter of universal sway, in whom is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning;" who loves

with an everlasting love, who hates divorce! This is the believer's privilege. Without presumption he can boast, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

Let this grand truth be now approached by an analysis of some PROPERTIES OF FRIENDSHIP.

I. Mutual knowledge. This feeling can only breathe in the region of thorough acquaintance. It cannot live in hearts estranged and unfamiliar. We may take interest in strangers, and view them with respect and kindness; but friendship requires far nearer fellowship. To cement this union, heart must hold converse with heart—freely, fully, and unreservedly. Mind must have access to mind, and hold the key of intimate communion.

Such is the blessed oneness between Jesus and His friends. His lips declare, "I know My sheep, and am known of Mine." (John 10:14) This knowledge must be His, because omniscience is His property. The Psalmist truly says, "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me. You know my down-sitting and my up-rising. You understand my thoughts afar off. You compass my path, and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether." (Psa. 139:1-4)

Surely shame must fill the heart, and confusion must depress the head, when reflection shows our natural condition. The penetrating glance of Jesus surveys the whole. "His eyes are as a flame of fire." (Rev. 1:14) Daily provocations bid Him turn with abhorrence from the chief of believers; but He knows, and still He loves. How can this be! The answer is the Gospel's glory. He loves because He will love. His nature and His name import that He is love. No moving cause can be discerned, but in the depths of His own heart, and in His purposes to redeem and save. While His thorough knowledge tends to alienate, He still loves.

But His all-seeing eye observes not only evil's course, He notes the tears which bedew the cheek of penitence. He hears each sigh from the sin-stricken heart. His ears are open to every wrestling prayer. Each sound of praise flies swiftly to His ear. Every cry for pardoning mercy, every confession of guilt, each supplication for help, each call for guidance, each avowal of need, ascend to His mercy-seat. Job utters the consolatory truth, "He knows the way that I take." (Job 23:10) Each epistle to the Churches (Rev. 2) commences with the assurance, "I know your works." The movement of the believing heart is spread as an open page before Him. The budding, the bloom, the ripening, the fruit of every grace, the origin, the advance of every good word and work, are clear before Him. It cannot be otherwise, for all are the planting of His hand, the produce of His will and power.

Thus He knows His people. They, also, in part know Him. Now, indeed, they "see through a glass darkly; but then face to face." (1 Cor. 13:12) Now their faculties are dim, but "when He shall appear, they shall be like Him; for they shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2) But by the enlightening rays of the Holy Spirit He has so revealed Himself, that the believer may profess, "I

know whom I have believed." (2 Tim. 1:12) Faith clearly sees the glories of His person, the tenderness of His heart, the plenitude of His unchanging grace, the accomplishment of His finished work, the power of His unceasing intercession, His sufficiency and willingness "to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." (Heb.7:25) Believers daily grow in this knowledge. The book which portrays the lineaments of His features and the transcript of His character is their constant study. Thus is the knowledge strengthened which is the basis of true friendship. Realizing this mutual acquaintance, the believer professes, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

II. Friendship requires congeniality of tastes. The friend must love what the friend loves, and dislike what the friend dislikes. "How can two walk together, except they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3) It is true that by nature there is immeasurable alienation, infinite discrepancy, boundless estrangement between heaven and earth's inhabitants. The natural heart is conceived in sin, and shaped in enmity to God. But Jesus, by His Spirit's power, takes the stony heart out of the flesh, softens the rocky hardness, melts the obduracy, converts the ice into a glowing furnace. He creates a new heart. He infuses a right spirit. He forms a new being, lovely in righteousness, radiant in true holiness, modeled after the image of God. Light succeeds to midnight-darkness. Beauteous order smiles where chaos once frowned. The new-born believer is no more his own. Christ sits on the throne of his affections. His conversation is in heaven. His delight is in the law of his Lord; its righteousness is his main pursuit. His every desire is intermixed with Christ. His inner man is in consonance with Christ's will. Thus entire oneness rules. Hence a grand ingredient in friendship is established, and the believer truly boasts, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

III. Community of interests. This is a requisite of friendship. A friend is interwoven in his friend's concerns. What treasures of delight are contained in the truth, that Jesus and all He is, and all He has, is the sure property of His people! His abode on earth was theirs, that He might be their Surety, their Proxy, their Substitute. He died that they might not die eternally. He lives forever, that endless life may be their heritage. He reigns on high, that all things may be ordered for their

good. His power is theirs to guard and to defend. His angels are theirs to encamp, as a garrison around. His throne is theirs, that they may sit forever by His side. Thus the believer realizes, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine:" (Song 6:3) As the bridegroom endows the bride, so Jesus calls His friends to share His every possession.

So, also, the believer's interests are centered in Christ, and in Christ's kingdom. This all-absorbing feeling burns mightily. When Christ is magnified, honored, glorified, the joy of His friends is at its height. When Christ is scorned, vilified, neglected, crowned again with thorns, and crucified afresh, their spirit is depressed. To them truly "to live is Christ." (Phil. 1:21) It is their labor and delight to make known the glories of His name, and to bear witness to His praise. Their lips are warm to call sinners to His cross. Their steps are glad to seek the abodes of ignorance and vice, that they may allure, invite, and win to the service, which is perfect freedom and overflowing bliss. By all the means within their power they help the missionary cause. By self-denying efforts, by incessant prayer, they strive that Christ may be "known on earth, His saving health among all nations." Thus they testify, "This is our beloved, and this is our Friend." Our cause is His, His cause is ours. Our prosperity and peace and joy are the objects of His care. His glory is our main concern.

IV. Confidence. Between friends there is firm trust. This is preeminently true of Christ and His people. The believer trusts his Lord in all things for time and for eternity. Is it said of our heavenly Father, that "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) This is the believer's confidence. Christ gave Himself for me, how shall He not also freely give me all things?

We may not deny that man is born to trouble; the path through life is strewn with thorns. Believers reach heaven through much tribulation, and the thought will sometimes perplex: If I am His, why am I thus? His over-ruling hand could avert all sorrow, and crown me at each moment with loving-kindness and tender mercies. But these mists of doubt soon vanish. The deep and abiding persuasion is settled in the soul, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." (Job 13:15) There is no real apprehension that trials are evidence of desertion. The truth is engraved on the tablets of the mind, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Heb. 13:5) "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you." (Isa. 54:7) The Spirit's voice echoes through the heart, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom. 8:35, 37)

Unwavering is this confidence. It is founded on the immovable rock of the Word, on the vast roll of precious promises, on the review of happy experiences, on the recording pillars which gratitude has erected along the route of past days. There could be no firm friendship without this confidence; but bold in this confidence, the believer shouts, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend."

Other properties of friendship might be viewed. They would all appear in lovely train, consolidating the truth that Jesus is the "Friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov. 18:24) The believer, knowing this well, cherishes among his richest treasures the assurance, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15)

The contrast cannot be hidden. How dreary and cheerless is the path of life unsolaced by a friend! But sadder far is that man's state who knows not Jesus as his own. His life is as the day which has no sun—as weakness with no sustaining staff—as sorrow with no sympathy—as solitude with no relief.

But why should any pine without this Friend! Behold! He stands at the door and knocks. His constant cry is, Open to Me; I am waiting to come in. Friendship may be cemented which no circumstances can impair or change. Distance or countless hindrances may part earthly friends. In sickness or in trouble the sigh may swell, Oh! that a visit from my friend might cheer; but impossibilities may intervene. Jesus is a Friend ever near. His presence may ever soothe the aching breast, and be a downy pillow for the dying head. Other friends may prove inconstant, or even false. Too many have been as the summer brook or early dew. Death may tear the loved one from our side. But Jesus ever lives and ever loves. Is it not happiness to boast, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!"

4. FOUNTAIN

"They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters."

—Jer. 2:13

No one familiar with Bible-teaching can doubt that Jesus is here set forth. He speaks, and adopts the Fountain as fit emblem of Himself. Faith hears, and hastens to seek improvement. The well is deep; the surface only can be slightly touched.

I. A Fountain is pure. Its waters bubble from a bed which no pollution can approach. Free from infection, they can convey no injury. Their element is healthiness. The river and the brook may receive tributary flowings. Thus noxious refuse may defile. Contaminated soil may introduce poison.

Jesus corresponds as the very purity of truth. From His lips and in His Word no taint of error can find place. His teaching never can mislead. It comes clear from heaven, and to heaven it clearly guides. Other teaching may be soiled by countless fallacies. A mis-personated Christ is often preached. A vitiated Gospel often poisons souls. Man's misconceptions may adulterate the Word, and thus impure streams prove deadly to the flock. It is the part of wisdom to seek refreshment from the Fountain of living waters. How can they thrive in health who turn aside and rather choose a tainted stream? They drink and perish: for the reproach is true, "You will not come to Me, that you might have life." (John 5:40) II. A Fountain is full. Its vast supplies are

buried in low depths. They cannot be drained by human hand, or checked by human effort. They equally defy the summer heat and wintry frost. They are secure from emptiness. Cisterns may leak and soon be dry. In times of drought, rivulets and brooks may show exhausted channels. Through many causes reservoirs may fail. It is not so with the fountain. It boasts perennial flowing.

A Fountain ever full is type of Jesus. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8) "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." (Col. 1:19) He is full of love, with no beginning and no end; of mercy, which endures forever; of grace, which is co-equal with Himself; of merit, which is as exhaustless as His Deity; of righteousness, which never can decay; of power, omnipotent from age to age; of intercession, lasting as His life in heaven. None can seek Him and fail to find supply at all times. He is heart to pity; ear to hear; hand to help; might to save. In every age, in every climate, sinners have drawn near and found a Fountain always flowing with streams of salvation. He is a Fountain ever ready and ever full. Those who pitch their tents beside deep wells can never take up the lament of Jerusalem: "They came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads." (Jer. 14:3)

III. A Fountain has cleansing properties. Its pure stream has beneficial use. Uncleaness appertains to fallen earth. Corruption is its very atmosphere. Everywhere the leper's cry resounds, "Unclean, unclean." The dwelling, the clothing, and all things around, require perpetual cleansing. For this the fountain lends its purifying aid. Let fountains cease, and filth would be earth's poison. There is no remedy but washing; there is no washing but by water.

Uncleanness is the common type of sin. It defiles the total man. It renders him loathsome before God and all creation. The foul tempter is emphatically "the unclean spirit." But the Scripture points to relief: "In that day there shall be a Fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." (Zech. 13:1) That Fountain is the blessed Jesus. He, and He only, can completely purify. His atoning sacrifice removes iniquity. How precious is the familiar word, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) His meritorious righteousness is the robe in which no accuser can detect a blemish. Is it not written, "Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of clothing." (Zech. 3:4) His Spirit so elevates the heart, that miry paths are shunned, and purity is the chosen walk. How teaching is the scene of Jesus washing His disciples' feet! How solemn is the warning, "If I wash you not, you have no part with Me!" How blessed is the response, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." (John 13:8, 9)

IV. A Fountain relieves thirst. To thirst is common to the sons of earth. Its cravings are extreme distress. The feeling is fomented by feverish malady, by scorching heat, by laborious work, by countless excitements. To this suffering the fountain gives relief. The peasant drinks and is refreshed for work. The sick man drinks and finds repose. The panting deer drinks and flees with fleeter speed. Thus precious is the fountain's recruiting boon.

Here Christ appears. The warrior in the fight of faith is often faint and weak. The Savior brings the refreshing of His presence. Thus the arms are braced and the combat is renewed. The pilgrim is exhausted in the heavenward race. Jesus supplies some Gospel-cordial. Strength is restored; the feet recover speed. The sick believer is parched and languid. The Savior draws near, and heavenly help cools the parched spirit. David's sigh is repressed, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (2 Sam. 23:15) The spiritual Fountain is ever near. The children of Israel "drank of that spiritual Rock that followed

them; and that Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. 10:4) That Rock still follows in full stream. The cry still sounds, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me, and drink." (John 7:37)

Woe, woe to them, who choose rather the unhealthy puddles of this world's vanity. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13, 14) Thanks be to God for the thirst-slaking "Fountain of living waters!"

V. A Fountain fertilizes. Its waters flow not forth in vain. It sends a trickling stream throughout adjacent lands. Crops raise their heads, and verdure robes the fields. Rich is the district in which fountains abound. Great is the contrast between the watered valley and the dry mountain-top. Achsah's request was wise: "You have given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs." (Josh. 15:19)

The Gospel here shines forth. The curse which fell upon the soil of earth fell heaviest on the heart of man: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you." (Gen. 3:18) In Christ Jesus the curse relaxes into blessing. The promise to the vineyard is precious: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment." (Isa. 27:3) Is it not written, "From Me is your fruit found?" (Hos. 14:8) Is not the believer to be a tree of righteousness, richly laden with luxuriant fruit, to be holy and pure, even as his great Exemplar! This luxuriance is the work of Jesus by His Spirit. The living principle can only come from Him who is "the Life." If no sap flows, the branches wither. If no

warmth melts, the ice continues hard. Without steam the engine moves not. If no breeze blows, the sails cannot expand. The child unfed expires. So without irrigation there can be no fruitfulness. But Jesus is ever ready to revive and fructify. His presence implants grace, and causes it abundantly to thrive. The believer thus visited becomes like "a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isa. 58:11) "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Isa. 55:13) The holiest man on earth is the happiest; and the holiest is he who is most watered by "the Fountain of living waters."

VI. A Fountain is precious. Its value baffles description. Unsearchable are its benefits to animal and vegetable life. All creation joys in its use, and gives testimony to its worth. In lands where wells were scarce, they were the cause of constant altercation. "Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away." (Gen. 21:25) Repeated and angry was the strife between the herdsmen of Isaac and of Gerar for these blessings. If they should fail, what misery would ensue! Death and drought would show grim form.

Here thought quickly flies to Jesus. "To you who believe He is precious." (1 Pet. 2:7) What mind can grasp, what thought can conceive, what intellect can measure, what tongue can tell, what eloquence can state, what pen can portray, what figure can represent, the immensity of His preciousness? The Spirit testifies that His riches are "unsearchable." (Eph. 3:8) Let earth exhibit its treasures in multitudinous array, let art bring all her triumphs, let science and philosophy be ransacked for their noblest works, let all the beauty which has ever graced this world be gathered into one focus—all is nothingness, when placed beside the preciousness of Christ. What is dark night compared with tropic sun! So Christ outshines all brightness. To descant on this preciousness is a charming task; but to unfold its fullness is beyond all power.

Who can conceive how precious is Christ's person! He is equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and one with man as touching His manhood! Who can estimate the preciousness of His work on earth, redeeming countless souls from endless misery, and exalting them to heaven's eternal bliss! Who can strain sight to gaze on Him on the right hand of the Majesty on high, ever living as an Advocate to plead, as an Intercessor to obtain mercy, as a Surety to represent! Who can depict the brightness of His near return, the glories of the millennial reign, the triumph of the final surrender of the kingdom unto God! Who can adequately speak of His love! It "passes knowledge." (Eph. 3:19) His enchanting promises, so exceeding many and precious, have no measure and no end. He is precious in health and sickness, in every moment of time, in the hour of death, at the day of judgment, throughout the ever-rolling days of eternity. Who will not cry, Thanks be to God for the precious "Fountain of living waters"!

VII. A Fountain is open. It was early custom to protect by stones the well's mouth. Laban's sheep could not be watered until the obstruction was removed. (Gen. 29:8) Fountains avail not if they are blocked up. The fountain to be used must be open to approach.

Such is the blessed Jesus. No hindrances bar access to Him. No flaming sword prevents free passage; all may approach and find Him open. "Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters." (Isa. 55:1) "Whoever wishes, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22:17) Invitations and calls are free as the very air of heaven. The monarch from his throne may come and partake until his soul can take no more. The poor man from his lowly hut finds equal welcome. The feeble need no strong arm to roll away all hindrance. To the aged and the young easy access is allowed. But while He is open to all the thirsty upon earth, the heart of man is the closed door.

Therefore He cries, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." (Rev. 3:20)

VIII. A Fountain is generally obvious to view. Unperceived, it can confer no benefit. Hagar consigns her child to death because she saw not the near well. (Gen. 21:19) Thus Jesus is open to all sight. Moses descending from the mount, puts a veil upon his face. (Exod. 34:33) Jesus hides not His luster. No concealment eludes discovery. It was not so to the elders of the family of faith. Types taught strikingly. Prophecies rolled in majestic flow. Heralds announced the coming Savior. But the revelation was not unclouded. The teaching was not the meridian sun. Obscurity enveloped the clear horizon. It could not be said, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shines." (1 John 2:8) But Jesus is now manifest, the truth of every type, the response of all prophetic strains, the consummated fullness of patriarchal hopes, the substance of all teaching images, the fulfillment of the vast promises. The inquiry is now superfluous, "Who is the prophet talking about?" (Acts 8:34) The sigh of Job is causeless, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" (Job 23:3) Prophets and kings desired to see what we may see, and did not see them. "The Fountain of living waters" is freely opened. Blessed are the eyes which see, and the hearts which love, this spring so obviously conspicuous!

But the reproach chides: "You have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and dug for yourselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Can any folly be more foolish? Can any madness be more mad? The cry is still heard, "Not this man, but Barabbas." (John 18:40) Men still "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." (John 3:19) The power of darkness tempts poor blinded men to choose sickness rather than health, the dungeon rather than a palace, slavery rather than freedom, deformity rather than beauty, ignorance rather than knowledge, blindness rather than sight, gloomy forebodings rather than fair prospects, the storm rather than the haven, things fleeting rather than things eternal, the quicksand rather than the rock, the company of fiends rather than the saints in light, hell rather than heaven, Satan rather than God. Thus miserable is the choice of those who "forsake the Fountain of living waters, and dig for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." From such

willful destruction, Good Lord, deliver us!

5. DEW

"I will be like the Dew to Israel."

–Hosea 14:5

The book of Nature is both rich and large. Its study is exhaustless profit. When much is read, much still invites continued contemplation. One object here is often replete with diverse teaching. It is so with the Dew. When the bright morning calls to the garden or the field, how glittering is the sight! From leaves, from flowers, from grass, innumerable drops are pendant. Each has a voice to tell variety of truth. Let a few instances be noted.

The words of life borrow description from it. The Spirit writes, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distill as the Dew." (Deut. 32:2) As the Dew works, so works the Bible's teaching.

Again, the blessed influence of godly men is thus portrayed. Micah proclaims, "The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many people like Dew from the Lord, like showers upon the grass, which do not wait for man, nor linger for mankind." (Micah 5:7) The true believer spreads extensive good. His godly walk and his bright example allure to paths of piety and peace. The holy remnant may be small, but its effects are mighty. It averts judgments, and calls down blessings. Ten righteous men would have delivered Sodom. Such Dew would have saved the plains from fire. Ah! if the world knew the value of the praying seed, their feelings would no

longer hate, but gratefully invoke their presence. May truth long flourish in our land, as this protecting Dew!

Once more, when the Lord sends the rod of His strength out of Zion, converts spring up. The image of our text shows their multitude and beauty. "You have the Dew of Your youth." (Psa. 110:3) As the Dew sparkles resplendent in the early sun, so a goodly company shines in youthful faith.

Yet further. The Dew is soon absorbed. It vanishes when rays grow strong, then it quickly disappears. Thus vain professors make a transient show. For a while their look is pleasing. They seemingly reflect celestial light. But trials assail, temptations allure, persecutions affright, and they are gone. Scripture finds their portrait in the Dew: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early Dew it goes away." (Hos. 6:4)

But as stars fade before the rising sun, lesser similitudes must now give place. The Lord appears and claims this emblem as His own. He thus proclaims, "I will be as the Dew unto Israel." What evidence of condescending grace! There is no holier bliss than constantly to gaze on Him. Therefore He selects as His image these tiny drops, obvious in every place, familiar to each eye. The lordly owner of the spacious park, the humble inhabitant of the hut alike may see, and equally may learn. Let Gospel-lessons now be sought. Let us consider the properties of

Dew, and mark its mode of visiting the earth.

I. Dew moistens. It falls in penetrating drops upon the surface of the soil. When the ground is dry and parched, it is not ready to admit the seed, or quicken it to life. But hardness relaxes when thus sprinkled from above. Then softened beds give nurturing shelter. The birds of the air no more can bear the grain away. The opening soil gives a protecting covering. Thus the Dew causes vegetation to commence.

What is man's heart by nature? Is it not harder than the nether-millstone, and more obdurate than adamant? Is it not more congealed than ice, more unimpressible than iron? Hence, if not touched by softening influence, it will resist the entrance of the Word. What multitudes are thus unmoved! They may frequent the house of God; they may listen to the voice of faithful pastors and enlightened friends; Christ may be set before them in all the glories of His person and His work; glad tidings may sound around, telling of pardon and of peace through His atoning blood. His perfect righteousness may be displayed, beautiful as our covering. The brightness of the eternal day and all the pleasures at God's right hand may be announced. Thus the good seed may abundantly be scattered. But without saving grace no saving entrance will be made. The heart of stone will continue to be stone. Earthly passions will rage unsubdued. The world will still be loved and God be shunned. There will be no vital change. Darkness will remain dark. The chains of Satan will not be broken. Christ will be still ignored.

Such, alas! is the picture too often seen of man not softened by grace. But when Christ by His Spirit works, there is preparedness to receive the Word. Hardened conscience ceases to resist. Obduracy rejects not the need of pardon. Christ is admitted as all-sufficient to redeem and save. Faith takes root. The seeds of salvation vivify in the heart. The Word no longer falls upon a resisting surface. The melting Spirit has prepared the soil. Heavenly Dew has infused moisture. Thus, as Dew softens the arid earth, so Christ by His Spirit melts the stony heart.

II. Dew invigorates. The seed may sink into the yielding soil, and quickly show some signs of life. But vegetation will not thrive if plants or herbs rise on a hardened bed. The infant plant requires nurturing care. It must be helped to become vigorous and strong. The Dew by constant watering works this result. Hence shoots are strengthened, vigor becomes more vigorous, and growth is secured. But if Dew falls not, the infant crop will droop. Its absence leads to sterility. David, when he would banish blessedness from the spot where Saul and Jonathan were slain, thus calls down barrenness: "You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no Dew, neither let there be rain upon you." (2 Sam. 1:21) Absence of moisture prevents all growth. When Elijah in dreadful mission appears to tell of Israel's coming woe, he thus predicts the misery of the land: "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be Dew nor rain these years but according to my word." (1 Kings 17:1) Unless the clouds drop fatness, leanness settles on the earth. Unless the Dew gives growth, pastures soon lose their verdure.

It is so with the soul. Incipient life may commence favorably. But at first it raises a slender head. Its weakness needs refreshing nourishment. But every grace, aided by congenial influence, will rapidly expand and grow. The tiny child may gradually become a full-grown man. The early dawn may brighten into midday light. The little rivulet may swell into an overflowing flood. How earnest should each believer seek to be enabled thus to put forth strong shoots! The prayer is placed upon his lips, "Lord, increase our faith." (Luke 17:5)

Of the Thessalonians it is testified that their "faith grew exceedingly." (2 Thess. 1:3) Love, at first cold and weak, may warm into a perfect blaze, pervading every word and work. Hope, whose prospect may at first be limited, may stretch into full assurance, and bring all heaven before enraptured gaze. The weakness of young converts may advance with strong stride to the "perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13) But where this growing power? It is the result of Christ by His Spirit giving energy. "Your fruitfulness comes from Me." (Hos. 14:8) His invigorating presence causes this fertility. Let then His presence be the one desire of the soul, and the little sapling will "grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." (Hos. 14:5, 6) The head shall tower as the giant oaks of Bashan. The fruits shall cluster as the grapes of Eshcol. Christ gives fertility to the soul, as the Dew to Israel.

III. Dew revives. Fields sometimes languish. Winds may be keen. The sun may scorch. The vegetation is blighted. The plants show downcast heads. The freshness of the leaves declines. The meadows are swept with desolating blast. But sweet is the change if refreshing Dew falls copiously. Then vegetation reassumes its beauty, and lovely verdure again robes the fields.

Thus is it with the fields of grace. Instances of decline abound. The holiest men are not above temptation's reach. An artful snare may be laid. They stumble and fall. A sudden dart may be aimed, and a rankling wound be given. Conscience accuses, and spiritual power dwindles. The case is wretched, until the grieved Spirit re-visits the heart. In deep depression David cries, "Renew a right spirit within me; restore to me the joy of Your salvation." (Psa. 51:10, 12) There is no peace or comfort until the liveliness is restored by the Spirit's renovating power. Then

freshness re-visits the soul. Through lack of watchfulness, restraint of prayer, neglect of ordinances, infrequent study of the Word, the soul may become barren. Internal dreariness prevails. There is no help but from the stores of heaven. When celestial windows open, and streams of blessing come, revival cheers, and sweet fertility returns. Sometimes the believer walks in darkness, and has no light. Bright shinnings of God's smile are withdrawn. This is a season of disconsolate distress. There is no remedy until heavenly Dew descends. "I will be like the Dew to Israel" is the sole relief.

Many apprehensions sometimes vex the soul. Fears of desertion cause alarm. The feeling, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul" is not uncommon. (1 Sam. 27:1) Death in prospect shows a relentless hand. Then terrors trouble, and peace is banished, until the Spirit whispers, "Fear no evil; my rod and my staff shall comfort you." (Psa. 23:4) "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." (Isa. 43:2)

The fainting soul speedily revives when Jesus comes as the Dew. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." (Isa. 41:17) They "shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isa. 58:11) "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He who has mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them." (Isa. 49:10)

IV. Its descent. Dew falls before the shades of night depart. Its period is earth's gloom. When daylight dawns, it descends no more. So when the everlasting day shall dawn, the work of Christ shall cease. Souls shall no more be born again, and quickened and revived. The manna ceased when there was no more need; and grace shall terminate when glory shines forth.

Dew moves on noiseless wing. No boisterous wind, no strife of elements, no pelting sounds are harbingers of its visits. Unconscious earth receives insensibly its presence. It feels the influence, but hears not the approach. It is refreshed without perception of the soft arrival.

Such often are Christ's visits to the soul. He conquers without force. No battle rages, but the field is won. Without resistance a willing captive yields obedience. Doubtless He is not limited to any mode of dealing. All creatures own His power and fulfill His will. Sometimes a sudden hand arrests the sinner in his maddened course. Saul of Tarsus lies prostrate under an astounding shock. The jailor at Philippi suddenly is convinced, and in terror cries for guidance to salvation. The dying thief is conquered with no earthquake of the soul. In one moment he looks, and sees the Savior, and prays to be remembered. He begins to die a criminal, and death lands him in Paradise.

But Christ's usual entrance is gentle, sweet, and noiseless. Thus it is said, "The kingdom of heaven comes not with observation." (Luke 17:20) It is written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." (Isa. 42:2, 3) Lydia's heart opens to gentle touch. Faith gains admission with an unconscious effort, and without struggle conquers all for Christ. Thus many become Christ's by power working with no crude assault.

It is sad, that when the Dew so plenteously falls, the heart is often as the parched sand. It may be that hindrances check the fertilizing work. Obstructions may interpose. If some covering is spread across the lawn, the soil beneath receives no moisture, and the softening Dew descends in vain. When neighboring fields show freshness, the covered spot is dry. Gideon's fleece may lack what falls around it. Neglect of Christ, ungodly passion unrestrained, cares of the world, the lust of earthly things, may ruinously impede. Thus when fruitlessness prevails, the cause should be most diligently sought, and the prayer be frequent, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psa. 139:3, 4) Let it be remembered that Dew comes only from above. In times of earthly drought prayer should crave the descent. So in spiritual need, on the bended knee refreshing streams of grace should be implored. "Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain." (Zech. 10:1) If there should be delay, let prayer grow stronger, and let not hope fail. "The husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." (James 5:7)

6. REFINER

"He shall sit as a Refiner."

—Malachi 3:3.

Simple is the process of refining. Its purpose is clear. It purifies from dross the ore submitted to its test. A furnace is prepared. The metal is placed within. Fire is strongly applied. The action of the overpowering heat produces liquefaction. The worthless parts, which before were intermixed, are thus separated. Impurity is disentangled. The Refiner gains his object. He has parted the precious from the vile. Unadulterated ore remains.

This process is a mirror to show Christ. It is a page of Gospel-lessons. May it be our special joy to mark and learn with profit!

To infer that Christ is here exhibited is no conceit of vain imagination, no dream of fancy. It is the sound conclusion from clear Scriptures. The Spirit speaks to us in the sacred page. In it we read, "He is like a Refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." And again, "He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver—and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Mal. 3:2, 3.) Can this be other than the Lord? To Him Isaiah pointedly refers, "I will turn My hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin." (Isa. 1:25.) Faith hears, and gladly receives Christ Jesus as the Refiner. To Him and to His work attention is now sought.

Let it be noticed that the Refiner places valuable metal in his melting forge. Believers are marked by this similitude. "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!" (Lam. 4:2.) "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried—they shall call on My name, and I will hear them—I will say, it is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. 13:9.) Job testifies, "When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10.) How grand, too, is the assurance, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." (Isa. 43:4.) Believer, realize the comfort! As gold is valued upon earth, and counted as most precious treasure, so Jesus esteems you as His riches, and ranks you as of inestimable price.

Let us proceed to mark—I. The need of refining. II. The mode of refining.

I. THE NEED of refining. Gold's origin is earth, and earthy accumulations long cling to it. Hence the refining-pot is needed, and fire must dissolve and separate. Similarly vile corruptions cling long to the earthborn seed. Their luster is often tarnished. Their savor is not always heavenly. Their robes are soiled with filthy spots. The sinews of their strength suffer decline. Their step totters. Their wings refuse to fly. The workings of corruption in those who have received renewing grace are too apparent. Their bodies are indeed the temples of the Holy Spirit. They differ from their former selves as light from darkness, as the sweetest flower from the vilest

weed, as the brilliant jewel from the rubbish of the quarry, as the sparkling fountain from the muddy ditch; but by the side of grace evil still shows its hateful head. The snake is injured, but still it trails its wounded length. The 'old man' is suspended on the cross of Christ, but in its writhings it shows life. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;" (Rom. 8:3) but still the final execution has not taken place. Holiness is loved and sought, but still the constant lament is heard, "When I would do good, evil is present with me. The good that I would I do not—but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Rom. 7:21, 19.) "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh—so that you cannot do the things that you would." (Gal. 5:17.)

Corruption long continues to afflict. Mark how unbelief still shows existence in the holiest saint. He has been taught the glorious truths of the Gospel of the grace of God. He has delighted in their beauty. He has adored the work of the Triune Jehovah—the Father's love and covenant of grace—finished work of the blessed Jesus—His blood, His righteousness, His uttermost salvation—the Spirit's enlightening and comforting and sanctifying presence. But still how often he lives in sad forgetfulness of his calling and his privileges.

The case of Peter is re-acted. Before the assault of temptation he trembles and lies as one who knows not Jesus. He is not bold to vindicate the truth. He is not valiant in the cause of Christ. Unbelief prevails, and he gives proof that the best believer may quiver as a shivering reed.

The stirrings of original nature often appear in lingering love of the world. This artful foe may have been manfully renounced, its fascinations may have lost enslaving charms, its gilded baits may have been rejected with enlightened scorn, its downhill leadings to perdition may have been discovered, and a bold attitude of defiance may have been assumed. But still the seeds of worldly-mindedness may retain life. Lot's wife advances towards Zoar. But thoughts of former pleasures move in her heart. She pauses, and looks back. Demas forsakes Paul because he yet loved this present world. Frequent indeed are the backslidings from yielding to this reawakening foe.

Many swarms of evil passions are long lurking in the secret places of the heart. A fit occasion calls them forth in fearful troops. How often words of wrath and passion show the remnants of the fallen nature! How often lustful desires pollute the inner man! How often thoughts wander, even in most sacred exercises! How often the knees totter while dalliance with impiety is rife! Let the believer honestly examine the thoughts and feelings of each day. What must the result proclaim! Surely the frequent movements of old nature must be detected. Sins of commission and omission—against light and knowledge, and the remonstrances of conscience, and the checks of the Spirit—must force the sad conclusion, that in the most holy heart sin yet lives—in the most saintly man corruption often struggles to recover mastery.

II. THE MODE of Refining. The eye of Jesus marks those struggling motions of reviving evil. Is He indifferent? No; as He "forgives all their sins," so He "heals all their diseases." The process of correcting may be painful, but still a gracious hand will firmly apply it. The furnace must be used, and the precious metal placed within. The needful heat must not be withheld.

The instrument for this purifying work is aptly termed the "furnace of affliction," (Isa. 48:10.) The term is large, and comprehends a long train of searching trials. These all obey the mighty Savior's bidding, and proceed to execute the salutary cure.

Foremost appears SICKNESS. The strength of health declines. Vigor ceases to be strong. Pain racks the limbs. The nights are wearisome. The days move heavily in languor and distress. This is the time for deep searchings of heart. Apart from busy whirl, the patient reviews his course. He has leisure to inquire, Why am I thus afflicted? Why am I placed within this furnace? Departure from his God may be detected, and repentance may lay him low in dust and ashes. He will resolve to work again his first works. He will abhor the foe which has seduced him. Thus the furnace accomplishes its purifying use, and the Refiner exercises restoring power.

Sometimes POVERTY forms the furnace. Grievous is this trial. Loved ones look for support. The coffer ceases to supply. The cruse of oil is exhausted. The brook no longer flows. Sources of sustenance are dried up. What anxious thoughts will now investigate the sufferer's heart! Awakened conscience will probably accuse of scanty thanks for former mercies, of boastful reliance on self-efforts. The swellings of self-trust will drop their disguise. The furnace will warn to return in deep humility to God, from whom alone all sufficiency of means for the necessities of life proceeds.

Sometimes BEREAVEMENT is the furnace. Some lingering malady or unexpected casualty removes a loved one from the side. The charm of the domestic circle receives a blight. This stroke of misery is very keen. The lonely mourner may now be taught that he had made an idol of God's gracious gift, that he looked for happiness not solely to his God. The furnace reveals the ungrateful reaction, and places God again as the sole monarch of the heart.

Similarly the whole tribe of TRIBULATIONS might be reviewed. Their forms are almost countless. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." (Psalm. 34:19.) "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22.)

Is it in wrath that the heavenly Refiner thus heats the furnace? Is the purpose to put forth destroying vengeance? Far otherwise. Sharp may be the process, but the motive is love. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." (Rev. 3:19.) "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope—and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." (Hos. 2:11, 15.) "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail." (Psalm. 84:30-33.) Let not the believer faint, nor be dismayed; let him not fear that the furnace indicates the hiding of loving-kindness in displeasure, or is a sign that he is cast off forever. The Refiner chastens "for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness." (Heb. 12:10.)

It is said, and the sweet thought claims notice, that the Refiner with anxious gaze watches the melting ore until his image can be seen. The purifying process has then attained its end, and the fire is extinguished. Thus Jesus keeps His metal in the heat of trial, until His lineaments are established, and conformity to His image brightly shines. Blessed, indeed, are they in whom the features of the Elder Brother soon appear! And blessed is the trial which tends to make His children pure as He is pure, and holy as He is holy, and beautiful as He is beautiful!

It must not be omitted that He who thus refines His subjects, and cleanses them from impurity and sin, will soon appear to consummate a final, universal separation. "The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." (Matt. 25:31, 32.) "But who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when he appears? For He is like a Refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." (Mal. 3:2.)

Reader, rest not, until full assurance pervades your heart, that enlightened faith has found all pardon at His cross, all justification through His blood and righteousness, all renovation through His Spirit, and all purification through His refining work. To be brought into this happy state is present peace, and will be future glory. The end will come; it is at the very door. They who retain corruption "will go away into everlasting punishment—but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:46.)

7. TREASURE

"The kingdom of heaven is like Treasure."

—Matt. 13:44

Of the kingdom of heaven Jesus is the King. On Him as the foundation it is based. In Him the fabric rises. His is the scepter, and His the subjects. He frames the laws, and He claims homage. Without Him it never could have birth. Without Him it never could survive the assaults of foes. He is its origin, its power, its guide, its glory, its all.

Is this kingdom then a Treasure? Pre-eminently so is the anointed Head! How warmly will each Christian heart respond, He is indeed the Treasure of treasures! Compared with Him all other objects are emptiness and dross. Before His brightness the sun is dark. Balanced against Him all the mines of silver and of gold are worth nothing. Beside Him learning sinks into glittering folly, and all the boast of intellect hides its head. Survey all that the world contains of riches, wealth, and treasures; the sight may dazzle, but it dwindles, fades, and disappears when Jesus is discerned. But who have minds to grasp, or thoughts to estimate, or tongues to proclaim, or eyes thoroughly to scan this Treasure of treasures? 'Holy Spirit! we need the power of Your grace to withdraw the veil. Come mightily and illuminate, and expand our view, and give fitting words of praise!'

Let us enter now the treasure-house, and survey the accumulated preciousness. For all our

needs we behold treasures of supply. Our sins are many as the sands of ocean's shore. They are black as the deepest dyes of hell's abyss. They all are liable to God's extremest vengeance. They all call loudly for the thunderbolts of wrath. But Christ appears, a Treasure of redeeming worth. His precious blood flows as a stream infinite to cleanse. Such is its value, as issuing from the God-man's side, that sprinkled over the vilest, it makes them whiter than the whitest snow. Is not the blood a Treasure, which obliterates every speck of evil from every one of the vast multitude of the saved? We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are a Treasure of redeeming merit!

Washed from sin, we escape just wrath; but we need more than the absence of guilt to constitute a claim for entrance into the purity of heaven. In Jesus we have a Treasure of righteousness. In our nature, as representative of man, He thoroughly obeyed the law, and fulfilled to the uttermost its requirement of perfect love. This work is perfect, because wrought by the God-man, Jesus. In it He arrays the whole company of the redeemed. He is the Lord their Righteousness. In His work the piercing eye of omniscience can discern no flaw. It is pure as God is pure. It is bright as the eternal day. It is glorious as the heaven of heavens. And it is "unto all and upon all those who believe." Is not such righteousness a Treasure? We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are this Treasure to us!

We need grace to help in every moment of our earthly course. Our Jesus is a Treasure of abundant aid. By His Spirit poured down from His high throne, He renews our nature, restores the likeness of our heavenly Father, subdues the countless hosts of our iniquities, implants faith to embrace Him as all salvation and desire. He watches over the incipient spark and fans it into bright flame. He braces our loins to wrestle with our God in prayer, and to tell into His ears our every sorrow and distress. He awakens the notes of adoring praise, so that thanksgiving is our chosen pleasure-ground. He leads into the rich pastures of Bible-study, and makes us to lie down beside the still waters of refreshing truth. He causes hope to cast enlivening beams on distant prospects. Thus by the constant working of His grace He fits us for our home above. 'We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are this Treasure of superabundant grace!'

By nature we are blind and ignorant, and prone to err. The Word announces, that "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col.

2:3) In His school He teaches by His Spirit lessons of saving truth. He opens our eyes to see the vanity of earthly things, and the value and sublimity of the eternal world. He gives skill to balance the present troubles and the eternal weight of future glory. He points out the straight path in all perplexities and doubts. He guides by a right way to a city of eternal habitation. While poor worldlings stumble and fall in many windings of tortuous delusion, His scholars clearly see the upward road. Those who follow Him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are this Treasure of wisdom and knowledge!

Some general thoughts here call for notice. This Treasure has enduring worth. Other riches make to themselves wings and fly away. Today the owner exults in his overflowing coffers, in his hoards laid up for many years, in his possessions to enrich successive heirs. Tomorrow he may pine in poverty. But he who has interest in Christ is rich forever. Rolling years will bring no diminishing. Eternal wealth can never see an end.

In this world the inheritor of vast abundance may contract expensive tastes, and indulge in ruinous pursuits, and open the sluices of draining profligacy. Thus reckless extravagance may lead to poverty's cold grasp. It is far otherwise with this Treasure. No expenditure can squander the possession. The more we have, the more we spend. The more we spend, the more we gain.

In spite of watchful care the thief may stealthily creep in, and bear away man's treasured store. The morning light may show the emptied chests and ransacked hoards. But of the heavenly Treasure it is true, that "neither moth nor rust does corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal." (Matt. 6:20)

Satan doubtless plies every art to rob and to destroy; but Christ is hidden in God, high in heaven, above this spoiler's reach. 'We bless You, O our precious Lord, that You are a Treasure above the robber's reach!'

Those who have gained this Treasure are not only thus enriched, they also enrich others. It is a grand word, "He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38) From their full supplies they communicate abundance to all around. The rays of light which fall on them are reflected, so that others benefit from the celestial brightness.

He who has discovered this mine of wealth will have the grand desire to proclaim his full delight. He will deeply pity the poverty of the masses at home, and throughout the wide expanse of the heathen world, and his constant prayer and unremitted efforts will yearn over the perishing multitudes who know not this enriching Treasure. Thus how charming are the annals of missionary life! Those who are rich in faith, with hearts all blazing with the love of Christ, delight to exhibit to the benighted worshipers of stocks and stones the true riches. It will always be, that those who own the Pearl of great price will so display it, and so commend its worth, that others will be stirred to long for the same jewel.

The inquiry now comes with craving urgency, "Where can this Treasure be found? How can it be obtained!" Blessed be our gracious God! we have near access. We are not sent to traverse distant lands, to investigate obscure paths, to trace all the intricacies of laborious intellect, to pass days and nights in painful study, to descend into the depths of the earth, to ascend into the heights of heaven, to take the wings of the morning in early flight, to outwatch the stars of night in scrutinizing thought, to consult the wisest of the sons of men, to take counsel with the famed students in the realms of erudition. The Treasure is hidden in a field, outspread at our very feet. A brief step places us within its precincts. At any moment entrance may be ours. This field is our blessed Bible. In its pages the unsearchable riches of Christ are treasured. Those who dig here shall find. Persevering efforts will have sure success. Can we then sufficiently prize this boon? Can we adequately bless God the Holy Spirit, that in His condescending love He thus places the Treasure within our reach? Can we give worthy thanks that our hands hold this volume? To what multitudes is this mercy not given! What tribes, what countries never heard its name! How many in our favored land are barely conscious of its nearness! Can we too warmly express

gratitude that we are made to differ, and that amid the needful cares of life we have such intervals of leisure for its perusal? Can we too devoutly study it, diligently watching to redeem time for deep searchings in the open field?

We have too clear instruction as to the right mode of laboring in this field. It is plainly written, "which when a man has found, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field." (Matt. 13:44) The Treasure, when discovered, is so prized that jealous fear arises lest the happy finder should be dispossessed. Therefore he uses all precaution to secure it. He conceives all plans, that no spoiler shall rob him. He therefore hides it in the stronghold of his memory; thus it is safe. He deposits it in the secret places of his heart; so no schemes of the foe can touch it. He lays it up where no craft of envious man, nor open assaults of the powers of hell can reach it.

It follows, "for joy thereof he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field." He rejoices with exceeding joy. He now has gained a Treasure which will enrich through all the ages of never-ending worlds.

It is added, "He sells all and buys." But what can be given in exchange! Can earth present a compensation! Can thought suggest an equivalent! Impossible. If all earthly treasures could be offered, they would in comparison be insignificantly small. If all the hoards of all earth's misers could be presented as a purchasing price, they would be rejected as insulting rubbish. No! this

Treasure is obtained "without money and without price." Christ is a free-grace gift. No one ever merited or earned the Savior. The blessed receivers obtain, because in His mercy He bestows Himself.

But still the hand which receives Christ must retain no other treasure; the heart which He enters must be swept; the eye which sees Him must be single; the lips which praise Him must be sanctified; the feet which follow Him must be washed. There must be full surrender of all other things before the Treasure can be truly possessed.

What, then, must be surrendered? To be brief, all that is adverse to Christ— all that opposes His complete and universal reign—all that raises a rival head, or breathes competition. The love of every sin, the fondness for transgression's miry paths, the fondling of the polluted pleasures of the world, must be abandoned with resolute rejection. There must be no backward look to the ways of the degraded cities. The thought of dallying with sin must be abhorred. The very touch must raise indignant writhing. Thus sinful self must be hewn to pieces, and scattered to the winds. No shred of ungodly desire may be spared. So too self-righteousness must crumble into dust. The thought of merit, or of self-constituted claims, must be renounced as impious delusion. The cry must be, "Nothing in my hands I bring." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8)

Thus all that self has made or self can bring must be abandoned. What an exchange! That

which is really nothing is cast away. That which is really all is grasped.

Rich indeed are those who have found Christ as this gift of gifts. Where their Treasure is, there will their hearts be also. They will love Him with daily increasing love. They will make their boast of Him as soul-enriching and eternal wealth.

8. FREEDOM

"If the Son shall therefore make you free, you shall be free indeed."

—John 8:36

A precious text here offers comfort to the sons of faith. It flies from Jesus' lips on a glad mission. It proclaims Freedom as the portion of His happy people, and the contrast is obvious, that apart from Him each soul is locked in cells of bondage.

Slavery is the lowest depth of degradation. It is the extremity of woe. It is man's worst condition. How sad is life to him, who trembles in constant fear of tyrannizing cruelty! It is misery indeed to hear the lash, and bear the chains of an exacting master. Israel's children, in their Egyptian thralldom, present the type of anguish. Their wretchedness is stated as the moving cause of heaven's compassion. "The Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." (Exod. 3:7) The direst form of misery is found in Samson—deprived of sight, bound in fetters of brass, and grinding in the prison of the Philistines. (Judges 16:21)

Let the truth be faced, that the state by nature of our race is spiritual captivity.

I. Each mother's son first breathes as a bond-slave. Satan exerts his overpowering sway. He says, "Go," and the slave obeys—"Do this," and submission yields. Freedom indeed smiled in Eden's lovely garden. But its peaceful reign was short. The tempter came. His are prevailed. Man surrendered liberty, and placed his neck beneath the tyrant's feet. From that day each child is born in slavery's bonds. Satan reigns the master-tyrant over subjugated man. He has imposed an universal yoke. He sways the will, the heart, the affections, the desires. He gives no respite and no rest. His ceaseless work is to impel to rebellion against God, to violation of His righteous law, to disregard of His holy will, to contempt of His majesty, to treason against His rightful rule. Resistance, if it be ever made, is vain. The unregenerate man willingly obeys the devil.

But from this thralldom Jesus liberates. "When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils." (Luke 11:21, 22) Satan indeed is a giant in strength, but Jesus is omnipotent. He enters into direct conflict with the vile usurper. He hurls him from his throne. He wrests the scepter from his accursed hands. He tramples it beneath His conquering feet. He throws wide open his prison-doors. He bids the prisoners to come forth. He calls them to breathe liberty's pure air. He delivers them from the kingdom of darkness, and translates them into the regions of new life. Satan no more is their tyrannic lord. They are no longer under the law, but under grace. We read the blessed words, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Rom. 8:2)

This deliverance is effected by the blessed Jesus, and the grand word is fulfilled, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18) The Spirit convinces believers "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:11) Believer! rejoice in the truth that you are striding to victory over the neck of a vanquished tyrant, and that you too will "tread Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. 16:20) You may exultingly profess, "The Son has made me free, and I am free indeed."

II. Freedom from the devil's power is also freedom from sin's penalties. How is it that Christ brings this deliverance? He presents Himself to bear the full descent of merited wrath, and to drink to the very dregs each vial of decreed punishment. Here is the glory of substitutionary atonement. Here is the perfect liberation of the redeemed. Jesus suspended on the cross makes satisfaction to every outraged attribute of Jehovah. He there endures the full amount of suffering due to His people's sin. They see, and they believe. They believe, and shout, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." "The Son has made us free, and we are free indeed."

III. Death affrights as king of terrors. It is invested with most solemn awe. Its image is appalling. It belongs not to man's original constitution. It is the terrible offspring of sin. With sin it entered. "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen. 2:17) It quickly commenced its subjugating course. Adam soon saw his Abel lifeless at his feet. From that day its scythe has never rested, and generation after generation have yielded to its stroke. No rank is spared. No intellect can gain exemption. The infant in the cradle dies. Old age must soon succumb. Thus it exerts uninterrupted sway, and begets universal dread.

Where is the breast which thinks unmoved of death! It conveys to a world from which there cannot be return. It closes the earthly course. It puts an end to all the hopes and prospects of this transitory scene. It bears to the immediate presence of our God. It is the prelude to the judgment-seat. It leads to the final doom and the unchanging sentence. Thus solemn is the view of death. But still to the believer there is no abiding fear. Jesus has made him free, and he is free indeed. It is grandly said, Jesus "has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10)

Death is mainly appalling as conducting to the execution of just wrath; but if all wrath be utterly effaced, the annexed fear must also cease. The believer feels, death surely comes, it quickly comes; it comes with constantly advancing step, but it will bear me to the presence of my Lord. To be absent from the body is to be present with Him. Can any who have faith in Jesus shrink from seeing His face, and being forever by His side! Thus death is the believer's friend. The Spirit assures, "All things are yours: whether life or death." (1 Cor. 3:21, 22) And again, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38, 39)

Moreover, the believer rejoices in sure trust, that when dissolving nature sinks, Jesus will grant especial presence. Therefore he sings, "I will fear no evil; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." (Psa. 23:4) Thus the fear of death departs, and he is free indeed.

IV. The world, also, forges chains. It is confessedly the enemy of God. The word is true, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (James 4:4) The exhortation is clear, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15)

The power of this tyrant is mainly in its fascinating arts. It coaxes, it entices, it allures. It presents attractive baits. It shows its votaries decked in enchanting guise. It presents goblets filled to the brim with intoxicating draughts. It points to the merry laugh and noisy revelries of its infatuated crowds. It uses ridicule and scorn to deter those who venture to prefer another path.

But in its schemes and pursuits, where is God? He is excluded. His name is treason against its godless laws. The rule which governs its proceedings ignores His will, His Word, His very being. Frightful are its triumphs. How many have fallen slain at its feet! How many throng the cells of hell, enticed and ruined by its fascinations! From this enemy Jesus makes the believer free, and he is free indeed. He sends His Holy Spirit, and then the enslaving chain is broken. He tears the deceiving mask from the world's features, and shows its native hideousness. He exposes its hollow insipidity, its utter emptiness, its thorough insufficiency to give real peace. The believer sees that all its ways lead to disappointment and to shame. He mourns the folly of ever yielding to its poor fallacies. He flies to Christ for pardon and deliverance, and soon sings, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14) Thus the believer is made free, and he is free indeed.

V. Sometimes the fear of trouble in advancing days embitters life. The present may be joyous; but the present is borne onward by the stream of time, and uncertainty conceals the future. Early morn smiles in sparkling brightness, but clouds and storms may wrap the evening in gloom. The spring blooms in copious blossoms, but frost and blight may introduce a fruitless summer. Thus sad anticipations of future distress may check enjoyment of the passing day, and show distressing phantoms in the dim horizon.

These apprehensions have no right place in the believer's heart. Jesus expels them. His Gospel tells that "things present and things to come" are the believer's heritage. He gives the promise which can never fail, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28) Thus He makes free, and there is Freedom indeed.

This Freedom is not mere immunity from bondage. It gives a title to the grandest rights. The believer is a freedman to our heavenly Father's courts. He may approach and ever find a welcome. He pleads the name of Jesus, and paternal smiles await him. As one of the household of faith, he is at home with God. When transacting needful matters in the valley of earth, his conversation is above. The slaves of Satan cannot thus draw near: access is the privilege of the happy company whom the Son has made free. They draw near to God, and God draws near to them. They have admission at all times and in all places to the throne of grace. The golden scepter is extended to their touch.

They open out the recesses of their hearts. They tell their sorrows, and make known their cares. They lay down their burdens and return relieved. Oh! how blessed is this privilege! It makes earth a foretaste of heaven: and thus believers pass through a lower heaven to their eternal rest. Such the Freedom of those whom the Son makes free.

The believer claims the promises as his allotted portion. Jesus bids him to walk up and down in the luxuriant garden of the Word, and to pluck the soul-reviving fruit. Many indeed and precious are these delights. They are suited to every state of need. They cheer in adversity. They add new relish to prosperity. They are all yes and amen in Christ Jesus. (2 Cor. 1:20)

The believer, also, has right to the sanctifying joys of public ordinances. He meets God in "the assembly of the saints." (Psa. 89:7) His prayers and praises are not dull formality, or merely the outward homage of posture, or the soulless utterance of holy words.

Happy are you, if you can truly say, The Son has made me free, and I am free indeed. But take heed that you "stand fast in this liberty." (Gal. 5:1) The enemy will try to spoil you of your treasure. Exchange not this blessed state for his slavish routine of outward rites, and forced observance of unsubstantial show.

9. SHEPHERD

"I am the Good Shepherd."

—John 10:11

Rural objects seldom fail to charm. To gaze on nature's beauties is never-wearying delight. But no scene is more attractive than when on the mountain-brow, or in the sheltered valley, the Shepherd is seen tending his flock.

Here Scripture lends abundant aid to multiply the interest. Shortly after the fall, the gates of Paradise fly open. Who is the first to enter? It is righteous Abel, a keeper of sheep. David is called to sit on Israel's throne. What was his early occupation? It is written, "God took him from the sheep-folds: from following the ewes great with young." (Psa. 78:70, 71) Who are the first to hear from an angel's lips good tidings of the Savior's birth? They "were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8) Thus sacred thoughts exalt the shepherd-life.

But deeper instruction must now be sought. Here is the chosen title of the blessed Jesus. Paul's eye gazing upon Him extols Him as "that Great Shepherd of the sheep." (Heb. 13:20) But who can declare His greatness? In every sense it is unsearchable. In every attribute He is great as God can be. Peter speaks similarly. He exhorts the under-shepherds to "feed the flock of God;" and he adds, "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will

never fade away." (1 Pet. 5:2, 4) He is indeed "the chief among ten thousand." (Song 5:10) He is high above His ministering servants as the heaven of heavens surmounts the earth. How precious are Ezekiel's words, "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David. He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd." (Ezek. 34:23)

To His people Christ indeed is all. He alone is all-sufficient for their every need. In Him all power resides. In Him they have superabundant help. But when He would display Himself to His beloved flock, He points not to His greatness, His preeminence, His power, His majesty, His glory—He rather shows His loving heart, His tender care, and sums up all in the sweet word, "I am the Good Shepherd." Good indeed He is. How good, eternity alone can show! Faith is thus encouraged to draw nearer, and behold the Lord in the office of the Good Shepherd.

I. A Shepherd knows his sheep. His knowledge almost exceeds belief. His constant watchfulness imprints each face on His retentive mind. Observation makes Him marvelously familiar with them.

Thus Jesus knows each member of His flock. They are His portion by His Father's gift. "They were Yours; You gave them to Me." (John 17:6) The possession consists of an innumerable company of immortal souls. Can such a treasure, so bestowed, not thoroughly be known?—They are His crown. "Come out, you daughters of Zion, and look at King Solomon wearing the crown, the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, the day his heart

rejoiced." (Song 3:11) Where is the monarch who knows not his crown?—They are His spouse loved with an everlasting love. Where is the bridegroom who knows not his bride?—They are His children, the creatures of His will, the new-born of His Spirit, the adopted of His grace. Where is the Father who knows not his sons?—He has the mother's tender heart. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you. (Isa. 66:13) "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isa. 49:15) Maternal instinct knows her offspring.—Where is the brother who knows not the loved ones of his home?—Where is the friend who reads not a friend's heart? Jesus is "a friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov. 18:24)

Thus every tie conspires to imprint on Him the knowledge of His sheep. The sheep are dispersed in every age and every climate. They are limited to no period and no place. They extend from Abel to the last-born of earth. They inhabit cities and wild deserts. They are found in torrid plains and ice-bound tracts, in isles of the sea and mountain heights. They belong to all nations, kindreds, people, tongues. But on each the eye of the Good Shepherd ever rests. They are as Canaan—"The land which the Lord your God cares for: the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even to the end of the year." (Deut. 11:12) In the wilderness Hagar is seen. "She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me.'" (Gen. 16:13) Nathaniel is told, "When you were under the fig-tree I saw you." (John 1:48) From the tree's branches Zaccheus is called down. No darkness hides, no prison-cell conceals, no crowds prevent discovery. Each believer may always rejoice in the truth that his image never fades from his Lord's sight. He knows the way that he takes. This knowledge is protection. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Heb. 13:5) His knowledge never slumbers, sleeps, or errs.

II. A Shepherd feeds his sheep. It is his daily care to lead them to the pastures where the best food abounds. He guards them from unwholesome fields, in which herbage is rank, and weeds might injure, and thorns and thistles mock the hungry mouth, and poison lurks in a beguiling form. Thus he nourishes, and the flock thrives.

The prophet takes up the image, and exclaims, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd." (Isa. 40:11) They need nourishment, and largely He supplies. Their appetite is spiritual, and spiritual is their regalement. He brings them to the fertile meadows of the Word, and says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song 5:1) Bodies retain not life except through food, and sheep would perish without pasture. But the Word supplies abundantly. Around the camp of Israel the angels' food fell only in the morning dew; but at all times the Word is near. The power of the Word to strengthen and revive consists mainly in its revelations of the Savior. "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10) Here the hungry soul is cheered by gladdening views of His wondrous person, His everlasting love, His tender grace, His willing sufferings, His atoning death, His rising power, His ascending glory, His interceding might, His coming kingdom. Invigorated by views of their ever-present, ever loving Lord, they are strong for toil. They renew their strength in His appointed ordinances, and mount with wings as eagles. In the congregation of the saints, in united prayer and praise, they brace their nerves and gird up their loins. They see their Lord uplifted in His courts, and they return "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." (Psa. 19:5) A table is prepared before them in the house of their pilgrimage—even the sacramental feast. Here is much-loved refreshment. In these green pastures they lie down with great delight, and the food is sweet to their taste. Thus tender is the heavenly Shepherd. Thus nurtured is the happy flock. They feed and sing, He is indeed "the Good Shepherd!"

III. A Shepherd protects his sheep. Many and mighty are their foes. In themselves they are weak and tremulous as a broken reed. The wild boar out of the forest marks them as his prey. The roaring lion watches to devour. Savage dogs would mangle. The wind, the rain, the tempest, threaten to destroy. The Shepherd knows these perils, and protects from all.

Thus Jesus screens His flock. "Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; You surround them with favor as with a shield." (Psalm 5:11, 12) It is superfluous to state that Satan is the arch enemy of the flock. For strength he is a lion, for fierceness he is a dragon, for twisting deviousness he is a serpent. His might almost reaches almightiness. His many vassals, as legion, are an universal swarm. His vigilance never slumbers. His skill is barbed by world-long experience. His wrath is vehement, because his time is short. He wars with desperation because a hopeless doom is near.

How is it that faith is not extinguished by his efforts? How is it that the sheep are not all driven to his prison-cell? There must be a Shepherd almighty to protect. He who delivered David "from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear" (1 Sam. 17:37) is the same rescuing Lord, "yesterday, today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8) Paul seemed to be in the jaws of ruin, but he testifies, "The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, and I was delivered from the lion's mouth." (2 Tim. 4:17) In direst extremity let the believer cry, "Rescue me from the mouth of the lion; save me from the horns of the wild oxen." (Psa. 22:21) A protecting arm will speedily be outstretched. A barrier is erected which has salvation for its bulwarks. At the command of Jesus angels encamp around and deliver them. Thus His sheep "never perish, and no one can snatch them out of His hands." (John 10:28) IV. A Shepherd heals the ailments of the sheep. His heart is tender love. It is, moreover, skillful care. The flock is subject to variety of ills. Inclement seasons bring disease: contagion may be contracted; injuries from accidents occur, and sickness from many causes weakens. The well-trained Shepherd knows how to use the suitable relief. He watches anxiously, he diligently tends, he wisely nurses, he administers right remedies, and so effects a cure. It is his pride to have a healthy flock.

Here the Good Shepherd cannot be hidden. Jehovah-Rophi—"I am the Lord who heals you"—is

His chosen name. (Exod. 15:26) Is it not written, "Who heals all your diseases." (Psa. 103:3) And again, "He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds." (Psa. 147:3) In the kingdom of grace the lament is never heard, "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?" (Jer. 8:22) Over His flock the Sun of Righteousness ever "shines with healing in His wings." (Mal. 4:2) When He came to procure for His people everlasting health, miracles of bodily healing were foremost in His credentials. His reply to the disciples of John is, "Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised." (Luke 7:22) At His word all maladies took flight. No case was too inveterate or too severe. As many as touched the very hem of His garment were made perfectly whole. So, also, He heals the sickness of the soul. His present kingdom is a spiritual Bethesda. "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (Isa. 1:6) Each believer is in himself loathsome, as the man "full of leprosy." (Luke 5:12) But let the cry ascend, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." "Heal me, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved for You are my praise." (Jer. 17:14) The Good Shepherd will put forth His power, and spiritual health shall be restored.

V. A Shepherd shears his sheep. At times excessive wool would be a burden. There may be profit in the fleece; but without such thought the sheep must be relieved. Unburdening process must be undergone. The Shepherd perseveres amid resisting struggles, and soon sees lightness and health exulting in the fields.

The Good Shepherd similarly gives freedom from obstructing weights. He calls His followers to the good fight of faith. They need unburdened arms. They must nimbly run the upward race. They need unshackled feet. They must fly heavenward on the wings of hope; their wings must not be pinioned to the earth. Their hindrances are many and diversified, and must be all removed. Some are adhesive as the very skin. Some are cancers deeply rooted in the body. The excision is painful, but it must be endured. Thus an agile flock is fit for the appointed work. The Good Shepherd spares not, and the result is vigorous life.

VI. A Shepherd enfolds his sheep. When the shades of evening thicken, the scattered flocks are gathered to their fold. They wander not amid pitfalls, nor are left an easy prey of roaming beasts. Convenient shelter is their night-long home. Together they lie down, guarded and secure.

The Church is the present fold of Jesus' flock. "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47) Here they are housed during the dark days of time's continuance. They repose together waiting for the dawn of the perfect day. Under-shepherds watch around. The storm may pelt, but they are not exposed. They may hear the howling of the hungry foe, but they cannot be reached.

This fold is but the prelude to the endless home. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appears before God." (Psa. 84:7) "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came." (Gen. 12:5) "There shall not a hoof be left behind." (Exod. 10:26) "So it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land." (Acts 27:44) In the "Father's house are many mansions," and they shall all be filled. Of all the children given by God, not one shall be lost. All the sheep shall be securely and forever folded. They never more shall hear the storm. They never more shall dread the foe. The Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep, shall be among them as "a Lamb that had been slain." (Rev. 5:6) They shall follow Him "wherever He goes" (Rev. 14:4); and He "shall feed them, and lead them to

living fountains of waters." (Rev. 7:17)

In prospect of this fold, let believers "gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope unto the end." (1 Pet. 1:13) Let them rejoice, give thanks, and sing. Let them clearly show the Good Shepherd's marks. They are marked in the ear, because they hear His voice; marked in the foot, because they follow Him; marked on the brow, because "Holiness to the Lord" is there inscribed. The motto over the earthly fold is, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not lack." (Psa. 23:1) Over the heavenly house letters of glory shine, "Never again will they leave it." (Rev. 3:12)

10. RESURRECTION

"I am the Resurrection."

—John 11:25

Whose lips proclaim this mighty word? Who is the speaker claiming such authority? Is it on earth that this announcement sounds? Can it be the calm utterance of sober mind? Is attention due to it as emanating from One who spoke what He well knew, and testified an indubitable truth?

Let all doubt vanish, as morning mists before the orb of day. Let reverence give heed. Let adoration meekly bow. Jesus here appears in the character of the true, "the faithful Witness." The Word, the eternal Word—He who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all; He who cannot deceive, and cannot be deceived—thus testifies. He in whom "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" gives this sublime revelation, "I am the Resurrection." Jesus the speaker, of Himself thus speaks—to Himself He points, exclaiming, "I am the Resurrection."

The question now occurs, What is the import of the term? What is its main significance? Accurate definitions lead to accurate conclusions. The end will not be reached, when first steps move in a wrong course. The target should be seen, before the arrow flies.

Doubtless the word is often used in figurative sense. It lends expressive aid to exemplify various occurrences. When wintry sods relax, and hardened fields assume again their verdant carpet; when flowers bloom, and buds expand, and renovated beauty clothes the earth, Nature is said to put on her resurrection-dress. When the soul has felt the absence of heavenly dew, when grace has languished, and no gracious breezes from above have nourished spiritual shoots, when after this cold period the Spirit revisits the heart, and renews the joys of holy communion, a metaphor speaks of the resurrection of the inner man. Other revivals might be characterized as resurrections.

But there is no figurative meaning in these words, "I am the Resurrection." The context at once claims literal acceptance. Let thought now realize the scene of utterance. The lifeless frame of Lazarus had recently been carried to the grave. Jesus seeks Bethany, to comfort the weeping sisters. Martha hastens to meet Him. In reply to her impassioned grief, He gives her the assurance, "Your brother shall rise again." The mourner acquiesces in the truth. She knew that her brother's body should not lie always in the grave. She assents that it again shall be arrayed with life, and again shall possess all properties of being. It is in connection with this assent that Jesus sublimely cries, "I am the Resurrection."

We here learn that Jesus speaks of the Resurrection of the body, and that this marvel shall be accomplished through the direct exercise of His mighty power.

Let grateful joy now revel in these wondrous tidings! When death opens the cage, the spirit flies to separate existence. It leaves the deserted tenement to crumble into dust. But the soul, alive without the body, is not entire and perfect man. It is but one portion of the total being. For man to be complete, the body must again resuscitate. The component parts must live, co-partners of one tenement. A re-animated frame must receive the ever living soul. Then man is man again. How delightedly, then, should we drink in the heaven-born assurance, "I am the Resurrection."

We rely not on utterance alone for this grand comfort. Indeed, if Jesus had but once thus spoken, faith would possess sufficient ground for solid standing, its feet would rest on a firm rock; it could confront a world of doubters, and trample down all sneering fallacies. But to fill the believing heart with confidence, Jesus adds demonstration to His word. Few moments are allowed to pass, when at His word a dead body lives again.

He asks, "Where have you laid him?" They guide Him to the grave. "It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it." He orders its removal, and having lifted up His eyes to heaven, in supplication to His Father, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." There is no delay. Instantly death withdraws its hold. The body "that was dead came forth." Thus Jesus by undoubted fact established what His lips had recently declared—"I am the Resurrection."

Had this fact only been exhibited, faith would rejoice in perfect confirmation. It would rightly exult and sing, Jesus is "the Resurrection." His voice declares it. His deed corroborates it. But this is not the only instance where Christ manifests His power to loosen the grasp of death. Let thought review the early days of His ministry. Jairus, high in Jewish rank, with supplicating urgency implored that death might not remove his little daughter. He asked much, and he obtained more. What an encouragement to bold and earnest prayer! The youthful sufferer expired. Great was the lamentation! Jesus hastened to the spot, and entered the chamber of the lifeless child. He takes her hand, and speaking with all authority, as "the Resurrection," cries, "Little girl, I say to you, get up." (Mark 5:41) He displays His re-animating power. "Immediately the girl stood up, and walked around."

Jesus multiplies evidence, that faith may with stronger grasp cling to Him as "the Resurrection." In His journeyings He approaches Nain. According to the pre-arrangements of His will, when He reached the gate, "there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and those who bore him stood still." And now He, who is "the Resurrection," speaks: "Young man, I say to you, get up." The word goes forth, almighty in authority, and arrayed with the strength of Omnipotence. No opposition checks obedience. No foes in earth or hell can stay the mandate. Instantly the corpse resumes its former life. "The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother." (Luke 7:11-15) Thus assurance towers to the heavens that Jesus is "the Resurrection."

The most notable evidence still claims attention. On the accursed tree at Calvary, Jesus lays down His life. To pay the penalty of transgression, to make entire satisfaction to all the outraged attributes of God, to drink to the dregs the cup of wrath, to fulfill all predictions, and to buy His ransomed heritage, He hangs a lifeless body upon the cross. To the grave He is consigned. The appointed morn arrives. Will He still lie among the dead? Vain are the watch, the stone, the guard; vain is all the precautionary vigilance; vain is all the power of the grave and hell; Jesus comes forth the mighty Conqueror of death. Hear His subsequent words to the beloved disciple, "I am He who lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore." (Rev. 1:18) He who raised others now rises Himself. He who raised others will raise us too. Reader! adore Him!—the Lord, "the Resurrection."

Further instruction is graciously imparted by the Holy Spirit. It is His desire that our hearts should overflow with consolation. He would not leave us deficient in any knowledge which could enlighten and delight. He therefore with loving hand withdraws the veil, and exhibits the main wonders of the Resurrection-day. He bids us now in spirit to intermix in events in which we surely shall have part, and which the flight of time brings on apace. The Apostle writes that when the set time is fully come, and all the decrees of salvation are accomplished, the blessed Jesus will rise from His high throne, and again in person hasten to this earth. We read, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Arch-angel, and with the trumpet of God." (1 Thess. 4:16) Other branches of His work He has entrusted to commissioned hands. Prophets and apostles have proclaimed His Word. Enlightened ministers have called sinners to His faith, and have toiled to place spiritual stones in the spiritual house of God. All His angels have been sent "forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. 1:14) But here is work which so intensely fills His heart that it can be entrusted to no other agent. The raising of the bodies of His sleeping saints shall be accomplished by Himself alone. The Spirit, with a herald's voice declares, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." The angels' assurance is now verified, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) Will He come back in silent pomp? Oh, no! He descends with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel. Angels and authorities, and powers, who are made subject unto Him, obey His call. All heaven hears, and re-echoes the mighty shout. All earth hears, and trembles through its length and breadth.

But what is the shout? Conjecture may with reverence surmise, but it finds no certainty. We may suppose that His voice summons all the hosts of heaven to bear Him under the canopy of their glittering wings, and all the ransomed spirits who had left their bodies in the graves of earth, fly to cluster around Him in His glorious return. To the Archangel's voice there is the adjunct of the trumpet of God. Paul, when treating of the wonders of this day, omits not this accompaniment, "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound." (1 Cor. 15:51, 52) It is wisdom's employ to live listening for this trumpet's sound.

What is the effect of this world-shaking note? Behold with faith the first occurrence. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. 4:16) Every grave which holds the body of a sleeping saint shall open its cold portals. Each inhabitant shall rise from the couch on which it has reclined. If any slumber in ocean's deep caverns, they shall uplift the head. From the four winds of heaven they shall stand again in living form on earth. Oh! what a mighty army! All whoever fell asleep in Christ, from Abel to the last who died in faith, shall re-appear.

But how changed are now their bodies! how perfect, how beauteous, how glorious! They shall put off their death-clothes for bodies like Christ's glorious body. In what condition was the body consigned to its parent earth? It was "sown in corruption"—tainted by decay, soiled by all which is most loathsome; but now, "it is raised in incorruption," blooming in pure loveliness, incapable again to know pollution's touch. It was "sown in dishonor." It was hidden as a revolting object from all sight. Its home was among the worms and reptiles of the ground. Now, "it is raised in glory." Its brilliancy surpasses the sun in midday splendor. All brightness is eclipsed by its surpassing rays. It was "sown in weakness." It lay in feebleness, without power to move, or exercise the least prerogative of life. "It is raised in power." We know the might of angels: more than angelic activity is now worn. Suffice, it was sown an heir to all the imbecilities and nothingness which cling to the earth-born. "It is raised a spiritual body." The term is easily

uttered. Its full import must be unknown until the grand reality is reached.

But the Resurrection of the sleeping saints is accompanied with the change of all the bodies of the Lord's flock who meet that day in tenements of clay. All this Resurrection-glory shall be theirs. They thus transformed shall be caught up in one collected mass to join the risen saints; they shall together "meet the Lord in the air," and together reign with Him forever. This is the consummation of the work of Jesus, "the Resurrection."

Who will not cry from his inmost soul, All praise to Him who said, "I am the Resurrection!" Blessed day! The espousal of the Church to the Heavenly Bridegroom is now complete. He had wooed and won her in her time-state. Mighty voices now shout: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7) The enraptured Apostle "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2) We bless You, O Lord, our Resurrection!

Blessed day! It witnesses the coronation of all who have washed in Jesus' blood, and by faith have put on His righteousness. The promise of a crown was freely given, and now is gloriously redeemed. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." (2 Tim. 4:8) Thus the Bride's head receives the crown of life—"the crown of glory that does not fade away." (1 Pet. 5:4) We bless You, O Lord,

our Resurrection!

11. WAY

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father except through Me."

—John 14:6

Here let the Way be first considered. Jesus claims it as an emblem of Himself. The object is familiar. No depth of learning, no elaborate skill, no ingenious reasoning, are needed to explain it. We cannot move from place to place except our feet travel in some way. A road facilitates communication. Without a path access is impeded. Thus to make truth perspicuous, Christ shows himself, as the Way by which the Father can be reached. He is the Mediator between God and man.

In musing on this emblem obvious thoughts occur.

I. Christ is an appointed Way. Sin raised impassable obstructions to God's presence. It formed a chasm infinitely wide, immeasurably deep. The separation knew no limits. Man cared not to return. The desire had expired. And if the longing wish could have arisen, no thought could have contrived, no power could have constructed, an open Way. Angelic intelligence could have devised no help. But God in His free mercy ordained a pathway of return. He appointed Jesus to be the Way. The design has origin sovereign grace.

In Eden's garden God's own hand first drew the plan. In eternal council, before the foundation of the world, the scheme of reconciliation was ordained, and Jesus called to execute its requirements. He accepted the mediatorial office, and undertook the appointed work. Thus "Christ glorified not Himself" to be made the Way; but He who said to Him, You are my Son, today have I begotten You. To testify its completion He exclaims, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." (John 17:4) Here anxious souls find copious streams of peace. The decree is gone forth, "Cast up, cast up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." (Isa. 57:14) No obstacle impedes. Christ is given as the Way to the Father. All who draw near through Him find that God draws near to them. (James 4:8) The happy believer sings, I have believed in Christ Jesus my Lord, and I walk in Him as the Way appointed by the Father.

II. He is the only Way. It is a well-trodden path. What multitudes of saints have traversed it. By no other route have any reached the rest of heaven. Abel's feet first trod it. The patriarchs followed in the self-same track. The prophets in their glowing terms proclaimed it, and what they showed to others, they themselves adopted. The apostles stood as heaven's own signposts, pointing to this road, and gladly did their feet pursue it. In every age, in every climate, the saved have walked herein; and the last pilgrim who shall pass the shining portals shall have followed in this line. One Way is not allotted to the wealthy, another to the poor. One invites not the learned, another the illiterate. One is not framed for the crowned rulers of the world, another for the lowly subjects. As there is but one remedy for sin, one ransom for the lost, one robe for the celestial throng, one release for the sin-bound, one Gospel for all the dwellers upon earth, one faith, one Christ, one heaven, and one God, so the Way to the Father is only one. Wherever the enlightened preacher speaks, in the city, in the village church, in visits to the whole, in the chamber of sickness, beside the dying bed, the essence of his message is only one—Look to Jesus, follow Him; so only can eternal woe be escaped, so only can eternal life be gained. Throughout the field of missionary work—from the Equator to the Poles, amid all classes of wilderness life, amid all slaves of superstitious worship, in all varieties of climate and race—one only are the saving tidings. This is the substance. There is one only Way to everlasting bliss—Jesus Christ, the appointed and the only Savior. Jesus! we walk in You, the one Way to the Father.

III. He is a new Way. Doubtless this Way is as old as the birth of sin. It was early mapped out, when the Seed of the Woman was proclaimed. Our first parents and the elders of the family of faith were called to walk in it. But midday light did not shine on it. It was dimly traced through types and shadows, and prophetic teaching, and various sacrifices, and symbolic rites. But now the darkness of the early days is dispelled by the Gospel's fullest rays. Christ stands clear as the orb of day in all His power and willingness to save. New glory illumines the Way. The old intimations now give place to full revelations of the Lord. In prospect of the new heavens and the new earth, He who sat upon the throne declared, "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev. 21:5) So in devout thanksgiving for the light of Gospel-days, the believer shouts, A new Way is before my feet. So rejoicing in expectation of unclouded knowledge, the Psalmist cries aloud, "O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things." (Psa. 98:1) Jesus! we walk in You, the new Way to the Father.

IV. He is a sure Way. None whose feet are planted in this Way fail to reach the heavenly end. Sometimes the pilgrimage seems very long, and weary travelers sigh for repose. But as Abraham's company "went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came:" (Gen. 12:5) so all who choose this blessed course finally attain the promised land. All whose names are in the Book of Life reach finally the home of Life. Those who have received real faith in Christ never draw back to perdition. They "believe to the saving of the soul." (Heb. 10:39) "He who begins a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6) Jesus will at last "present them faultless before the presence of His glory" (Jude ver. 24), with the avowal, "Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none." (John 17:12) Let all, then, who through enlightening grace are thus journeying heavenward, "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Let them "gird up the loins of their minds;" let them "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Every step brings them nearer to the "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10) Jesus! we walk in You, the sure Way to the Father.

V. He is a secure Way. The road is indeed beset with perils. It lies through the country of the arch-foe. His evil eye is ever on each pilgrim. He hates the progress, and is ever watchful to impede. He knows that he must check, or there will be escape. From Abel's day he has seen multitudes thus moving from his grasp. This knowledge intensifies his wrath, and impels him to unwearied attacks. Long experience, also, has taught him wily arts. His armory, also, yields countless weapons. Not one of these instruments is left untried. Each pilgrim, from first entrance on the Way to the end, is constantly and vigorously assailed. But all these efforts are in vain. Each humble traveler is girded with armor mighty to resist. Fiery darts may fly, but the ready shield of faith can quench all. Murderous thrusts may be directed against the heart, but the true breastplate of righteousness, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, avert the blow. Sometimes, indeed, through lack of vigilance or languid faith, a wound may be inflicted; but the good Physician is at hand with remedies to heal. The balm of Gilead soon allays all wounds. He who forgives all their sins, heals all their diseases. (Psa. 103:3) Thus believers closely following their Lord, and walking in His path, "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Pet. 1:5) "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appears before God." (Psa. 84:7) Securely guarded they reach their home. Unfailingly protected, they tread on the necks of all opposing enemies. They pass the gates of heaven with shouts of victory, through the preserving Lamb. Jesus! we walk in You, a secure Way to the Father.

VI. He is a holy Way. The Spirit proclaims, "A highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." (Isa. 35:8) All who thus journey have on their brow a conspicuous inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." They are all born again by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. They are all new creatures in Christ Jesus. They have all "put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and are renewed in the spirit of their mind; and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:22-24) They are enabled to be holy even as God is holy. Backslidings are indeed not rare. Sometimes reviving sins entrap. But then, what tears of penitential sorrow flow! what smittings of the breast! what deep confessions! what cries for pardoning grace proclaim that though fallen they still live. What vows of increased

watchfulness of walk! what supplications for more upholding and directing aid besiege the mercy-seat! Thus apparent blight, issues in more abundant fruit, and a holy company advances in holy path to the fair land where holiness is the unclouded sky. Jesus! we walk in You, a holy Way to the Father.

VII. He is a joyful Way. There is sweet rapture in the shout of Moses: "Happy are you, O Israel! who is like to you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency!" (Deut. 33:29) The cup of joyous bliss is placed in believers' hands. They have chosen the good part, and the Way of pleasantness. Observe the votaries of this transient world. Amid the dance, the laughter, and the song—in all pursuits of wealth, and honor, and applause, there is no inward peace, no calm delight, no settled ease of conscience, no heavenly converse with rejoicing comrades, no hopes full of immortality. The broad road is indeed crowded, but disconsolation darkens it. The past accuses, the present gives no rest, the future is dread anguish. Turn to the enchanting contrast. Zion's pilgrims "sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord." (Psa. 138:5) Joy is their portion. They are called to rejoice in the Lord, and again and again to rejoice. With grateful hearts they cheerfully obey. They "bless the Lord at all times: His praises are continually in their mouth." (Psa. 34:1) What happier employment can thought conceive or heaven present? They praise Him for having "brought them up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, for having set their feet upon a rock, and established their goings." (Psa. 40:2) He snatched them from the broad way, and placed them in the path of joy. They bless Him for the loved companions of their march. How sweet is their holy communion! how charming is their exercise of prayer and praise! What blissful confidence uplifts their hearts! They are wafted along streams of happiness to the eternal home, where there are pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. Thus happy, thus gloriously happy is this Way. Jesus! we walk in You, the happy Way to the Father.

VIII. He is a narrow Way. It is not an open plain, in which wandering feet may widely stray. Strict boundaries define its course. Devious wanderings are interdicted. Gospel-precepts hedge it on the right hand and on the left. At the strait gate SELF-WILL is utterly abandoned. In the narrow

Way no PRIDE may flaunt, or SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS swell, or SELF in any form seek to gain indulgence. The humble cry is in each pilgrim's heart, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth, and teach me: for You are the God of my salvation; on You do I wait all the day." (Psa. 25:4, 5) "O send out Your light and Your truth: let them lead me, let them bring me to Your holy hill, and to Your tabernacles." (Psa. 43:3) There are no gaps through which the halfhearted followers of the world may find an opening to seek the noxious waters of vanity, or pluck the poisoned berries of loose living. Wholesome restrictions guard from such injury. No eyes can see, no eyes can find, forbidden fruit. A narrow Way leads to a blessed end. It is an elevating joy to contemplate the charms of a truly Christian life. As the believer has "received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he walks in Him; rooted and built up in Him, abounding in faith with thanksgiving." (Col. 2:6, 7) His every step is Christ, and thus conformity to His likeness, which is the foretaste of heaven, is wrought out.

Let it be added, that a tender feeling beats in these pilgrims' hearts. They "have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the Way." (Heb. 5:2) They would not enter heaven alone. They remember the misery of their early days, and hence they strive to "turn sinners from the error of their ways, and to save souls from death, and to cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:20) They address others with the moving entreaty of Moses to Hobab, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord has said, I will give it you: come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel." (Num. 10:29) The blessed thus scatter blessings, the happy promote happiness, the saved, through grace, augment salvation.

12. TRUTH

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

—John 14:6

Truth next invites attention. The very term commands respect. At once it calls for reverence. It is a noble plant; but it is not indigenous to earth. Here ignorance and fallacies, and falsehoods are the wide-spreading weeds. Truth lived at first, but it was soon slain by sin. Then untruthfulness came in—"You shall not surely die." (Gen. 3:4) Multitudinous has been its progeny.

The history of this earth presents a frightful picture of the miseries which follow in the rear of falsehood. It extinguished light, and darkness cast its wretched pall around. It banished peace. It raised a barrier between God and man. It barred the gates of heaven. It constructed the prison-walls of hell, and kindled its inextinguishable flames.

But Christ came, the remedy of all evil. As such, He re-established the reign of Truth, and shines as its perfect embodiment. Let us bow before His proclamation, "I am the Truth." This subject is most large. It presents expansive views, and extends through Creation's wonders and Revelation's glory. Let thought glean profit in each field.

I. When Creation's beauties were arranged, it seems that Christ was the deep signification of the work. Statements are distinctly made, as hints to be expanded into fuller intelligence. Thus those who read Nature's book, looking for Christ, perpetually find feasts of joy. At every turn they see objects which reveal the Lord. Here indeed erratic fancies must be checked, and due bounds must restrain imagination's flights. But it is both duty and delight to follow where the Spirit leads, and He plainly tells that Christ is the true end of our earth's fabric. Let a few instances guide to this improvement of things visible.

Light shines the earliest wonder of the world. Who can depict its beauties and its properties! But it is more than nature's charm and earth's benefit. It is a treasure of Gospel-truth. Its lovely rays show the more lovely image of the Lord. It is written, "That was the true light which enlightens every man who comes into the world." (John 1:9) Jesus, also, selecting it as a typical mirror, cries, "I am the light of the world: he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12) The prophet, anticipating the rising of the true "Dayspring from on high," sweetly sings, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." (Isa. 9:2) Thus from early morn to evening's close we are encompassed by an atmosphere, the Truth of which is Christ.

Again—our meals require the staff of life. Costly viands may abound. Luxuries may be multiplied by culinary art. But if bread be absent, the food is incomplete. Thus bread is an essential article at our tables. But it affords much more than nourishment. While we eat we gain instruction. It is an emblem of our Lord. His own lips declare, "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven." (John 6:32) Thus whenever we receive this necessary nutriment, our souls should see and feast

on Jesus. He adds, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." (John 6:51) And again, "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35) Thus the lifeless material proclaims the Savior, who is alive forevermore. (Rev. 1:18) Material bread not only sustains life—it sets Him forth who quickens the soul with never-ending life. Our tables would be sanctifying schools, if in the main nutriment Christ was discovered. Animal life indeed would thrive, and spiritual vigor be replenished.

Again—in rural scenes the vine is often present to our view. It is not limited to the glassy shelter of the rich man's home. It spreads its far extending tendrils and its luxuriant clusters around the humblest dwellings. Its stem indeed is lowly, and shows no form, nor strength, nor beauty. But it abounds in branches of extensive growth. Each branch is laden with rich clusters, and each cluster swells with grapes, and each grape is bursting with delicious juice. What plant then can compete in value! As Jesus walks attended by his chosen band, this plant attracts His notice. Quickly He deduces a spiritual lesson. He exclaims, "I am the true Vine." (John 15:1) The plant was an emblem of the blessings which He came to give. Whenever the vine is viewed, let pious thought ascend to Christ.

It belongs not to this design to trace at length the full similitude. Let it suffice to note most briefly that the lowly stem prefigures the lowly birth, the lowly life, the lowly walk of Jesus. No pomp, no show, dazzled the eyes of men. He grew up "before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." (Isa. 53:2) He did not "cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." (Isa. 42:2) But His preciousness surpasses thought. All eloquence is dumb before such theme. His fruit exceeds all praises. Well might the Church exclaim, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." (Song 2:3)

Behold His death! It is the atonement of all the sins of all who trust in Him; it pours forth the richest exuberance of peace. What multitudes extract from it transporting sense of pardon for each offence, expiation of all iniquity, reconciliation with God, cleansing from all vile stains, adoption into the heavenly household, all peace, joy unspeakable and full of glory, and hope of the inheritance of the saints in light! Survey the countless multitudes of the redeemed. Mark their rapture, listen to their endless hymns. All their ecstasy is derived from the fruit of Christ the true Vine.

Mark, also, its expanding boughs. Verily they traverse the universe. Where man lives, the vine presents its reviving clusters. Wherever the vine claims notice, or the mantling goblet invites taste, let thought ascend to Christ, and feast on the delights of all His benefits.

Thus significantly the blessed Jesus points to objects in creation's field, as showing some especial picture of Himself. He intimates that they unfold the volumes of His worth. Behold the light, the bread, the vine—they are but shadows: the substance is in Him. He is the true light, the true bread, the true vine. Their Truth is Christ.

These instances supply a clue for wide investigation. They lead to a fertile field, and unlock the gate. They place the foundation for much superstructure. They teach that Christ is the Truth of Creation's book. Thus, in rambles through the verdant fields, by the flowing stream, beside the babbling brook, in uplands, in the valley—thus, when summer glows, when wintry frosts invest the scene with snow—we are encouraged to search for exhibitions of Gospel-truth. There is much spiritual delight in this constant looking for Him who is "chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely One!" (Song 5:10-16) There is sweet rapture in these discoveries of His image! Thus things terrestrial help the believer to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him, whom to see is heaven begun.

II. But it is in Scripture's page that Christ shines forth in glorious brightness as "the Truth." He guides to this conclusion. "Search the Scriptures, for in them you do you think have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39) To the disciples journeying to Emmaus, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27) Hence we know that all the Scriptures abound in disclosures of Him as "the Truth." It pleased God that through the Church's infancy teaching should be much in partial show. Pictures, signs, and shadows, passed in long train before the early fathers. But in them the substance was not fully unveiled. The Truth of each was Christ; but He was seen through long vista.

Among the types the foremost place is justly given to sacrifice. It is the firstborn of this school. Its birth was concurrent with sin's entrance. In Eden's garden the first victim bled. The coats of skins which clothed our parents when they were cast out into a dreary world, is clear proof. These victims died prefiguring the Woman's Seed who would bruise the serpent's head. From that time until the Cross of Calvary, how many altars were upraised! What streams of blood flowed in unceasing current! How often did the priest lift up the sacrificing knife! No morning dawned, no evening closed, unmarked by sacrificial type. But from every victim a distinct voice was heard. It cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Every death on every altar pointed to Him who in the fullness of time should die to atone for sin. Of every

sacrificial victim Christ was the Truth. Needless would have been the expenditure of life, except each death had been herald of the coming Savior. But the bleeding victim was only one in a vast volume of instruction, one link in a long chain, one tree in a forest of spiritual lessons.

Let the wanderings in the wilderness be surveyed. In long array Christ was proclaimed by some types. With morning light in the dew the manna fell. It gave supplies of food; the tribes had only to gather and to eat. But its main value was its spiritual import. In diverse ways it showed forth Christ. He was its Truth. It fell to image "the true bread."

Again, the smitten rock sent forth a stream always flowing in their rear. The tribes had not to toil in digging wells, or in long search for springs. "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. 10:4) He was the Truth of this unfailing water.

Amid all the wilderness-types the brazen serpent claims prominence. Israel's sons were in deep misery. As a punishment for their grievous sins, fiery serpents darted through the camp inflicting deadly stings. God removed not the plague, but He commanded Moses to raise a brazen serpent on a pole. To 'calculating reason' this would seem to be a mockery of their woe. What healing virtue could issue from this figure! But God ordained that whenever a bitten Israelite fixed his eye upon this form, the poison would cease to act, the sting would abate, and health return. But more than bodily recovery was here. Jesus Himself declares that of this type He is the Truth. Marvelous are His words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so

must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:14, 15) What hearty thanksgivings should this type call forth! What multitudes in every age have been led by its teaching to turn the eye of faith to Christ its Truth, and thus to win eternal life!

How prominent in Israel's story was the High Priest! View his splendid robes. Examine each part of his significant apparel. See on his heart and on his shoulders the names of the twelve tribes. Mark his passing the veil, and entering into the Holy of Holies, not without blood, and burning incense in the sacred place, and sprinkling the mercy-seat, and returning to give blessings to the people. The Truth of every part of this dazzling appearance is Christ. He came, "a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. 9:11, 12) How precious, how enlightening, how cheering, is the Old Testament record, when in every sign, and semblance, and type, we see the glorious Person, and the gracious acts of Christ, the Truth!

But Jesus is pre-eminently the Truth, as the grand revelation of the Father. Apart from Jesus, God's face is hidden; more than Egyptian darkness conceals Him. Mists and impenetrable gloom envelop His character, His purposes, and will. The sages of old, boasted much mental culture. Vast were the resources of their intellect. They probed science to its core. But the world by wisdom knew not the true God. (1 Cor. 1:21) When Jesus came, the darkness passed, and "the true light" shone brightly. Hence the Spirit gives Him the designation, "the faithful and true Witness." Hence the Apostle was guided to pen, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6) So that He truly says, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

How precious is this Savior! With what intense desire should we study Him! He is the true mirror which reflects the Father's glory. He is the true volume, in which we read, as in the light of heaven, the Father's attributes, and see as in a collected focus, His righteousness, His justice, His holiness, His love. Thanks be to God for this manifested Truth!

Has Truth thus come down from heaven to earth, and shall not men most diligently, most earnestly search for it! Shall they not employ their time in seeking to be possessors of this treasure! It enriches for time and for eternity. It is useful for every moment, and in every state. It makes free from every bondage, and from all debasing ignorance.

It is sown in the field of Scripture. Let no day pass without deep digging in this mine. Dig, also, with wrestling prayer for the Spirit's aid. "O Lord, send out Your light and Your Truth; let them lead me." (Psa. 43:3) Let the love of the Truth reign in our hearts. Sweet is the exhortation of the prophet, "Love the Truth and peace." (Zech. 8:19) Fearful is the doom against those who "received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved." (2 Thess. 2:10)

Who can resist the charms of Truth! It contains every attraction to awaken and to rivet affection. Especially let us walk in Truth. It is a solemn injunction, "As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him." (Col. 2:6) The Apostle had no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in Truth. Christ should be the Truth on which the eye should ever gaze, the way by which our feet should move, the arm on which we should lean coming up out of the wilderness. Thus earth will be an infallible passage to the bright world, in which unclouded Truth forever shines.

13. LIFE

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

—John 14:6

What thought can grasp the full import of Life! It animates the body, the soul, the spirit. It begins in time. It has being throughout eternity. As to the earthly tenement, its limits may be brief. As to the inner man, its expanse is limitless. Thus the analysis of Life is food for boundless meditation.

Life may be considered as bodily, as mental, as spiritual, as eternal. But whatever view be taken—whether of body, soul, or spirit, whether of time, or timeless period—the truth is clear, Christ is its essence.

We owe this knowledge not to speculation, or research, or theory. No mortal power could devise a probable conjecture as to Life's origin and continuance. But the infallible Word reveals it. The lips of Jesus give authoritative announcement. His simple statement conveys the intelligence: "I am the Life." Paul re-echoes, "When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory." (Col. 3:4)

I. Bodily Life. Where do we obtain these living frames, so curiously, so exquisitely formed? Where springs this animal activity? What is the origin of this marvelous mechanism? The reply is before us. Christ is the Life.

The Spirit, in the records of creation, gives clear information. In that history we are taught, that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." (Gen. 2:7) But Jesus was co-partner with the Father in this life-giving act. It is written, "By whom also He made the worlds." (Heb. 1:2) And again, "One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him." (1 Cor. 8:6) And again, "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities; or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him." (Col. 1:16) Hence Jesus claims adoration as the author of all the powers of the living frame. The composition, the arrangement, the vitality, are the work of His celestial skill. On every part His hand of power is inscribed. This truth receives but scanty recompense of gratitude.

When the eye revels in delightful contemplation of the beauties and the wonders which on all sides gratify the gaze; when every sense is refreshed with endless varieties of charms; when the pores open to receive the genial warmth of summer, or the cool fanning of the vernal breeze; when the limbs put forth their energies in exhilarating exercise—in short, in every joy which results from Life in the body, the blessed Jesus should be seen and adored as one with the Father in these gifts. It should not be forgotten that in this sense He is our Life.

But Jesus not only calls these powers into being, their preservation hangs on Him. The Spirit testifies that "He upholds all things by the word of His power." (Heb. 1:3) And "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col. 1:17) The world is crowded by barren trees, and the stern voice of justice is ready to exclaim, "Cut it down, why should it use up the soil!" But the destroying hand is stayed. An interceding cry prevails, "Let it alone." (Luke 13:7, 8) If justice had obtained its course, if mercy had not sweetly interposed, what child of man would at this moment tread the earth! The checking voice proceeds from Jesus. Continuance in Life results from His guardian care. Here again we acknowledge Him to be our Life.

II. Mental Life. Bodily powers, vast and wondrous, are shared by all the tribes of brute existence. Exquisite construction and activity of motion belong to them all. They possess the gift from Him who is our "Life."

But in man there is the separated gift of mental and intellectual vitality. Endowed with this superiority, he can reason, reflect, calculate, conclude, and put forth prodigious powers of speculation and invention. On the wings of intellect he can scale the heights of the skies above, and count the radiant orbs, and trace their course, and weigh their magnitude. He can descend into the depths of earth, and mark the various strata, and estimate their gradual formation. He can traverse the surface of the globe from pole to pole, and scrutinize its multitudinous produce, and examine the properties of all, from the lofty monarch of the forest to the tiniest herb upon the wall. But far more than this. He can unlock all the stores of learning, and write and read

large volumes of erudition. Here we pause to bless our God in Christ, who is our mental "Life."

III. Spiritual Life. If bodily and mental Life were alone imparted, the real worth would have but small endurance. A living case is provided for a dead soul. The outside semblance may be very fair, but within is misery, and filth, and death. "Whited sepulchers, may indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." (Matt. 23:27) There are fabled trees, whose fruit presents a captivating show, promising delicious juice, but beneath this inviting garb is rottenness and dust.

But to the heirs of promise, the soul, dead in sin, is quickened to newness of Life. Such renovation consists in the entrance of divine being into the desolate tenement. It is a heavenly work, which heaven puts forth its energies to accomplish. It is display of the mighty acting which restored Life to the body of Jesus sleeping in the tomb, and raised Him to the throne of glory. Hear the Spirit's testimony. He ascribes this quickening to "the exceeding greatness of God's power, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. 1:19-21) No inferior power could create afresh a dead soul. But Jesus speaks, and the soul which was extinct revives, and puts forth spiritual energies. Divine perceptions flourish. God, before utterly unknown, is now intelligently seen and loved and served and honored. Christ is received in all His power to redeem and save. Living comprehensions estimate His everlasting love, His gift of Himself as an expiating ransom, His robe of spotless righteousness, His sacrifice on the accursed tree, His conquest of death and hell and Satan, His session at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the constant prevalence of His unfailing intercession, the unceasing outpouring of blessings on His people, the near approach of the millennial reign, the final judgment, and the surrender of the kingdom to the Father, "that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15:22)

Such is a brief and scanty summary of the light out of darkness which shines throughout the soul when spiritual Life is restored. The main employ is now in spiritual exercises. God is now the all pervading Life. There is union to the Three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity. Heavenly communion is free, constant, and sweet. Prayer was once a cold and formal drudgery, addressed to an unknown God, and never rising above this earth's region; now it is an intelligent and warm delight. The soul flies up to God as to a reconciled Father, it seeks and enjoys filial communion, it is free and bold to tell out its every need and desire, it wrestles with indomitable energy until answers come, it prevails because Life pleads within.

Similarly it revels in the luxury of praise. What motives urge! What an expanse of topics calls! It feels that if every breath should extol the Lord, the debt of gratitude would be unpaid. In every circumstance of time it finds occasion to give thanks. Thus spiritual Life is heaven begun, and the eternal hallelujah will but perpetuate the hymns first sung on earth.

Constant delight too is now gleaned from the study of the Word. The sacred Book was once a maze of perplexity and darkness. Its truths were enveloped in mists and obscurity. Its revelation revealed nothing. Its teaching left the drowsy ponderer uninformed. The ignorant read, and remained ignorant. Now how great the change! How charming are the lessons! How delightful are the hours of perusal! Newborn spirits search the page, and expand in growth.

In this school of Scripture spiritual Life thus strengthens. "The sincere milk of the Word" gives invigorating nutriment. Jesus is found to be the Bread of Life. "His flesh is food indeed, and His blood is drink indeed." (John 6:55) By faith the gracious verities of all His work are received as power and vigor unto salvation. Thus Christ cherishes and maintains the spiritual Life which He has quickened.

At the beginning Adam was endowed with this Life, and the preservation of it was entrusted to his own vigilance. But he was soon dispossessed! The devil came. His crafty arts prevailed. Our first parent yielded, and was bereft of this inestimable boon. This Life is no more left to mortal custody. The second Adam undertakes to hold it in sure keeping. "Our Life is hidden with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3) Thus His sheep shall never perish, and none shall ever pluck them out of His hand. The believer rejoices in Life nourished and securely guarded.

IV. Eternal Life. Let it here be added, that the full blessedness of spiritual Life is its eternal duration. It has the seed of never-ending being. What is grace, but glory in its birth! What is glory, but grace in its consummation! The gifts differ, doubtless, but they differ only in degree. The one is weak and tender as the bud; the other is strong and expanded as the full-blown flower. The one puts forth the slender ray of the morning dawn; the other is resplendent as the mid-day sun. The one is a little rill issuing from a hidden spring; the other swells into an illimitable sea. The one is as the gentle spring relaxing the fetters of stern winter; the other is as the established summer, decking the earth with verdure, the fields with golden produce, and filling the groves with melody, and the meadows with rejoicing flocks. The one is as the infant smiling in the mother's arms; the other is the stalwart man, mighty in brawny strength. The one

is as the outline-sketch of some great architect; the other is as the glorious edifice which labor has industriously raised. But where the first begins, the other surely follows. Life in the soul on earth is Life in heaven forevermore. The redeemed are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. (1 Pet. 1:23)

If spiritual Life could ever become extinct, if the arts and malice of the devil, the seductions of this evil world, the teaching of the unstable heart, or countless enemies could prevail, then heaven might at last be devoid of inhabitants, and the precious blood of Christ might have been shed in vain. The shadow of such thought is folly. A great multitude, which no man can count, shall fill the many-mansioned home. All shall have been renewed with spiritual Life on earth, and so inherit eternal Life above.

Thought is weak to comprehend this blessedness. What will it be to realize that time is no more—that all trials, temptations, sufferings, conflicts, are behind, never again to harass or disturb—to feel that heaven's portals are passed, and safety is obtained forever! The joy of the saved is briefly expressed in the assurance, "They shall never again leave it." (Rev. 3:12)

If the joys of salvation could ever reach an end—if night, however distant, could ultimately extinguish light—the thought would render heaven an abode of sad anticipation. Present happiness would be no happiness, because of its contemplated cessation. But the realized delights receive augmented ecstasy from the knowledge that rolling time brings no conclusion.

The present joys will be joys in the future days of an inexhaustible eternity. And surely eternity will not be too long for all the bliss of the redeemed.

The Life eternal which results from the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3), will be occupied in ever-deepening, ever-expanding, views of Deity. To know God, even as we are known, to see Jesus as He is, will be employment which never can find exhaustion, because the objects of study are lessons of infinity. The happiness of time is to make progress in this school—the happiness of eternity will still be to advance. It is sweet to sip these streams below. What will it be to draw water without ceasing from the fountain-head!

Christ is this Life. He bought it. He procured it. He bestows it. He maintains it. He preserves it. He consummates it. Sinners never could have earned it. We easily destroy ourselves. He only is the Author of renewal. While thoughts of our inability depresses us into the very lowest dust of shame and humiliation, they should fill us with adoring views of His love, His grace, His goodness, His super-abundant mercy, His unfailing power. The Life bestowed by Him should be devoted to His praise, His service, and His glory.

When we feel decay of spiritual life, how earnestly should we cry, "Quicken us, good Lord! according to Your word." The prayer would surely receive reply. Fresh grace would re-animate the inner man; and redoubled efforts in Christ's cause would go forth in recruited strength. Herein would Christ be glorified, that His people would "bear much fruit." (John 15:8) Lively

branches would prove union with the Tree of Life. Living stones should shine a living structure cemented into the true foundation, which is Christ our Life. He is "come that we might have Life, and that we might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

14. WISDOM

"It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God."

Admiration never wearies in commending Christ Jesus. Every perfection claims preeminence in Him. He is the beauty of all beauty, the luster of all luster, the wonder of all wonders, the excellence of all excellency. The eye of faith luxuriates in gazing on Him. The sight is the transport of transports, and renders present meditation a very foretaste of heavenly reality.

One jewel in His diadem now calls for notice. The Holy Spirit again and again exhibits Him as Wisdom. He is proclaimed—I. As Wisdom in Himself. II. As the Source of Wisdom to His people.

I. Wisdom in Himself. Behold the wonders of Creation. Christ sits as co-equal on the Father's throne, calling each creature into life, originating each faculty of mind and limb, arranging all the stores which form the riches of the universe. Scripture confirms the truth, "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! in Wisdom You have made them all: the earth is full of Your riches." (Ps. 104:24) Again, we read, "The Lord by Wisdom has founded the earth; by understanding has He established the heavens." (Prov. 3:19) Let blind arrogance ascribe this symmetry of order to the whims of chance, or the fortuitous concurrence of atoms, or the unintended combination of accidents! How pitiable is such childish folly compared with the teaching of the Word! In Creation Christ rides forth in the chariot of Wisdom. His will is Wisdom. His voice is Wisdom. All

things start into being as the formation and result of Wisdom.

Next, see Christ is Wisdom in Redemption's scheme. On every stone of the glorious fabric Wisdom is inscribed. Christ undertakes and consummates this work. In this how grandly is Wisdom displayed! He alone had power to encounter and to triumph over countless difficulties. In Him alone the might resided to tread down the principalities and powers of darkness, to snatch the scepter from Satan's hands, to endure the penalties of the outraged law, to satisfy to the utmost all the violated attributes of Jehovah, to uphold His people in the perils of their earthly conflict, and to make them more than conquerors unto the end. All is accomplished by Christ as Wisdom.

The Gospel page teems with displays of His Wisdom. It is apparent in its every provision. Sinners are made righteous by faith through grace, and not of works. Hence redemption is secured without the risk of failure, and all honor is given to mercy in the highest: every part of the law is magnified, and man's boasting is excluded: sin is abhorred and righteously condemned, and yet the sinner is loved and saved: ungodliness is pardoned and the ungodly raised to glory. This, also, is accomplished by Christ as Wisdom.

Thus the Spirit proclaims, that "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10) We marvel not that wondering "angels desire to look into these things." (1 Pet. 1:12) Worthy is the ascription, "O the depth of the riches

both of the Wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33) Hence we see how blessed are the children of Wisdom! They revel in the contemplation of wonders achieved by Wisdom.

II. Christ is the Source of Wisdom to His people. He contains all the treasures of Wisdom and knowledge, not for Himself alone—not as His exclusive heritage—but for His people's well-being, that he may impart and largely communicate. He enriches indeed with all true riches. "All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." (1 Cor. 3:23) But the present subject is restricted to His gift of Wisdom. His entrance into the heart brings new understanding. Not only do believers dwell in Christ, but He also dwells in them. "If a man loves Me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23) The brightness of this presence chases away the mists of ignorance, and opens the eye to clear discernment of all truth. As in creation's day, He said, "Let there be light, and there was light," so in the day of grace, He says, Let the light of truth shine forth, and all is bright.

Let some of his illuminating lessons be now produced.

1. He teaches what unaided man could never learn—humbling lessons of man's darkness and need. He reveals our lost and ruined state, as we stand by nature in God's sight. He exhibits sin in all its hateful features, as rebellion against God; hatred of His holy rule, defiance of His

power, the enemy of His glorious law. He brings us to feel that sin is the inborn inherent of our constitution, corrupting every faculty of mind and body, bringing the whole man into vilest bondage, awakening God's righteous wrath, forging the chains by which Satan binds his prisoners, kindling the flames of hell, and driving its slaves to receive the wages of their woeful service. These are truths which never can be learned in reason's school. There the self-complacent pupil boasts, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knows not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:17) Jesus imparts this Wisdom to each disciple. Hence He is made unto them "Wisdom."

2. He is made unto them Wisdom by the clear revelation of Himself. He unveils Himself in all the glories of His Person, His character, His attributes, His work. He shows Himself as very and eternal God—as invested with all the power, and majesty, and greatness of Deity—as thus possessing all strength and ability to consummate redemption. He manifests Himself as

condescending to assume our nature, and thus to become qualified to become man's substitute, to bear our every penalty, to pay our every debt, to shed blood in our behalf, to bear what man should bear, and do what man should do. Thus He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and sympathize with our need and sufferings. He teaches that while He is able to atone as God, He is capable to feel as man. He thus presents a key to unlock the treasure-house of Wisdom.

III. Those who thus learn Christ truly feast at Wisdom's table. They read in bright colors all the significance of His finished work, and delight in clear understanding of each part of salvation's scheme. They are enlightened to scan the cause of all His doings and all His sufferings. Their expanded intellect knows with what intent He became man and shed His blood, and now makes intercession on the right hand of God. They can explain the mysteries which baffled the mental powers of the sages of this world. They read in Wisdom's school all the purposes of redeeming love. They can estimate the unspeakable value of the blood, efficacious to wash out every sin. They adore Him as reigning on high, that He may bless His people with all blessings in heaven and in earth, and bring them in safety through all earth's perils to their home above. Such is a small glimpse of the Wisdom which Christ by His Spirit sheds abroad in the heart.

IV. He exhibits, also, the overflowing riches of His grace and love. Every page of the Gospel-story teaches the feelings of His heart. Radiant manifestations of His character abound throughout. In love He receives His people as His own. Before the world was framed, He inscribed them on the tablets of His heart. In love He undertakes their cause, and espouses them as His bride. In love He works out in their person a righteousness so bright, so perfect, so glorious, that Jehovah's eye can find no flaw, no spot, no blemish in it. In love He beautifies them with His shining robe, and fits them for the banquet in the heaven of heavens. In love He guards them from every foe, and makes them more than conquerors over all the hosts of darkness. In love He makes all things to work together for their good. In love He leads them to lie down in the rich pastures of Bible truth, and instructs them in the Word which is "able to make them wise unto salvation." (2 Tim. 3:15) In love He will come again to receive them to Himself. In love He will present them pure and blameless to His Father with exceeding joy. In love He will dwell among them through the ages of eternity. All these truths, and many more, are distinctly revealed by Him. Thus He is made Wisdom to them.

Wisdom in the mind soon becomes Wisdom in the will. The enlightened intellect leads to determined action. Illumination in the thoughts is not dormant and inactive. It rouses Wisdom's sons to put forth energetic conduct. The sinner who has been taught Wisdom's ways no longer

slumbers on the pillow of indifference. He lies no longer groveling in the mire of filth and impurity. He dwells no longer content in the regions of gross darkness. He is no longer willing to grind in the prison-house of Satan. He no longer hugs the chains of vile captivity. He is widely awake to his misery and peril. He sees a pitfall yawning in his path. He fears that each step may plunge him into the abyss of endless woe. He knows his danger, his wretchedness, his helpless state, and thus is all anxiety for escape. His earnest cry is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24)

The Wisdom which thus awakens to the sight of peril also shows the City of Refuge, the ark of safety, the fortress of deliverance, the fortress whose gates and walls are salvation and praise, the munition of rocks, which is high above all billows, the door of hope, the abode of blessedness and peace. Jesus stands before the awakened sinner with salvation in His hand, and cries of inviting love issuing from His lips. He shows His pierced side into which the sinner may flee, and be secured from every foe. The convinced man cannot rest until he reaches the sheltering arms of Jesus. No hindrances, no obstacles can impede. Through seas of difficulty he works out a way. Over obstructing mountains he strides valiantly. He never rests, until he clasps the Savior to his heart, and intelligently shouts, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." (Song 6:3)

Thus Wisdom strengthens the sinner to embrace the Savior, and to cling to Him as all salvation and desire, and to sing aloud, "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You." (Psa. 73:25) Thus Christ is made to His people saving Wisdom.

He also places balances in their hands in which they truly weigh the value of surrounding attractions. He enables them to discern things which differ. He strips off the tinsel which conceals the emptiness of mere temporal objects. He tears away the delusive mask which hides features of real deformity. Earthly honors and distinctions, human titles and applause, the glitter of pomp and parade, fade before the scrutiny of this Wisdom; and nothing is regarded as a lasting treasure which has no reference to the eternal world. Thus Christ becomes to His people discriminating Wisdom.

This Wisdom implants desire for increase of knowledge. The more we gain, the more will be coveted. Each ascending step in this scale shows higher eminences which eagerness will strive to reach. All earthly knowledge sinks into insignificance in contrast. Paul, learned in all the acquirements of the age, "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." (Phil. 3:8) His all-constraining desire was to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death." (Phil. 3:10) His constant aspiration was, that he might know the love of Christ, which he confessed to surpass all knowledge. (Eph. 3:19) Thus rich delights will charm the pupils of true Wisdom. New revelations will outshine the previous light. A study will commence which will continue throughout the ages of the endless world. Eternity will be the never-ending lesson of Christ Jesus. Thus no day will come in which He will not be made Wisdom to His people.

Alas! there are some who choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. "They will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd." (John 3:19, 20) Who will not pity this blindness! Who will not strive to rescue them from such willful ruin! Those who fail to be made wise by Christ in time, will learn their folly when no Wisdom can enlighten. What misery can be like the misery of "blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 13) What joy can be like the joy of expanding in Wisdom forever!

15. RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Who of God is made unto us Righteousness."

It is gainful employment to analyze the term Righteousness. The study instructs and elevates the mind. All knowledge is dignity and power; especially knowledge of true Righteousness.

The meaning, though exceedingly grand, is not obscure. It expresses exact rectitude, undeviating adherence to right line, uncompromising conformity to given law. It is not a halting, stumbling, or backsliding quality. It is not a vacillating yes and no. It is the bright shining of faultlessness without a cloud. It is as water clear from a mountain-spring.

This definition is general, and belongs to Righteousness in its abstract sense. But when we enter the Gospel-region, Righteousness assumes a far more glorious aspect. It is then perfect adherence to that law of God, which is the transcript of His essence, the manifestation of His image, the embodiment of His perfections. It closely follows that this Righteousness must be the property of all who would see God's face in glory. It must invest and ennoble all who bask in His smile, and listen to His voice, and sit at His table, and have fellowship with His family in heaven. If any should seek that abode whose garments exhibited stains of sin and were not resplendent in purity, dismay would startle the bright home, eyes would be abhorrently averted, serenity would cease to smile, the intrusion would excite a thrill of horror. The climate of heaven is

perfect holiness; none can dwell there who are not purged from all iniquity, and clad in clothing of celestial brightness. There must be absence of all trace of evil, there must be the presence of all the beauties of unsullied Righteousness. The multitude of the redeemed are cleansed from all iniquity, and have put on a change of clothing. Thus they shine in loveliness divine, and God, who sees the guests, counts them worthy of His own abode.

The position then admits not a denial. Those who would enter heaven must be righteous as washed from all sin, righteous as arrayed in all obedience.

What a momentous thought now rushes to the front! We see that Righteousness is essential to salvation. Without it, hell gapes, and heaven is closed. Without it, misery unalloyed glares in the prospect. Without it, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Rom. 2:8, 9) are the decreed portion forever. Without it, every step moves downward to the abyss of agonized despair. Can the cry be checked, How can this Righteousness be won? Where can this blessing come? From what quarry can this gem be raised? In what garden can this flower be plucked? By what efforts can such happiness be wrought?

Scripture announces that this Righteousness is the Righteousness of God. Here is the reply to the vain hope that human merit could procure it, or human hands elaborate it. If the whole race of man from Adam to the present hour had combined in one effort to work out God's Righteousness, the toil must have been utterly in vain—it would have steered the vessel to

hopeless wreck.

The subject is so infinitely important, that further elucidation is not superfluous. Man's every day is stained with countless sins, each hour sees violation of God's law. The wandering thoughts stray into forbidden course. Thus the garments are bespattered with the mire of ceaseless transgressions.

But each transgression is direct antagonism to Righteousness, and is an infinite offense infinitely hateful to our all-righteous God. Each must be obliterated, or God's smile cannot beam lovingly; each must be hidden from His omniscient search, or just hatred and wrath must exist.

Here is man's miserable need. The stains of sin are crimson-dyed. No human effort can erase them. Regard our best works. If they could be perfect, they would but be the duty of the moment. They would only satisfy the present claim. They would leave all behind them unobliterated; the scarlet would be still scarlet; the guilt would be still guilt. But such is our misery, that imperfection cleaves to our holiest works. Our repentance needs to be washed with repenting tears, and therefore in itself has no expunging power. If fast-falling tears bedew our worthlessness, those tears themselves need cleansing, and therefore cannot purify offense. Contrite weeping is faulty, and therefore cannot mitigate a fault. Shall we present their aid to cover sin! Where is the man who turns not with shame from praying hours! They testify of wandering thoughts, of hateful intrusions, of unreal professions, of lack of reverence for the

Majesty of heaven. Who has not often cried, Oh! save me from my guilt in prayer! Shall almsgiving present itself as a cloak to hide iniquity? Beneath its slender texture what motives appear! How often is the thought prominent of man's applause! How often is the real object to gain commendation for poor self! In the same way all man's doings might be examined and found to be only some phase, at least, of imperfection. Evil cannot atone for evil, sins cannot expiate sins, transgression cannot undo the past. Iniquity cannot constitute Righteousness. Thus man's constant lament must be, Unrighteous! unrighteous!

Can the angelic hosts upraise us from this miserable state? Pure indeed is their nature; holiness is their essence; compassion is their tender feeling. But still they cannot soar beyond the limits of created power. Their works could never rise to infinite efficacy. Hence evil could never be removed by them. They might commiserate, but they never could bestow a justifying Righteousness.

But now let our eyes be turned from man, and all man's misery, from angels, and all angelic inability, to the blessed Jesus. Instantly the scene is changed. The prospect brightens. The clouds are raised. Hope flies to banish despair. All dismal fears give place to heavenly brightness. Joy claps its hands and loudly utters praise. "Jesus Christ the Righteous" shows His all-saving form. "He of God is made unto us Righteousness." He is the rich treasure-house of the supplies which we require, and of His fullness we may receive. His hands extend the gift, without which we are undone. "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21) Hence He condescends to bear the comforting title, "The Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. 23:6) It is the very joy of joys to gaze on Him removing all unrighteousness, and working out and confirming all Righteousness. Thus He justifies, thus He rescues from hell, thus He gives title to Heaven.

Let thought now separate the distinct portions of this redeeming work.

It is a grand truth, that Jesus came commissioned from on high to consummate eternal salvation, and to people heaven with a multitude all worthy of such bright abode. With such design He stoops to wear the garments of humanity, and takes upon Himself man's total nature. As man, He receives by the Father's appointment the burden and the guilt of all the sins of all His people. Hear the assurance, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6) And again, "He was made sin for us"; (2 Cor. 5:21) and weighed down under this oppressive load, He sighs, "My iniquities have taken hold upon Me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of My head." (Psa. 40:12)

It is a comforting thought, that the sins thus removed from the guilty and transferred to the guiltless, leave the real transgressor relieved from the weight of evil. Thus unrighteousness is removed. "The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) Jesus thus laden with iniquities, endures all that sin merits and the law denounces. He approaches the altar of the Cross. He there presents Himself the willing victim. He there lays down His life, the all-sufficient sacrifice. He there sheds His blood, worthy to make expiation and to give total satisfaction. Wrath pours out on Him all its vials: justice sheaths in His heart its avenging sword: the law pours on His head its total curse: He endures to the uttermost all that justice required.

Where now are the believer's sins? That which is blotted out can no more be found. God is satisfied, and therefore "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) "God is just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." (Rom. 3:26) Thus Jesus is made unto us Righteousness. None who are washed in His most precious blood can be borne off to hell. Satan claims sinners as his own. He can offer no charge against those on whom no sin is found.

Again—Jesus lives and moves and works as very man on earth. But what is His earthly course? It is as pure as He is pure in heaven. His Father's will is His delight. His heart is perfect holiness. He fully exhibited exact compliance with every demand of the glorious law. Undeviating love is its requirement. Jesus' life was love in its perfection. Scrutinize His every word and work. Probe every movement of His heart. They are the image of pure Deity. He was diligently watched, but no vigilance of malicious men, no craft of the arch-foe, could ever find a flaw in Him. In Him love never waned or had eclipse. Thus He is "Jesus Christ the Righteous." (1 John 2:1)

But why was this Righteousness achieved and manifested? He lived not to acquire Righteousness for Himself. He moved on earth as the accepted representative of His people. It was for those who He thus lived, for those who He thus obeyed, for those who He thus brightly shone. He wove this spotless robe that it might be the wedding garment of "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." (Rev. 21:9) Hence the Spirit testifies, "Righteousness is to all, and upon all those who believe." (Rom. 3:22) It is to them as placed to their credit in the Book of Life; truly theirs, as much as if their own performance had achieved it. It is upon them as an entire covering, as bright as heaven is bright, and as glorious as God is glorious. Thus Jesus is "the Lord our

Righteousness." As the believer escaped hell by the plea, "Christ died," so he enters heaven by the plea, "Jesus lived." Christ's death places him as though he had never sinned. Christ's life places him as though he had always obeyed. Here lips are silent. We would adore, but language fails.

Let it be briefly added, that the application of this Righteousness is entirely through grace. We read, "It is therefore by faith, that it might be by grace." (Rom. 4:16) Hence it is termed "the Righteousness of faith." Christ becomes our Righteousness by uniting us to Himself. He makes us thoroughly one with Himself, so that "as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17) The uniting link is Spirit-wrought faith. This was early exemplified in the case of Abraham. "He believed God, and it was credited to him as Righteousness." (Rom. 4:3) By the eye of faith he saw the day of Christ, and he was glad. By faith he received the testimony of God, and believed in the coming Savior. This faith made him one with Him, and "heir of the Righteousness which is by faith." (Heb. 11:7) Similarly all who believe in Him are the children of faith, and the heirs of Righteousness. Hence "the promise is sure to all the seed." (Rom. 4:16) They all rejoice in Him, "who of God is made unto them Righteousness."

How wondrous is this Gospel-truth, how evidently Divine in origin and significance! It springs from heaven as evidently as it bears to heaven. Let us begin on earth all adoration to Him through whom unrighteousness is obliterated, and sin washed out, and Righteousness imputed. And blessed be the Holy Spirit for the gift of faith, as the connecting and appropriating link.

16. SANCTIFICATION

"Who of God is made unto us Sanctification."

How many texts, as overflowing cups, bring comfort to the believing heart! Varied and excessive is the sinner's need. By nature he is destitute of all grace, and by practice laden with all iniquity. He lies in the deep abyss of helplessness, utterly powerless to devise escape. Among his countless miseries, the tendency to evil holds a sad place. But here an exuberant scripture administers relief. It reveals Jesus as appointed to supply this aid. "He of God is made to us Sanctification."

To this grand mercy attention is now invited. Let us explore the favored state of the recipients of this grace. The Holy Spirit, willing to elevate the soul, and to multiply strong consolations, gives copious illustrations of this work of Christ. A vast picture is spread before us, exhibiting in diverse forms and varying colors its beauteous nature and supreme blessedness.

Sanctification is portrayed as "putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24) It finds us as far from God as sin could drive us; as unlike Him as darkness is to light; as far estranged as hell from heaven; with features hideous, loathsome, and disgusting; with pollution soiling every word and work, and look and step. It enables us to discard concerning the former conversation this old man. By its

transforming power it renders us "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. 1:4) Wondrous is this renovation! It is not a transition from one earthly state to another. It is not the construction of another fabric from old materials. Such a patched edifice might be effected by earthly means. It is rather the introduction of heavenly life into the heart. Heavenly aid therefore must put forth energy to accomplish this exaltation to God's own likeness. The language of the text announces the mighty means of the translation. "Christ of God is made unto us Sanctification."

Our perception of the superhuman work is further aided by the image of new birth. The necessity of this marvel is stated by the lips of Jesus. "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again." (John 3:7) We must be translated into a state of being antithetical to that which by natural birth we brought into this world. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." (John 3:6) And we know that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:8) But no motion of our will, no effort of our power, can originate our birth into this world. Much less could earthly means regenerate us to spiritual condition. The new creature is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13) A heavenly voice says, Live, and we live to God. Thus again the truth appears, "Christ of God is made unto us Sanctification."

Another image expressively describes this change as a resurrection from the dead. "He has quickened you, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1) We are here taught the nature of such revival. Sin entered, armed with murderous weapon. Ruthlessly it slew the life of God within. The soul, originally the abode of God, became godless desolation. The torch of life was totally extinguished. The spring, at first so pure, became the source of only noxious streams. The human race presented the picture of Ezekiel's "valley full of bones, very many, and very dry." (Ezek. 37:1, 2) We ask, 'Can these dry bones again be animate?' No human power could raise them from their incapacitated state. The breath of the Lord alone could quicken them. But when that breath passed over them, "they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army." (Ezek. 37:10) So, when the voice which called forth Lazarus from the tomb utters the resurrection-mandate, the soul comes forth in newness of fresh life. Here again we

welcome the truth, "Christ is made of God our Sanctification."

Conversion is a term employed to add vivid colors to this picture. Significant is this illustration. By nature our course of life is wholly downward. Every step is deviation from the ways of God. The back is turned to heaven and heavenly things. This world, with its polluting pleasures, its empty vanities, its unsatisfying shadows, its deceitful pomps and honors, is sought with blinded zeal. The daily movement is descent towards hell. But Sanctification turns the soul completely around. Objects once shunned are now desired. That is now loved which once was hated. Former pleasures retain no relish. The mask which hid the hideous features of the world has fallen. The other lords which so long exercised dominion are now renounced as cruel tyrants; their yoke is broken, and their scepter shattered. The warning is solemn, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3) Earnest is the call, "Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19)

But the exhortation does not imply that man thus has power of himself to turn. As easily might the descending river with returning stream seek again its native spring. As easily might the sun's seeming motion turn again and seek at evening an eastern bed. The power of God must stride forth mightily. Ephraim in this consciousness supplicates, "Restore me, and I will return, because You are the Lord my God." (Jer. 31:18) And Zion prays, "Restore us to Yourself, O Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old." (Lam. 5:21) We find the answer in the Gospel-truth, "Christ of God is made unto us Sanctification."

Other illustrations press forward to portray this renovating grace. It is beauty from deformity, strength from helplessness, health from disease, clothing from nakedness, riches from poverty, sight from blindness, activity from decrepitude, righteousness from unrighteousness, purity from filth, peace from anxiety, joy from sorrow, smiles from tears, songs from sighs, the oil of gladness from the spirit of heaviness, the glorious liberty of God's children from the captivity of Satan's slaves, adoption into God's family from wandering in the world's waste wilderness. But no multiplication of words can fully show the change effected by "Christ, who of God is made unto us Sanctification."

Let us advance to mark the means employed by Christ. A renovation so vast and so complete requires the power of Deity. Such power lends its aid. The Holy Spirit is the all-conquering Agent. He changes the wild desert of the soul into the paradise of God. He broods over the chaos of confusion, and establishes the loveliness of order. Under His renewing rays, the soil so rank with weeds blooms with fragrant flowers, and branches before laden with poisonous berries bend with luxuriant fruit. The breast, which was the highway of every unruly passion, becomes the way of holiness. Transformed by His subduing scepter, the scene, once so hateful and repulsive, assumes the charms and beauties of peace and love. Satan is driven from his old domain. One far stronger than this mighty tyrant expels him from his usurped dominion.

He alone who had power to create, can put forth energy mighty to renew. But what He undertakes, He is able to complete. Thus salvation's perfect scheme receives no check. The Father loves, and sends His Son to save. Jesus loves, and takes on Himself the full accomplishment. The Spirit loves, and rides in conquering chariot to change the heart, to introduce the reign of Christ, to sanctify to the uttermost. All glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit! The work is gloriously finished. The Bride is fitted for the marriage of the Lamb.

In producing these grand effects, a mighty Agent uses a mighty instrument. This is the blessed Word; the proclamation of God's truth; the revelation of His will; the transcript of His character; the announcement of His purposes; the mirror which reflects His attributes; the weapon "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"; (Heb. 4:12) "a light shining in a dark place"; (2 Pet. 1:19) "better than thousands of gold and silver"; (Psa. 119:72) "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb"; (Psa. 19:10) "a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces"; (Jer. 23:29) the "leaven which leavens the whole lump"; (Gal. 5:9) "the rain which comes down from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud"; (Isa. 55:10) "the speech which distills as the dew"; (Deut. 32:2) This is the conquering instrument which the Sanctifier uses to effectuate renewal.

This Word is conquering, whether sounded from the pulpit or diligently studied on the knees and in the hour of calm retirement. It stands high among appointed means. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe." (1 Cor. 1:21) We are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." (1 Pet. 1:23) It is our Lord's assurance, "Now you are clean, through the Word which I have spoken to you." (John 15:3)

When the Word enters as a ray from heaven, it shows sin in its abominable filth, as the vile monster which the Lord abhors, and thus creates most righteous hatred. It reveals Jesus in the

plenitude of His redeeming grace, and kindles the flame of fervent adoration. The love of Jesus produces love of His will, and transformation into His glorious likeness.

Thus Jesus, through the Spirit's blessing on the Word, becomes our Sanctification. The most saintly man on earth is he who lives steeped in the Bible, whose every desire is framed after Gospel-mold, who reflects the rays which sparkle through the sacred volume. There is much teaching in the prayer, "Sanctify them through Your truth; Your Word is truth." (John 17:17) Error defiles, pollutes, and leads to viciousness of life; but it cannot exist in the soil which truth has consecrated. Hence Jesus by His teaching sanctifies the whole man.

It is scarcely necessary to press the obvious truth, that without Sanctification no fitness for the heavenly home is gained. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14) The pure in heart are those who shall see God. (Matt. 5:8) Sin loved and fondled is absolute exclusion from the realms of light. Impossibilities may be supposed, but not the possibility of an unsanctified man in heaven. How could he join the pure communion of the saints in light! how could he sing their rapturous songs! how could he swell the chorus of their ecstatic praises! how could he sit down at the table of their choice delights, and give blessing for the salvation which he had never welcomed, and extol the blood in which he had never washed, and testify that he was clothed with the righteousness which was most alien to his choice! None but the sanctified could gain admission, none but the sanctified could join the throng. To others every sight and every sound would be discordant. In heaven the unsanctified could not be happy; in hell, their proper home, they must be miserable forever.

Hence the blessedness of learning the lesson, that through Jesus Sanctification may be obtained. Let each day then be regarded as a blank in which no advance in this knowledge is made. This study is a heavenly pursuit. It dignifies and ennobles every thought and every desire. It kindles the radiant flame of peace and joy.

Sanctification is, also, the correlative of happiness. As grace is incipient glory, so Sanctification is incipient heaven. Here we see the delusion of those whose impiety sneers at the doctrines of our Gospel, and defames them as loose and licentious. It is Satan's falsehood, that to receive salvation as the bestowal of free grace, breaks down the barriers of holy living, and gives allowance to unbridled passions. How different is the real case! The truth of Jesus is after godliness. (Titus 1:1) Where Christ is absent, there is no check to evil. With the indwelling Savior the fruits of holiness abound. "He of God is made unto us Sanctification."

17. ROCK

"That Rock was Christ."

It is a truth which cannot be too dearly prized, or too industriously brought into use, that the field of nature is a volume full of Christ. On every side abundant objects picture Him. Piety looks around and learns Gospel-lessons. Thus meditation is supplied with edifying stores, and from familiar view gleans spiritual delight. While the unenlightened see a bare prospect, the true believer finds an illustrative Bible in Creation's wonders.

This statement is verified in the Rock. To casual observers, it frowns a hard, impenetrable mass. It presents a stern front, devoid of verdure, and barren of all charms. But to faith it gives instructive lessons, and opens out some teaching images. Let us draw near and reverently ponder; and may the Spirit which announced, "that Rock was Christ," direct us to wise views!

I. The Rock is a hard substance. It is firm and strong. It melts not like snow beneath the sunny rays. It yields not as wax to outward pressure. It is not as soil easily indented by the spade and harrow. It defies each rough assault.

These properties are emblems of Christ's person. Doubtless He is very man. He has assumed our nature, and will forever wear it. In heaven He shows glorified humanity. But He is marvelously more. He is God of God, and very God of very God. Therefore He is strong in the might of omnipotence, and firm as Deity can be. Let faith rejoice in every help to this assurance. In each Rock let it behold Christ's strength.

II. The Rock stands out immovable in stability. Vast piles of sand may be removed by art and industry. But what skill, what mechanism, can prevail against the fixedness of the Rock! The waves may lash, but all their fury beats in vain. The storm may hurl its fierce bolts around, but the Rock totters not. The mass never shakes, nor tumbles, nor succumbs. No object more exhibits resistance to all attempts to move it.

In this stability Christ is apparent. We know that all the hostile powers of earth and hell combined against Him. Satan assailed with bold effrontery, but was baffled and repulsed. Our Rock firmly stood unmoved. The arch-enemy excited evil men to ply their utmost efforts. But futile was their enmity, and vain their machinations. On the Cross he showed all-conquering might. By death He destroyed him that had the power of death. When all which diabolical hatred could excite had burst upon His head, the Rock stood invincible. Let faith give thanks, and rejoice with joy unspeakable. The Rock on which it stands never can be moved.

III. The Rock presents a sure foundation. Jesus in His heavenly teaching speaks of the "wise man which built his house upon a Rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a Rock." (Matt. 7:24, 25)

Believers are represented as coming to Jesus "as to a living stone, and as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:4, 5) Strong, indeed, are those who are thus cemented into Christ. The union renders them one in firmness with the divine foundation. As it can never be removed, so they endure in undisturbable stability. Doubtless they will be sorely tried. Satan, who assailed the Head, will use his every weapon against each member. But as he failed to move our Rock, so will he fail when he assails the building. The foundation cannot be destroyed: and no stone of the building can be subverted.

IV. The Rock pours forth streams in the desert. When Israel panted in a dry and thirsty land, the Lord gave them refreshment, not from some cavern or moist valley, but from a rocky fissure. The people at Rephidim were sorely distressed. Water failed. They and their cattle had no supplies to quench their thirst. Their impatient threats drove Moses to the throne of grace. This refuge never fails. The Lord replied, "Behold, I will stand before you there upon the Rock in Horeb; and you shall smite the Rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." (Exod. 17:6) The yielding Rock sent forth the needful help: and throughout the lengthened march abundant water trickled in the rear.

The Spirit helps us to discern our never-failing stream. "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. 10:4) That Rock is ever near, ready to refresh the thirsty flock. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them." (Isa. 41:17) It is forever true, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God: the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (Psa.46:4) This river is the Spirit, the gift of Jesus. This the apocalyptic seer beheld. "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Rev. 22:1) Let, then, the parched and weary in all hours of need flee to their Rock. Supplies will flow. They who seek to this Rock for reviving grace, are "as a well-watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isa. 58:11)

V. The Rock affords refreshing shade. Isaiah, with enraptured eye fixed on the coming Savior, cries, "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land." (Isa. 32:2) Lively images here show the excellency of our Lord. In every need He is a solace and a sure refuge. But the subject confines our thought to the Rock diffusing shade around. Imagine, when a noontide of sultry heat oppresses, and fields are parched and dry, and unmitigated rays assail the earth with fiery power, that a great Rock invites to cool retreat. With eager step the traveler, the shepherd and the flock move towards it, and stretched beneath its shadowy arms obtain relief.

Such is the shelter of the blessed Jesus in the heat of the scorching day. The Church found this defense, and rejoiced beneath the partial covering of the branches of a tree. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." (Song 2:3) A gourd was great delight to the fainting Jonah. The pillar of cloud by day warded off oppressive rays from the wayfaring camp. Much more welcome is the covering shade of our beloved Lord. In our journey through earth's wilderness, we are exposed to burning trials. Satan's darts are barbed with fire; persecution is inflamed with fury; temptations are as a heated furnace. The menaces of the law are as the forked lightning. But Jesus calls us to repose by His side. He gives the tender assurance, "The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night." (Psa. 121:6)

This shade gives not only comfort, but fertility. Thus guarded, the fruits of grace thrive vigorously. It is written, "Those who dwell under His shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." (Hos: 14:7)

VI. Birds seek shelter in Rocks. In these heights they safely build their nests and rear their young. In the Canticles the Church is addressed, "My Dove in the clefts of the Rock!" (Song 2:14) Here the fowler can lay no snares. Here the archer can direct no arrows. No climbing rustic can invade the secrecy. Thus the Rock affords a shelter which no enemy can reach.

The soul, exposed to many terrors, is safe in the cleft side of Jesus. In this position it enjoys security. "Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33, 34) The Savior, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, conceals from all the fury of divine displeasure. The sword of vengeance is in Him sheathed. There is therefore now no peril to those who are in Christ Jesus, who nestle in the fissures of the Rock. The Church rejoices in the knowledge that her "place of defense is the munitions of Rocks." (Isa. 33:16) When fears alarm, she flees to the Rock which is higher than all foes, and gladly sings, "You are my hiding-place." (Psa. 32:7) Believer, realize your happy state. Look out from the clefts of your Rock, and smile at baffled foes.

VII. It is supposed that hives sheltered in a Rock give sweetest honey. They are safe from exhalation of damp soil. Moses, enumerating the choice blessings bestowed on Israel, adds, "He made him to suck honey out of the Rock, and oil out of the flinty Rock." (Deut. 32:13) When it is stated that no good thing would have been withheld from an obedient people, it is added, God "would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the Rock would I have satisfied you." (Psa. 81:16) Thus Jesus supplies His people with rich joys. His word is a very hive of exquisite food. The invitation goes forth, "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song 5:1) The Spirit testifies, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psa. 19:9, 10) Who can express the exuberant happiness, when the King "brings His beloved to the banqueting house, and His banner over them is love." (Song 2:4) Every promise, also, is replete with sweetness, and they are exceeding many, great and precious.

Reviving power also issues from honey. Of Jonathan it is stated, that "he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened." (1 Sam. 14:27) Thus vigor and strength are renewed to those who feast on honey from their Rock.

VIII. The Rock stands not only as a refuge, and a spot where waters flow, and in which rich stores are hived: it also affords solemn warning. Falls from its heights, resulting from incautious steps, are destruction.

Thus those who make profession of the faith of Jesus, and desert their first love, encounter fearful fall. The Spirit warns, "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." (2 Pet. 2:20, 21)

Alas! such cases are not rare. Stony-ground hearers too often show a blighted form. With joy they hear the Word, but there is no steady step, no firm advance. The path is slippery, the head becomes dizzy, some trial assails, the hold on Christ relaxes, a grievous fall ensues, and mangled limbs proclaim a terrible catastrophe. Many run well, and have good prospect of reaching the summit, but their end is to perish at the base. Demas loves the world, and falls. Lot's wife looks back, and stands a warning to the tottering professor. It is better never to have seen the Rock, than to commence ascent, and stumble into ruin.

IX. Another warning speaks terribly. To some Christ is "a stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offense, even to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient." (1 Pet. 2:8) The pure, the holy walk of faith, imposes a yoke which worldly shoulders will not bear. To renounce the world, to flee its vanities, to tread down its cheating pleasures, to scorn its painted baubles, to reject its poisoned goblet, is an effort which the unstable refuse to endure. Then the end comes. The Rock falls on them, and grinds them to powder. "Those enemies of Mine, who did not want Me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of Me." (Luke 19:27) To stand on the Rock is everlasting life; to reject it is eternal woe.

18. HOPE

"The Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Hope."

—1 Tim. 1:1

"We are saved by Hope." (Rom. 8:24) Such is the pinnacle on which the Spirit seats this grace. Without it, the soul would never steadfastly adhere to Christ, it would yield to doubts and fears and ultimate despair. Without this anchor, it would make shipwreck on some dreary coast.

It is a delightful task to tell how Hope diffuses the sweetest joy throughout life's course, and lifts a smiling head in trouble's hour, and gilds each prospect

with bright hues. Such grace is not of the earth, and earthly: it is from heaven, and heavenly. It is implanted in the soul by the working of the loving Spirit.

Let it be promised that our heavenly Father adds Hope to His titles: "O the Hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble." (Jer. 14:8) And again, "Now the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in Hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:13)

But to Jesus, at present, our eyes are mainly turned. O Lord, You are our Hope, for truly You are our "All." Every supply of grace, and help, and blessing, abounds in You! You are the inexhaustible storehouse of all treasures for us. No lack remains to the children of Your love. Come, then, and shine forth as "our Hope."

It is decreed that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22) Trials and troubles are as numerous as the surrounding air. "Now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold trials." (1 Pet. 1:6) Heaven's inhabitants have traveled through a land of sorrow. We read that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Rev. 7:17) Therefore, in life's sad days, weeping must have been their lot. Often the storm was fierce, raging, violent; the wind assailed with fury; the waves uplifted threatening heads; rocks and quicksands were ready to destroy; the yawning deep gaped as an inevitable tomb; no harbor offered a retreat. But still despair was weak to crush the heir of faith.

How could this be? Hope whispered, Fear not, for Christ is near. It pointed to Jesus, ready to lull each storm, and to say, Peace, be still. The sons of Hope "looked to Him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." (Psa. 34:5) O Lord, be our constant Hope!

The page would find no end which portrayed all the region in which Hope sweetly works. But let some of the diseases be slightly specified in which this balm presents relief.

Sometimes means of support are diminished. Need shows a ruthless visage. Poverty approaches with a cruel step. Anguish broods over an impoverished family. This is Hope's season to sustain. It discloses Jesus having all resources at His command. It recalls instances of marvelous rescue from the grasp of ruin. It shows that His fullness never can be drained. It reveals Him as the God of Elijah by the brook Cherith; as the widow of Sarepta's stay; as ever the same in guardian care. Thus confidence is implanted, that "God will supply all His people's needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:19) O Lord, our Hope, we look to You in every hour of need.

Sometimes the fear of death weighs heavily. It is granted that "goodness and mercy have followed during all the days of life:" that no good thing has failed of all the abundance which rich promises have held out as our portion: but still apprehension trembles, lest help may fail when the feet tread the dark valley. The strength must fade, and vigor be exhausted, and mental energies droop, and decrepitude totter. But these prospects no more distress, when Hope

draws near. Its hand contains a bright supply for this especial need. It displays in glowing colors the assurance, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." (Isa. 43:2) In quick succession it exhibits a long train of similar cordials. The dying saint clasps them to his heart, and brightness illumines the passage by which earth is left. Death has no more a repulsive look. It is welcomed as a friend, which leads to the longed-for home. O Lord, we look to You! Be our Hope in the hour of death!

This grace not only cheers the believer's dying bed: it is his prop, his stay, his support, his strength, his enabling power, in every circumstance of life. Sometimes all earthly help seems utterly to fail. On the right hand there is no friend. On the left menacing foes come on. In the rear there is terror and dismay. In the front destruction yawns. Such was the case of David at Ziklag. On his return he found that the enemy had attacked the town, and burned every house with fire, and left the dwellings reduced to ashes. The wives and sons and daughters were carried into captivity. No welcome voices cheered his coming. His eyes beheld one scene of smoking desolation. His own followers were more than bewildered. They regarded him as the cause of all this misery. They were impatient to wreak vengeance on him. In their grief they threatened to stone him. All friends on earth now failed. But Hope survived. The trembler was upheld amid these billows of distress. "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." (1 Sam. 30:6) He reasoned, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psa. 42:11) Thus amid all disconsolations, Hope sings with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"; (Job 13:15) and with the prophet, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no food; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3:17,18)

A grace so bright, so joyous, the parent of such solace, the sweetener of life's cup, the unfailing prop throughout earth's pilgrimage, must rest on sure foundation. This tree of precious fruits

must spring from a root deep-seated in a fertile soil. The flame, which many waters cannot quench, must be wondrously maintained. Some giant must uphold the strength which many foes cannot lay low. It must have inherent and abiding vitality. Verily it is so. Christ—and all that Christ is, and all that Christ has done, and all that Christ is doing—is the Rock on which Hope rests, and the source from which it draws supplies. Thus Hope's expectations are bounded by no narrow circle. They are vast, as He is to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. Christ shares the omnipotence of Jehovah. All resources are in His mighty hands. To Him no case beyond relief can occur. There is nothing too hard for Him to do. He speaks the word, and the universe obeys. Hope estimates this power, and thus becomes more strong when outward circumstances seem to fail, and outward prospects are most dark. O Lord, we look to Your omnipotence as imperishable Hope!

Hope knows too that it rests on One who has His people engraved on His heart. It is cheered by the precious word, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isa. 49:15) It has read, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." (Jer. 31:3) Can Jesus thus love His people, and will He not delight over them to bless them and to do them good! Are not their interests His interest—their cause His cause! Is it not His joy when they prosper and are in peace! Thus Hope is verily persuaded that the heart of Christ is always warm with loving desire to avert distress. It doubts not that every issue will be final blessedness. O Lord, we look to Your love as our sure Hope.

Hope is renewed in strength, and mounts up with wings as eagles, when it contemplates what Christ has suffered for His people. He has redeemed them, but with what price! He paid not silver and gold for their ransom. He gave not all the precious things of earth as their equivalent. He heaped not worlds upon worlds and placed them as payment in the balance of God's justice. All such expenditure would have been as unavailing as the chaff. He gave Himself, His life, His blood. He gave so much that He could give no more; and He gave this to bear the extremest curse of God, to endure all the punishment, and all the miseries, and all the anguish which His

people must have suffered if they had wailed through all the endless ages amid the torments of the lost. Hope sweetly reasons. He who has done so much, will He not surely give all that His people really need! Therefore it treads down all hosts of doubt, and against all timidities of reason, "laughs at impossibilities, and says, It shall be done!" O Lord, we look to Your suffering Cross as our sure Hope.

Hope too, with piercing glance, beholds the proceedings at the throne of God. There it views Jesus, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high. It sees His extended hands, and hears His all-prevailing cry. That cry is ever-living intercession. It cannot go forth in vain. It must succeed. Therefore Hope lifts a joyful head, and sings amid all menacing events, O Lord, Your throne on high is our sure Hope.

Hope too has a field from which it largely gleans. This is the Book of Life, abounding in assurances of support. Each word in this book is true as God can be. The heavens and the earth "shall perish: they all shall grow old as does a garment, and as a vesture You will fold them up, and they will be changed," "but the Word of the Lord endures forever." (Heb. 1:11, 12; and 1 Pet. 1:25) Hope sets firm foot on this immovable rock, and fears no failure. O Lord, Your Scriptures are our Hope.

The Holy Spirit too in His love, ever seeking the believer's bliss, exhibits this grace in terms of potent teaching. Speaking of the Hope which is set before us, He adds, "Which Hope we have

as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil." (Heb. 6:19) What the anchor is to a floating vessel, Hope is to the soul. The anchor descending from the ship, grasps by tenacious teeth a solid pavement. Thus it clings to an immovable foundation. The ship cannot drift to rocks or quicksands; it cannot be torn away by tides or billows. It rests in safety amid storms and adverse waves. Thus Hope, fast holding Christ in heaven, within the veil, keeps the soul tranquil amid all conflicts. Christ must vacillate before the clinging soul can be endangered. O Lord, we anchor on You as our Hope. Again, in the catalogue of the Christian's armor a helmet is named, and the helmet is "the Hope of Salvation." (Eph. 6:17) As is the helmet to the warrior in the day of battle, so is Hope to the soul. The head thus guarded boldly meets the foe. It is upraised and knows no fear. While this covering is unbattered, no fatal wound can be inflicted. Thus the Hope of salvation gives all heroism in the fight of faith. He who shows the promise of salvation written on his brow, will never fear that his expectations will be frustrated. O Lord, our Hope, we look to You to be our Helmet.

Believer, cultivate this precious grace. For this purpose, diligently study Christ—His person, work, and love. Each day mount higher on the ladder of heavenly knowledge. The more you know, the more you will trust. Time will thus sweetly find its end, then Hope shall reap its harvest, and be swallowed up in never-ending reality.

But caution should be added. Every grace has its vile counterfeit. Many weeds resemble flowers. Tinsel may glitter, but it is not gold. There is a false Hope. It sparkles for a little while, and then expires in darkness. It may be easily detected. Mark the foundation on which this cheat rests. Its foot is placed on some form of self, and on its own doings and deserts. It claims no text of Scripture for its warrant. Christ is not its "All." Therefore its end is hopeless woe.

19. APOSTLE

"Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess."

—Heb. 3:1

The office of Apostle is invested with high sacredness. Let its consideration be approached with eyes uplifted for a ray from heaven.

It now belongs not to the sons of men. Exalted rank, and dignified position, and supreme authority may be accorded. Many succeed to ancestral honors. Ennobling titles may be won by merit. But the Apostolic station cannot now be reached. It ceased with those who held it by heaven's own investiture. To usurp such privilege in this age is ignorance, or a far greater fault.

The name is mainly glorious, because Jesus Himself vouchsafes to bear it. On His brow this diadem is placed. Nature throughout her varied realm, art in her rich storehouse of elaborate skill, literature in her learned page, all classes of profession have contributed to give representations of His worth. But other titles fade before the name of Apostle. The Holy Spirit, ever delighting to exhibit Christ, and to enrich our thoughts, thus designates Him, "The Apostle and High Priest of our profession." In meek obedience may we find refreshing profit.

The meaning of the term needs little explanation. An Apostle is one 'sent' and charged to execute commission. Jesus is thus sent. He is the Father's messenger from the courts of heaven. It is our privilege to glean much teaching from the copious Scriptures which announce this truth. They flow onward in broad streams, enriching the readers. Their sound is sweet as the resounding echoes of the songsters of the grove. They glitter as the dewdrops of the early morn. A luxuriant garden presents its ready flowers to the hand. A few only can be plucked.

A noble passage advances to the front. It not only proclaims Jesus as the Sent or Apostle from the Father; it also unfolds the motive of this act of love. "Here is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10) The avowed message of the Giver is the mercy of mercies. It wills that atonement should be made, expiation offered, sins washed away, transgressions obliterated, satisfaction infinitely secured. To accomplish this Jesus comes the Apostle of Salvation. But no merit on man's part procures this mission. There are no workings of the human heart which awaken pity and excite this condescending grace. The Father's love originates the scheme. In love He sends His Son. Thanks be to God for Jesus His Apostle.

A kindred statement brings corroboration. "This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him." (1 John 4:9) Another feature of this loving mission is thus shown. The Apostle comes from heaven charged with the gift of everlasting life. A world dead in trespasses and sins is spread before Him. Death had established its dark sway. Its iron scepter ruled. The Apostle comes with life eternal in His hands. "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) He undergoes the death. He thus annihilates

its claims and gives the heirdom of heaven's life to all whom He was sent to seek and save. He not only tells that the sinner's death is slain by His death, but that life forevermore is the purchase of His work. "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) Thanks be to God for Jesus His Apostle.

Similarly in that wondrous prayer—and none more wondrous ever ascended from a fallen world—He testifies, "This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." (John 17:3) The Apostle opens out this knowledge. He reveals the Father, and He reveals Himself. He gives the knowledge which leads infallibly by the sweet path of faith and peace to endless bliss. Such is the grand commission which the Great Apostle executes. It is worthy of the Father who devised the plan; worthy of the Son who executes; worthy of the Spirit who applies. Thanks be to God for Jesus His Apostle.

Let us advance from Scripture's copious statements to mark that the Apostle comes with no reluctance to this office. He shrinks not from the degradation and the pain. In treading the path of sorrow no murmurs or complaints, escape His lips. This is His testimony, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) He ever joyed in the Apostolic work. He was cheered and refreshed by the thought that He thus obeyed His Father's will, and carried out His gracious designs, and brought glory to His name. As food supports the frame of man, so He found strength and animation in the discharge of His commission.

While it is precious to meditate on the Covenant of Peace, to survey its various terms, and to see an Apostle sent from heaven charged with their execution, so it is superadded preciousness to hear His own assurance, that in this work He found refreshment. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2) Oh! that we joyed as cordially in accepting salvation as Jesus joyed in earning it!

It closely follows that it should be our main delight to sit as pupils in His school. He teaches as the Father's Apostle. He cries, "My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him who sent Me." (John 7:16) Hence, when He speaks, His words are the echo of His Father's voice. How eagerly should we listen, with what intense delight should we drink in each sound, how fully should we receive, how faithfully should we trust, how reverently should we obey, with what confidence should we place our feet upon the firm rock of His instructions! His title is the Word. He is the Apostle to open out the Father's message. Who will not respond, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears!"

Next, the Apostle shows clear credentials from the Court of Heaven. He exhibits indubitable proof that He comes not unsent. Nicodemus shrewdly reasoned, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher sent from God; for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him." (John 3:2) The truth shines forth beyond all doubt. He who performs what none unempowered by God can do, must be invested with divine authority. Jesus knew the might of this truth, and thus sets His seal to it. "I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me." (John 5:36) Faith gathers strength from this decisive evidence. It looks to Jesus controlling all the works of nature, speaking with almighty power, changing the properties of water, stilling the tempestuous billows, rebuking the fury of the winds, making the sea a pavement for His feet, turning all malady into instantaneous health, compelling the strong grasp of death to release its subjugated victims, and rising Himself a conqueror from the grave; and is persuaded, that this Apostle is accredited by God. No doubt remains. Jesus is the Apostle of the Father.

And when Salvation's work was fully finished, what home will this Apostle seek, where will He find welcome? Hear His own words, "Now I am going to Him who sent Me." (John 16:5) His work was fully done. He returned to sit beside His Father on His glorious throne.

Is He welcomed? The work which He still performs is sure reply. Every soul brought now by Him to life is evidence. "Because I live, you shall live also." (John 14:19) But would He be thus exalted if redemption had not been finished? Can we give sufficient praise that Jesus conspicuously reigns as having accomplished His commission as the Apostle sent from God!

With what implicit trust should we embrace His revelations! Let unbelief regard His message with cold indifference. Let conceited minds scorn the simplicity of His grand announcements; but let us receive each statement as an utterance from the throne of God. Let us adore Him as teaching what man unaided could not learn—what weak philosophy could never trace—the truths of God. It is not only true that, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," (John 14:9) but He who has heard Me has heard the Father. Mark His words to Pilate: "For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." (John 18:37)

He who appeared in person as an Apostle, also commissioned others to high work. In holy prayer He states to His Father, "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John 17:18) But though thus designated and empowered, their office was vastly inferior. They had no power but what was derived from Him. He was clad in all the essential might of His own Deity. As years advanced their strength decayed, and in due time they slumbered in the grave. He is invested with unfading life. No lapse of time can bring decline of energy to Him. He ever lives in all the freshness of undying power.

The Spirit indeed dwelt largely in them. They read with open eye the grandest mysteries of heaven. They could impart spiritual gifts to others. But they were but a little rill compared to Him, the boundless ocean. Hear the Baptist's testimony: "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit." (John 3:34) He spoke as never man spoke. His words were clothed with the panoply of authority. We may listen with all the fullness of assurance. He cannot deceive. He could not be deceived. Let the command of God be heeded: "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." (Mark 9:7)

Hence the Holy Spirit's charge: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Consider His mission. He comes from heaven to teach, that through His instruction we might become wise unto salvation. With such an Apostle, ever ready to reveal all wisdom, let us not turn aside into the bypaths of ignorance and deceit. Antichrist indeed still stalks abroad, even that impostor: "whose coming will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." (2 Thess. 2:9, 10) How shall we escape, if we choose him and neglect Christ Jesus, the Apostle

sent of God!

20. EXAMPLE

"Leaving us an Example, that you should follow His steps."

What searching mind can probe the depth of the familiar verse, "to you, therefore, who believe, He is precious!" (1 Pet. 2:7) Precious indeed He is at every moment of time, in every circumstance of life. He is precious, when we traverse in thought redemption's glories, and gaze intently on the cross, and wash in the atoning blood, and realize that all pardon is thus obtained. He is precious, when we put on the garments of His righteousness, the fitting robe for heaven's courts; and when we meditate on the interceding voice, obtaining every blessing; and when we wait for the descending chariot, conveying Him to institute a glorious reign; and when we look onward to the final day, when the kingdom shall be surrendered to the Father, and God shall be all in all. He is precious in the hours passed in meditation on the work planned before time was, and continuing in its effects when time shall be no more. But His preciousness cannot be fully felt until grace ends in glory, and faith concludes in sight.

There is further blessedness to those who revel in the study of Christ. Attention is now invited to it. His work is not limited to redemption. In Him we have more than substitutionary atonement. His walk on earth supplies a model to be copied. His whole career marked a clear track for the believer's course. It is inestimable gain that we possess this wondrous pattern. It is indeed a helpful blessing.

We learn much when the various parts of some machine are viewed and explained. But intelligence expands when we see these parts in motion, and cooperating to produce the purposed end. Thus the precepts and directions of the Bible-page are most impressive lessons. They warn what paths to shun; they teach what mode of conduct to adopt. But immeasurable is the advance, when we behold the God-man in human form, exemplifying each lesson, and walking in the heavenward track.

Jesus presents Himself this blessed Example. Moses was instructed to "make all things according to the pattern shown to him in the Mount." (Heb. 8:5) So we are exhorted to live and move after the copy thus exhibited by Christ.

The Bible-page sparkles indeed with bright displays of brilliant excellence. In turn we see the shining of distinguished merit. Noble qualities illustriously appear. Abraham stands out in all the heroism of full-blown faith. He "was strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Against hope he believed in hope." (Rom. 4:20, 18) His faith scaled heaven's heights, clasping a promising God, and refusing to relax the grasp.

Behold Moses. He was preeminent in one lovely grace. Amid high honors from heaven, with much to kindle self-importance and to foster pride, vexed too with provocations keen with every

sting of ingratitude, he moved with lowly spirit, the meekest of meek men. His garment was humility. His walk sought the seclusion of the valley.

We see the suffering Job. What afflictions could exceed his bitter agony! Bereft of the children of his love, stripped of his vast possessions, heartbroken and impoverished, he writhes in all the miseries of disease and pain. What weary nights! What days of anguish! But still in patience he possessed his soul; uncomplaining he endured; submissive he bowed beneath the crushing blows.

Behold David! Such grace was granted to him that he won the glorious title of "the man after God's own heart."

Let admiring gaze be fixed on the beloved John. Love seems to be the very element in which he breathed. It is the very channel in which flowed the utterance familiar to his lips. Other distinguished heroes of exalted life pass as examples over the Scripture-stage. But generally in these one grace outshines all others. All excellences sit not in harmonious union on one brow. All beauteous features concur not in one form. Sometimes too the transcendent grace sustains eclipse. The faithful yields to assaults of unbelief. The meek in angry temper uses hasty words. The patient gives way to fretful murmurs. The loving is tempted to desire fire from heaven to devour the adversaries. Thus in the most noble men we learn that the highest properties may falter, and cause shame to themselves, and call forth sneers in their malevolent observers. If

then fervent thanks are due for models which in their purity retain much dross and shine with flickering light, and exhibit only partial display, how much more thankful should we be for JESUS! His walk exceeds all other steps, as the sun outshines all lesser lights, and Deity transcends humanity. We look to Him and see heaven tabernacling upon earth. He beckons onward in a perfect path, which knows no tortuous bend.

Sweet details attract enchanted notice. But first let a grand principle be established. In all His life on earth one mighty motive reigned supreme. His one absorbing rule was to subserve His Father's glory. "His food and drink was to do the will of Him who sent Him, and to finish His work." (John 4:34) He was ever intent to uphold the majesty of God's kingdom and the supremacy of His law. He lived to illustrate His righteousness, to magnify His grace, to maintain His truth, to assert His justice. He died to glorify His every attribute, and to fill heaven with adoring hallelujahs, sounding Jehovah's praise throughout eternity. This was His all-constraining impulse. Thus when His steps neared their final goal, He testifies, "I have glorified You on the earth." (John 17:4) His concluding utterance is the loud echo of His first recorded words, "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49) How Godlike is this aim! To what elevation would it raise man's walk! Truly earth would assimilate to heaven, if every thought and word and work and step moved onward in the broad road of devotedness to God's glory.

Let advance be made to show how this grand principle was exemplified in distinct acts. His infancy and early manhood are veiled in much obscurity. He was content to dwell unnoticed in the retirement of a lowly village. He thus wrought the miracle of concealing His essential greatness, and abstaining from seeking admiration and applause. In His lowly home He inculcated lessons which large volumes would have been small to teach. No wayward temper soiled His early days. No petulant resistance of control, no outbreaks of rebellious passion, no fretting violence of self-will, showed hateful features. Meek submission, self-denying reverence, obedient love, was His early life. Thus He lived, "the holy child Jesus," the luster of a pious home, the model of all youth.

But when in nature's course He increased in stature, and put on the strength and energies of manhood, He wasted not vigor in indolence and sloth. The first Adam was bid to maintain a garden, and Jesus ennobled work by diligent employment. This truth breaks forth from the inspired Word, which designates Him as "the Carpenter." (Mark 6:3) It is thereby declared that His hands labored. But why is this record preserved? It implies not that need required thus to be supplied. His will could instantly command resource. The narrative commends all honest toil as dignity and duty.

To follow Christ is to adhere with all observance to appointed rites. We read that when twelve years were attained, with ready step He hastened to the Paschal Feast. And when the time came that public ministry should be discharged, He sought the Baptist's instituted ordinance. It must have been humiliation's depth to join the crowd of open sinners, and to profess repentance by ablution's rite. But He obeyed. The Baptist by heavenly instinct checked Him. He knew His supreme dignity, and meekly inquires, "Do You come to me?" Jesus replies—and it is His second recorded word—"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." (Matt. 3:15) This example is a strong warning. Away with the proud conceit, that we can live in disregard of enjoined service. What He, who is all wisdom, has appointed, it is our highest wisdom to observe.

Our Example gives weapons to resist temptation's darts. These darts fly on perpetual wing.

While man lives on earth, he lives thus exposed to Satan's murderous assaults. In Eden's garden he approached pure innocence. He succeeded, and innocence no more was man's. In the dark horrors of the lonely desert, where wild beasts roamed, and all was cheerless loneliness, he daringly approached the Son of God. He plied the arts which never yet had failed. But they recoiled, as waves from the firm rock. The victory is our salvation and our lesson too. What weapons did the Savior use? He might

have summoned resources which humanity could never touch. He might have used profundities too deep, and heights too high for our reach. But he plied only the armament of the Bible. He selected weapons open to us, even as they were to Him. He waved "the Spirit's sword, which is the Word of God." (Eph. 6:17) "It is written" is impregnable. It shields from every wound, and drives back every foe. Let us then store our minds with these all-victorious implements. Let the Word be hidden in our hearts, and it will be a fortress which the tempter cannot capture. (Psa. 119:11)

The example too in lovely colors shows that our path should always be compassion, tenderness, and love. These features are conspicuous in all His works. Doubtless, His miracles were designed to reveal Him as "a Teacher come from God." (John 3:2) But for this purpose He might have selected stupendous marvels, filling the mind with astonishment and awe. He might have shown omnipotence over nature in her every part. Judgment might thus have been convinced, and the crown of Deity have been thus assumed. But He chose rather to prove His commission by healing disease, wiping the weeping eye, calming the troubled breast, pouring balm into the throbbing wound. Thus proving that He was God, He proved too that God was love. Hence we learn that gentle pity should be our constant path.

Mark too His humility. The only mention of His heart declares, that He was "meek and lowly in heart." (Matt. 11:29) His mantle was humility. He gave notorious instance when He washed His disciples' feet, and told them that He thus stooped so that they might follow Him. Thus we are taught in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves.

Observe His patience. What provocations were like those which battered Him! But "when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." (1 Pet. 2:23) "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." (Isa. 53:7) Sublimity of grandeur marks His patient sufferings. Ponder His forgiving spirit. The tide of injuries swept ceaselessly over Him. But never did He "repay insult with insult, but with blessing." (1 Pet. 3:9) The first word on the Cross shows His pervading feeling: "Father, forgive them!" May this lesson sound not in vain. An unforgiving spirit is a graceless spirit, and therefore cannot enter heaven.

The question presses urgently: By what efforts can this likeness be secured? The Bible leaves no doubt. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the

glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18) As we gaze on Jesus His lineaments are formed in us. As we study the heavenly model, we are exalted to corresponding beauty. Let then each day attest our study of Christ our Example. The view will renovate the heart, and mold it into lovely conformity.

But let not the vain thought occur that the mere contemplation will achieve resemblance. Our rough materials need a mighty hand to mold, to frame, to shape. The Spirit is the converting Agent. To Him then let us raise our eyes— to Him direct our cry. On rapid wings He will descend, and working in our yielding hearts, will make them holy as our Lord is holy, pure as He is pure, perfect as He is perfect. Christ the bright Example will have bright imitators.

21. ADVOCATE

"If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Similitudes of Jesus are indeed an overflowing cup. They sparkle as the starry firmament. It has been fully stated, that nature's varied forms and the treasures of art and science abound with such illustrations. The adjuncts also of regal rule and legal courts add to these stores of teaching. Not only is He the supreme Sovereign, wielding the scepter of unbounded sway; not only is He the Judge, to whom all judgment is committed; not only is He the Counselor and Intercessor; He is exhibited, moreover, as the Advocate. Thus faith is aided constantly to testify "Christ is All."

On Him as our Advocate let adoration now be riveted. Let a legal court with its appendages be imagined. The judgment is set. The Judge in solemn pomp is seated. A criminal trembles at the bar. An accuser states the cause. An Advocate, learned in the rules of law, offers defense. Such is a general view.

Let thought now travel to the final judgment-seat, and let a sinner be regarded as the culprit at the bar. Many are the charges pressed against him. Long is the roll of indictment. Grievous are its contents. All belong to one class—sin. All are forms of transgression of the law of God, rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven. Thus they are many as the fleeting particles of time.

For as the law demands unsullied love at every moment, and in every movement of the mind, it is incontrovertible that every moment is laden with accusation.

Let it be supposed that the offender is thus arraigned. Are witnesses needed to support the charges? They attend in ready crowds. The comrades of wickedness, the accomplices in crime, the casual beholders, the people who have shared the guilt, give evidence. But the main proofs proceed from conscience, that inward witness whose ever-watchful eye has marked and registered the course of life. Against such evidence denial must be vain. Confession stammers from each lip, These deeds are mine; thus have I acted; these sins belong to me; no charge is exaggerated; in all these points I am a violator of the law of God.

Scripture tells that an accuser calls for condemnation. Satan is truly branded as "the accuser of the brethren;" when his final doom is announced, he is depicted as he "which accused them before our God day and night." (Rev. 12:10) No sacred place excluded his vile approach, no holiness daunted him; his effrontery knew no check. He assailed innocence in Eden's garden. He solicited the Son of God in the wild horrors of the wilderness. He extended his foul touch to convey Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. So now he uses his last effort to effect destruction. Such is his hate, such is his malignant wish to have our race as his victims, such is his unceasing desire to bear them captives to his cell, that he is represented as appearing in court to prevent acquittal, to offer proof that the accused are his, to show that God's truth condemns them, that His righteousness excludes them from the kingdom into which righteousness alone can enter. Oh! that the eyes of men were open to the malignities of this foul fiend! Oh! that they would discern his crafty arts and foul attempts! Could they then lend their ears so readily to his insinuations; could they so eagerly snatch his baited hooks; could they serve him whose life is to make them wretched, and to fill hell with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

With conscience so condemning, with an accuser so bitter, so fierce, so cognizant of facts, can the prisoners cherish one ray of hope? Must not despair unnerve the heart, and downcast looks await the merited decree?

But there is hope—fresh, lively, bright. An Advocate appears able and willing to befriend a culprit so palpable in guilt. But can any undertake a case so desperate? Yes. The Advocate is "Jesus Christ the righteous."

The Father views Him with delight. He sees His Son—His only-begotten, His well-beloved Son, His co-partner in majesty and glory. On earth Jesus said, "I know that You always hear Me." (John 11:42) Reluctant audience will not now be granted.

The culprit anxiously turns to view this Advocate. It is his Jesus, who loved him with an everlasting love, who gave Himself for him, who endured all shame, all misery, all suffering on his behalf, who left nothing undone to effect redemption. Surely now He will use all efforts in his behalf! Would not a father plead warmly for a beloved son, a mother for the child of her womb, a

brother for the fellow-offspring of his home, a friend for the companion whom he loves as the close inhabitant of his heart, the ardent bridegroom for the partner of his bosom? The believer realizes that Jesus sustains all these relationships. He feels, then, that this Advocate will plead with all energy and zeal and power to save him; that each argument will be urged with constraining might, and all reasoning strive to obtain deliverance.

The question next occurs, "Why is this Advocate now present?" It is not a slight motive which impels Him. Every feeling, which brought Him down from heaven and placed Him a willing victim on the altar of the cross, now burns with undiminished fervor. He is urged by zeal for His Father's glory. His Father's honor would be tarnished if one perished who had been entrusted to His care. God's glory is involved in their salvation. For this, then, the Advocate must plead; and if He fails, heaven cannot sound the Father's everlasting praise.

Love, also, for His people warms His tongue. He comes flying on the wings of love, striding in the strength of love, riding in the chariot of love. He feels that those for whom Satan is now striving are the children begotten by His grace, the travail of His soul, the purchase of His blood, the offspring of His agony and death; His sister, His spouse, His beloved, around whom His heart has been entwined before time was, the portion of His Father's gift and of His loving choice; His jewels, His crown, the signet ring on His right hand, the sheep of His pasture, His wealth, His treasure, His delight, the members of His mystic body, the very apple of His eye. Thus Jesus loves them, and in love appears as their Advocate.

The Advocate may have all favor in the court, the clients may repose confiding trust in Him, His desire to win the cause may be unbounded, His every energy may be strained to gain success—but insurmountable obstacles may intervene. If the rules and decrees of the court be adverse, justice must prevail, impartial sentence must be given, guilt must be condemned, the statutes of the realm must be inviolably guarded.

This the Advocate well knows. All His pleadings uphold the known decrees. He calls for favorable sentence, on the broad ground that the law requires acquittal, and renders condemnation alike illegal and unjust. He demands the statute-book. He turns to the articles of the Covenant of Grace. The principle of substitution is there allowed. It is enacted that a proxy, in every way qualified, may occupy the sinner's place, pay all his debts, endure all his penalties, make full expiation, and render vicarious obedience, and thus avert all punishment.

The Advocate maintains that He has worked and suffered as the substitute; that He was qualified, because He had assumed man's nature; that infinity belonged to His every act of merit and of suffering, because He never could be less than very and eternal God.

The sinner boldly awaits the issue. The accuser states the multiplied offences, and establishes that death is due for each. The Advocate presents no contradiction of offence, but forcibly

rejoins, The death denounced has been endured; in My person the sinner died on Calvary's cross; he was crucified in Me. Who is he who now condemns! Christ died is full reply to all demands for the transgressor's death.

If the accuser presses that the Law has uttered its inexorable curse against every violation of perfect, pure, unsullied love, the Advocate replies: The total curse has been endured. On Me in fullest measure it has been outpoured. It is written, "Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree." On the accursed tree I was suspended, and on Me the whole vengeance fell. If the importunate accuser reiterates that justice must have its dues, the Advocate replies, Where is the debt which is not fully paid! What satisfaction is not adequately made!

Thus every charge is met. Justice acknowledges that no more is due. Truth testifies that it is amply honored. Justice would cease to be just if punishment could be twice inflicted, and the sinner who suffered in the person of his substitute could be required himself to suffer. The court is just, and pronounces acquittal on all for whom Christ died. It is forever true, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1) Thus the Advocate prevails. Believer, bless Him, praise Him, extol Him, adore Him, more and more, now and forever. He gains your cause. In Him you are eternally acquitted from wrath.

This name of Jesus suggests some slighter thoughts which tend to enliven faith and fill the soul with consolations. Advocates in earthly courts may have high fame, and plead with wondrous

skill, and rarely fail to win successful a outcome. But invariable victory cannot be presumed. Failure may sometimes blight the man most learned, and the tongue most eloquent. Some adverse pleader may be summoned, more trained in rhetoric, more versed in precedents, more mighty in ingenious reasoning. Thus a cause apparently secure may suffer damage in the end.

Such discomfiture cannot befall our great Advocate. "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:3) He is wise, the only wisdom. He is the source of all intellect. No genius glows which is not kindled by Him. The tongue of learning is His gift. Thus none can surpass Him. All who commit themselves to Him are sure of victory. O my soul, entrust all your matters to this Advocate.

Earthly advocates grow old, their strength declines, their vigor languishes. The tongue, once so unrivaled, ceases to electrify. Weakened powers no longer command admiring plaudits and unfailing victory. Far other is the case with Jesus. Immortal vigor is His property. Rolling years can bring no change. In all preeminence He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Heb. 13:8) Can age enfeeble Deity! Jesus is ever fresh in all the powers of immortal being. O my soul, entrust your cause to this Advocate, who ever lives to plead in all the might of Omnipotence!

Earthly Advocates exact large price. Their eloquence is bought by golden baits. The wealthy may command their energies. Poverty seldom obtains help from earthly barristers. Look now to

Jesus. Riches have no charms for Him. The poorest applicant from the lowliest hut is regarded with like favor as the monarch of the stateliest palace. His advocacy is granted "without money and without price." All who flee to Him in penitence and faith, all who receive Him as their full salvation, in lowest station and extremest need, may gain unfailing Advocacy from Him.

Happy believer, view your precious Jesus! He is salvation to the utmost. Study Him, love Him, adore Him more and more. Clasp to your heart of hearts the truth, Christ is my Advocate; He is my All.

22. KING

"He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

The person who thus gloriously appears is beyond doubt the blessed Jesus. Throughout the context He is indubitably manifest. The names and attributes belong exclusively to Him. From this magnificent array let happy thought now select the royal state, and meekly bow before the King. The title shows the highest dignity, the loftiest supremacy, the most extensive power, the most exalted seat among the sons of men.

Absolute right to all sway, and all homage, is unquestionably our Lord's due; but still He magnifies not Himself to be styled King. The Father speaks, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; Hear O sons of men. The heavenly proclamation sounds, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." (Psa. 2:6) The mediatorial throne is thus assigned to Him. "The government shall be upon His shoulders." "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever." (Isa. 9:6, 7)

None can subvert a kingdom resting upon such foundations. None can demolish supremacy thus fixed by the right hand of omnipotence! Doubtless foes, many and mighty, have assailed it. They have invaded it with consummate skill and with inveterate hate. They have brought

against it weapons of prodigious metal, and plied them with incessant fury. But it would be far easier to pluck the sun from the high firmament, or to drive back the ocean rolling in its might, than to dethrone this King, "How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth." (Psa. 47:2) The archenemy who still conducts this warfare is mighty in himself, and aided by a legion formidable in power. He commenced his enmity with the birth of man, and never has he laid down his arms, or remitted his attacks. Often has he seemed to approach victory; but yet the kingdom stands impregnable.

Let faith now gather profit from viewing some usual SYMBOLS OF ROYALTY.

I. Crown. Earthly sovereigns display a crown, as emblem of their people's homage. On Jesus' head are "many crowns." (Rev. 19:13) The Father crowns Him, as co-equal ruler of the universe, as fellow-worker in the wonders of creation. All voices cry aloud, "You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. 4:11) He is crowned with a bridal diadem. "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown with which His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His heart." (Song 3:11) Believers delight to place on His brow the crown of their redemption. This work is wholly managed by His might. To Him the glory must be wholly given. He wears, also, the crown of victory. He ransomed His people on the battle-field. He won them in garments dipped in blood. His brow is entitled to the emblem of hard-won conquest. All His ransomed possess crowns, as made kings and priests unto God by Him. These crowns they cast at His feet, and crown Him Lord of all.

II. Scepter. This staff is the common emblem of dominion. The sovereignty of Judah's tribe is thus portrayed. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes." (Gen. 49:10) The Holy Spirit hence places a scepter in our King's hand. "The scepter of Your kingdom is a righteous scepter." (Psa. 45:6) Earthly rulers are often swayed by ungodly passions. Injustice, oppression, cruelty, and tyranny rage in their hearts. Their laws are often framed in hardness, and enforced by unrelenting might. Their subjects groan under hard bondage, and are the slaves of wanton caprice. Homes are the scene of trembling, and prisons resound with sighs. How different is the rule of the King of kings. "With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His reins." (Isa. 11:4, 5) All His enactments tend to promote harmony alone. Obedience to His laws is heaven begun. Hearts subdued to His sway are the sweet abodes of peace. His scepter crushes every ungodly passion. His empire is unbroken righteousness.

III. Throne. As on His head are many crowns, so He is enthroned on many thrones. He sits high on the throne of all power, majesty, and supremacy. His voice proclaims, "To him who overcomes I will give the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Rev. 3:21) From this royal seat all events are ordered by Him, and the whole course of providence receives direction. He speaks, and it is done. He commands, and the whole universe submits. It is a blessed word, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18) And therefore the result is sure, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called, according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28)

His seat is sweetly styled, also, a throne of grace. (Heb. 4:16) Here free favor is dispensed. To this His people have access at all times. A ready smile awaits them. Their prayers are heard. Their needs are bountifully supplied. Their sins receive the seal of pardon. They obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Favored subjects are constant as suppliants at this

throne. Their privilege exceeds all thought. The King sits to bless them with all blessings.

Another throne demands especial notice. It is the throne of glory. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations." (Matt. 25:31) It is wisdom's exercise often to forecast the proceedings which then shall be transacted. The day is surely coming. Each moment brings it nearer. We must meet it. "Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." (Rev. 1:7) Shall we then lift up our heads with joy, and shout, "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isa. 25:9) Those who frequent the throne of grace move onward to the throne of glory. "You are the King of glory, O Christ."

IV. Kings are attended by royal retinue. When they appear, guards in splendid attire precede and follow. All the holy angels bend before this King. Countless is the number of this throng. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." (Rev. 5:11) These attendants announced His first coming, and proclaimed His birth. In the wilderness, in His exhausted state, they came and ministered to Him. In the garden, when in the bitterness of His agony He sank to the earth, "there appeared an angel to Him from heaven, strengthening Him." On the resurrection-morn, an angel rolled back the stone which closed the rocky tomb. When He ascended, two angels told His sure return. On His appearance, the whole of the angelic host shall bear Him company. Not one shall be absent from the glorious procession. Such are the attendants of the King of kings.

V. Kings were inaugurated by oil poured upon their heads. Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon the head of Saul, and kissed him, and said, "Is it not because the Lord has anointed you to be captain over His inheritance?" (1 Sam. 10:1) Again, "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed David in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward." (1 Sam. 16:13) Jesus, also, is anointed to be His people's King. "God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." (Psa. 45:7) His reign is a reign of gladness. For the joy set before Him, the joy of ruling in His people and for His people, He endured the cross, despising the shame. Similar is the testimony of His lips, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek." (Isa. 61:1) "The Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him." David, also, speaking of the things which he had made touching the King, declared "Grace is poured into Your lips." (Psa. 65:2) Thus His government is inaugurated by the unction of the Spirit. His name Christ proclaims Him as the anointed One.

VI. Kings are announced by proclamation. Many voices at diverse times proclaimed our King. Hear the prophet's cry, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold your King comes to you." (Zech. 9:9) Angels cry aloud, "To you is born, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11) At His baptism, a voice from heaven proclaims, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17) Again, at His transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." (Matt. 17:5) With what lowly reverence should we bow the head and pay allegiance to our constituted King!

VII. Subjects. There is no kingdom without subjects. The sway of Jesus rules an innumerable multitude of all nations and kindreds, and people and tongues. "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." (Psa. 72:8) The blessed company was given to our King in everlasting counsels. "They were Yours, and You gave them to Me." (John 17:6) He loves them with everlasting love, and has inscribed their names upon His heart.

He has received them as the jewels of His crown, the signet ring upon His right hand. He delights over them as a bridegroom over his spouse. He knew that another master had obtained usurped dominion over them; He encountered this foe, and rescued them from his cruel grasp. So they became His by conquest. He found them poor and wretched and naked, and He wrought out a glorious robe of righteousness to adorn them for His palace. He knew that their debts were many. He laid down His life and shed His blood to satisfy each demand. He found their hearts estranged from Him, and their affections given to the poor baubles of this fleeting world. He sent His Holy Spirit to create new hearts within them, to win their love, to lead them to choose Him as their all forever. Thus they became His by voluntary surrender. He accepts their offered hearts. He endows them with all He is and all He has. His every perfection is for their enrichment. His wisdom is theirs to guide and teach. His power is theirs to defend. His grace is theirs to beautify. His righteousness is theirs to clothe. His life is theirs that they may live forever. His death is theirs that they may never die. His heaven is theirs as their eternal home. His angels are theirs as their ministering guards. He renders them great and noble in time, great and noble throughout eternity. Thus His people are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God." (1 Pet. 2:9) In His kingdom every subject is a priest and king—a priest to offer up spiritual sacrifice to God, a king to rule over unruly passions and desires.

Well might Moses sing, "Happy are you, O Israel: who is like you, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, and who is the sword of your excellency! and your enemies shall be found liars to you; and you shall tread upon their high places." (Deut. 33:29) The words of Sheba's Queen only faintly shadow the blessedness of His subjects. "Happy are your men, happy are these your servants who stand continually before you, and that hear your wisdom." (1 Sam. 10:8)

Though all honor and glory belong to Jesus, as King of kings and Lord of lords, "we see not yet all things put under Him." But we wait with longing desire, and constant prayer, and eager expectation, for the day when He shall openly take to Himself His great power and reign. "When

the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." We sigh, Why tarry the wheels of His chariot! We cry, Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Even so. Amen.

23. ROOT AND OFFSPRING OF DAVID

"I am the Root and the Offspring of David."

Countless proofs attest that Scripture is the Word of God. Among them this verse claims lofty place. Volumes of grand truth are here comprised in a brief sentence. Immensities are uttered in a breath. Thoughts which exceed limits are exhibited in microscopic space. The wonder here unveiled is Jesus in His person as God-man. No mortal mind could have conceived this truth. A divine pen could only teach it. "Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21)

Let attention be now fixed on the announcement of Jesus: "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." Incredulity is startled, and exclaims: It cannot be! How can one person be alike the parent and the progeny of another! How can He originate and also receive existence! The Root may bear the branch; the branch may germinate from the Root; but they are essentially diverse. The Root and the topmost boughs cannot intertwine. The glacier, which is the cradle of the stream, cannot also be its final bed. Jesus uses this seeming impossibility to silence the cavils of the Pharisees, "If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?" (Matt. 22:45) The union of God and man alone can give reply.

View Jesus. As God, He is the Root of David; as man, He is his offspring. We here see the

wonders of the Gospel-scheme, the pivot on which salvation turns, the unfathomable ocean whose breadth and length no power of man can scan. Let us sit humbly at the shore, and mark some ripples breaking at our feet.

I. The Offspring of David. When sin upset the world, and man became the bond-slave of the devil, the victim of eternal wrath, an alien from God's family, and the prey of every form of misery; mercy flies on rapid wing to bring a healing balm. A staff is given to support the wretched outcast. A prospect is exhibited on which hope might repose. Recovery is announced. The promise sweetly sounds, that one in human form should repair the breach, and crush the serpent's head. The seed of the woman should restore the fallen culprit to all, and more than all, that had been lost through sin. Thus the first-born prophecy declares that in fullness of time a deliverer should arise, offspring of the family of man.

At first the prophecy is general, and specifies only human birth. As time rolls on, predictions assume a more especial garb. Their features become more exact. Intimations speak in graphic terms, and precise pictures are displayed. Heralds of His advent sound distinct preludes. Suffice it to remind that the period of His assuming human garb is clearly told, the very place in which He shall draw the first breath of life is added; the tribe, also, is named, which shall be made preeminent by His birth. But the present subject calls chief notice to the fact that the family is specified which shall boast this grand distinction. The seed of the woman shall be born the Offspring of David.

The prophet, from whose lips Gospel-predictions flowed in clear stream, sung unmistakably: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." (Isa. 11:1) A mark is thus fixed on the parentage of Jesus. The truth too is annexed, that in this family, when it shall be low in obscurity, and the scepter should seemingly have departed, He shall arise out of the ashes of the smoldering house a bright flame, and shall enlighten the Gentiles, and become the glory of His people Israel. Similarly the same prophet sings, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even forever." (Isa. 9:6, 7) The seed of the woman shall be born in the house of David. David, also, himself received the glorious tidings. The great honor of his house was stated to him. The inspired Nathan thus comforted the king, "When your days are over, and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish His kingdom." (2 Sam. 7:12) The memory of this promise lived from age to age, and Paul avowed its fulfillment: "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as He promised." (Acts 13:23)

Other Scriptures specify David as the progenitor of the woman's seed. The riches of redemption are displayed as "the sure mercies of David." A blessed prospect brightens, "They will serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them." (Jer. 30:9) The cheering word goes forth, after years of humiliation shall have been their doom, "The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their King, and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." (Hos. 3:5) Thus when the Desire of all nations shall appear, His cradle shall be in David's house.

It is a soul-assuring task to contemplate the exact fulfillment. If any word of prophecy should fail, the fabric of salvation falls. But as surely as the word was spoken, so surely in the set time, the angel Gabriel seeks the highly favored Mary, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. She hears that she is to become the mother of the promised Savior. It is

added, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32, 33) In accordance, the angel encourages the wondering shepherds: "Fear not! for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10, 11) Thus expectations are fulfilled, and Jesus breathes the breath of life as David's Offspring.

What floods of peace and consolation flow from this fact! Jesus verily assumes our nature, as truly man as any mother's son can be, one of our kindred and our race. Thus what man should bear He can bear, what man should do He can do. Is blood required to wash out sin? He has blood to shed. Must death be suffered? He can die. Must the law be rigidly obeyed? As man He can supply obedience. Must each transgression meet inexorable curse? On Him, as man, the curse can fall. Can none enter heaven but in robes of perfect purity? Such garment is wrought out by Christ. Thus David's Offspring is complete salvation to all who, by the Father's decree, are given to Him. By His atoning merits He so cleanses those who no shadow of a charge against them can be found. He so adorns them with the beauties of unsullied righteousness, that heaven's portals open widely to admit them.

But His people are not only thus fully saved, but as a man Jesus is qualified to cheer them by His sympathizing love. He has lived and felt and suffered pain as man; therefore He can be touched with all the feeling of our infirmities; therefore "in all our afflictions He is afflicted." Hence He is skilled by fellow-feeling, and acquaintance with human woe to pour balm into every bleeding heart, to wipe away all tears of sorrow, to calm the troubled breast; "to give to those who mourn beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isa. 61:3) Thanks be to God for Jesus, the Offspring of David.

II. The Root of David. Jesus is not only the Offspring of David, He also is his Root. Let holy reverence meekly bow, and adoration raise a loftier strain. The Root is that which, hidden from sight, is the spring and origin of life to trees and herbs and countless offspring of the garden and the plain. Thus Jesus is the cause of life to David. But who can be the author of life to man but He who has almighty and creative powers! God only can confer existence. Hence the Root of David must be God. Thus David worshiped Him as Lord, and in frequent hymns adored Him as his God. Let not our lips be backward in ascribing praise to Him as "God over all, blessed forevermore," "the God of our salvation." Can we too often dwell upon the truth, that He alone can be our Savior whose arm wields omnipotence, and who is arrayed in garments of almightiness, and rides in the chariot of Deity? Salvation's work requires Deity, because it requires all infinity. The sins to be obliterated are infinite in number, and each is infinite in guilt, hence infinite must be the value of the atoning blood and of the expiating suffering. Infinite wrath must be appeased; infinite strength alone can bear it. The debt to be paid is infinite, infinite resources alone can liquidate. The enemy who opposes is mighty, adamant are the chains by which his victims are bound; who less than the mighty God can crush this foe, trample down his legion, shatter his scepter, liberate his captives, and sit as conqueror over his demolished empire? But Jesus is God, and therefore is infinitely mighty to achieve this work. By proclaiming Himself as David's Root, He proclaims Himself as seated on the throne of God. Thanks be to God that our Jesus is David's Root.

Faith here delights to behold more than David. When it contemplates Jesus as David's Root, it sees Him too as the Root of all the family of faith. Indeed, He is the Root of their being as men and as believers—the origin and support of all their life, and power, and grace, and hopes. In Him, as God, "they live and move and have their being." He willed, and they received the gift of never-failing existence. They have the breath of life, because He breathed it into them. But small would be the benefit of natural life, unless the soul revived. It would only be a brief passage to eternal woe, the flickering of a sickly candle, even to expire in everlasting night. To live is no blessing, unless we live to God. But Jesus is the Root of spiritual life. He by the Spirit imparts new being to the inner man. Thus He teaches, "I am the Vine, you are the branches." "As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself."

The fertility of the tree depends on the vitality of the Root. This Root is ever lively, strong, incapable of weakness or decay. Christ, strong as Deity can be, thus sustains the being, the vigor, the fruitfulness of His people. Satan, doubtless, has never ceased to aim malignant blows against this Root. But all his rage and fury have been vain. Christ is secure, inhabiting the bosom of His God; thus "our life is hidden with Christ in God." Let then all fears depart. "His sheep shall never perish, and none shall ever pluck them out of His hands."

Another thought must not be overlooked. If the Root be holy, even so are the branches. All springing from this sacred source become trees of righteousness, and are richly laden with all holy fruit. Hence true believers give evidence of their holy birth, "shining as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." All who see them take knowledge of those who they are one with Jesus.

The mark of the heirs of darkness is also visibly displayed. "By their fruits you shall know them." As in these there is no change of nature, so they continue in the fleshly state. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like." (Gal. 5:19-21) How frightful is this catalogue! How hideous are the features in which such lines are seen! How dreadful is the condition of all who bear these signs! It is added, "of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:21) If the eye

of any of this class should rest on this page, may God in the riches of His grace apply the word of warning before it is too late, and the decree goes forth, "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still." (Rev. 22:11)

The entreaty sounds: Linger not among the branches blackening for the burning. You may yet be broken off from the wild olive tree, and grafted by grace into the stem of salvation. Oh! cry earnestly and without ceasing, O gracious God! deliver me from this fearful state. O blessed Jesus! I implore You by all the love for man which from eternity has filled Your heart, by all the grace which led You to take our nature and endure our curse, by all the precious blood which flowed from Calvary's cross, by all the might of Your never-failing prayer, by all the brightness of Your millennial reign, by all the glories of Your everlasting kingdom, by all the happiness of heaven, make me Yours and keep me Yours forever. Let me hear the assurance, 'I make you one with Myself by transforming grace forever.'

24. ALPHA AND OMEGA

"I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

Exceeding grandeur marks this designation. The crown fits not a mortal head. The jewel sparkles not on human breast. Infinity is its scope. It stretches from everlasting to everlasting. It cannot belong to less than Deity. The ground is evidently hallowed. Let each step now be taken with reverential awe.

At once the echo of Isaiah's voice is heard. When the seraphic seer would sing Jehovah's glory, he sounds this high note, "Who has wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He." (Isa. 41:4) No fitter words could proclaim Jehovah the eternal God. We listen, and again like terms describe Jehovah's majesty. "Thus says the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides Me there is no God." (Isa. 44:6) Again the prophet strikes his harp, and again Jehovah is the subject. But with all language at his command, with choice of imagery as his handmaid, gifted with all the charms of eloquence, he can employ no terms more suitable or more significant. The same sound still reverberates. "Listen to Me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am He; I am the first, I also am the last." (Isa. 48:12) Such then is Jehovah's chosen designation.

Before the Revelation closes, Jesus claims this title as His prerogative. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." The truth then shines forth, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners." Jesus is Jehovah. He who is the truth claims Jehovah's glories, takes Jehovah's name, ascends Jehovah's throne, wields Jehovah's scepter, assumes Jehovah's crown, demands the homage which is Jehovah's due. Thus adoration is due to Him as the Creator and Preserver, by whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. He stands before us as "I am that I am." He manifests Himself in all the incomprehensible glory of self-existent and eternal Being.

I. Let some general inferences be considered. Ample fields invite to meditative rambles. But thought must be briefly limited to some especial attributes. As Jesus is Jehovah, all power in heaven and earth is in His hands. Let no fears then depress His people. Let no trembling apprehensions sadden their days. Providence may seem to frown, but smiles will soon break forth. Events may show a threatening form, but they roll on subservient to His ordering. His power stands as a bulwark against all final ruin. The united fury of all satanic foes is as a broken reed against His all-protecting arm. His people shall be surely kept by His almighty power unto eternal life.

In His character, love takes essential place. From everlasting to everlasting "I am that I am;" and from everlasting to everlasting His heart is boundless love. Before the foundations of the world He loved, in foreknowledge of all our sinfulness He loved, through all life's sinful days He loves, to the end His love will burn unchanged, unchangeable. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35) The perpetuity of His love is as sure as His protecting power.

Similarly He is the all-wise and the only wise. Wisdom in the highest is His property. His people claim this wisdom for their teaching and their guidance. "All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Thus the whole expanse of Jehovah's excellencies are the believer's heritage and joy, his portion and his defense, his excellency and his glory. Holy Spirit! accept our fervent thanks for revealing Jesus to us as Jehovah, "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

II. Particular lessons result from these terms. Jesus is emphatically "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," both in creation and redemption.

Contemplate the former work, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:1, 2) The Father is revealed as addressing Him, "You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands." (Heb. 1:10) We thus are emboldened in spirit to listen to His creative voice, calling all things out of nothing. Let vain speculation bewilder itself in mazes of imaginings; let it raise and pull down and re-erect, and again recall systems upon systems of evolution and gradual development. Let us be content to know that, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Gen. 1:1) In this work our Jesus sat coequal on creation's throne—the Alpha, the beginning, the first. It is a charming exercise to hear Him speak, and light shines forth, the source and handmaid of all beauty, and chaos melts into form, and lovely order robes the world, and the sun goes forth, "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." We know that it is at His bidding that the firmament on high is bespangled with innumerable orbs, and glitters seemingly with worlds upon worlds. He is the Alpha, the beginning, the first of earth in all its multitudinous array of beauty and of wonders. Marvel at the earth, now rising high in mountains to the sky, now sinking into lowly valleys, now startling with cataracts of watery fury, now lulling with the gentle streamlet's murmur, mark its verdant carpet, its beauteous flowers, its

majestic forests. Mark too the ocean, spreading its expanse of wave, raising the foam of mighty billows and subsiding into unfathomable depths. Behold the earth, the air, the waters, teeming with life! Behold man, also, created after God's own likeness, receiving life that he might be capable of grace, receiving grace that he might inherit glory. Adoring wonder stays its flight and checks its aspiring wings, and blesses Jesus, the Alpha, the beginning, and the first of all created things.

He too shall be the Omega, the end, the last. We read "they shall perish, but You remain: they all shall grow old as does a garment, and as a vesture You shall fold them up, and they shall be changed." (Psa. 102:26) At present we cannot foresee the beauty of this earth, during the millennial reign, and the splendor of "the new heavens and the new earth, where righteousness dwells," but we know that all shall be the work of Jehovah Jesus. As in the beginning He was Alpha, the beginning, the first—so in the final scene He shall be the Omega, the end, the last. He is all in the world's birth, its continual progress, and until time shall reach its timeless end. We adore You, O Jehovah Jesus.

Let redemption be next contemplated. Here, Jesus is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." He is the foundation, He is the top-stone. The main parts of it are exclusively His work. He is the Alpha, the beginning, and the first before the foundation of the world. In the counsels of the everlasting Covenant, He presented Himself to be the substitute of His people, to receive all their sins, as truly His own acts, in human form, to make atonement for them, to present satisfaction to every outraged attribute of God, to bear all wrath, to endure the law's total curse, to pay every debt to justice, to meet truth's every demand, to render all obedience to the requirements of perfect love, to invest with this robe all the family of faith. To execute this work He came, He lived, He died. He challenged all heaven to bear witness, "It is finished."

He too shall be the Omega, the end, the last. The day shall come when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and every foe to the eternal reign shall be forever vanquished, and God shall be all in all; and the last stone of salvation's pyramid shall be brought forth with shouts, "Grace to it, grace to it."

In contemplation of this glorious work, faith loudly sings, You are worthy O Jesus, to receive blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and might, for You are "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" of redemption.

III. Concluding inferences claim notice. As Jesus is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," to the whole Church, so too He is all in the case of each believer. He begins the good work, and carries it on, until the home of glory is attained. The good Shepherd goes after each of His lost sheep. He finds them straying in the wide wilderness of the world. He lays them on His shoulders rejoicing, and brings them to His fold of peace. By His Spirit He carries on the work of grace, awakening the hatred of all sin, the love of all holiness, the resolute choice of every holy path. He implants unwavering faith in His atoning blood, delight in His imputed righteousness, confidence in His unfailing love. He makes them more than conquerors in every conflict. He never leaves nor forsakes until the valley of the shadow of death is passed, and the last enemy is swallowed up in victory, and welcome is given in the courts of heaven. Thus He is the foundation and the pinnacle of salvation in each individual case.

The inference is obvious. If Christ be all for us, gratitude requires that we be wholly His. This thought applies to every state and condition of life, and to every moment of our fleeting time. It embraces each movement of the mind, each word, each step. Mark how cogently it presses on all who are called to the eminence of ministerial life, who are invested with the high honors of being ambassadors for Christ, and who bear the responsibility of watching for souls as those who must give account. In every pulpit, beside each dying bed, in every visit to the sick and whole, in all the teachings of the school, the instruction should be redolent of Him. His work, His grace, His love, should be the all-pervading theme. He should be the opening and the concluding thought. The life should be as full of Him as the sun is of light, the ocean of drops, the garden of fragrance, the groves of melody in spring, the trees of leaves in summer. In all matters of arrangement, whether in the family or in more public matters, all decisions should be cast in one mold—Christ the beginning and the end. We are often called to design, to plan, to project. We are perplexed, and doubt whether to turn to the right hand or the left. How simple would be our course, if the one inquiry should be, Will He, whose I am, and whom I am bound to serve, give His approval? Will His presence accompany? Will His smile bless? Will His Spirit lead these schemes to happy issue? Sometimes we may be required to fix abode, to choose profession, to determine plans for children and dependants. In such cases seeming advantages must give place to the primary inquiry, What is the mind of Christ? What plan most entirely accords with the rules of His kingdom? The career of life would glide in a safe and happy path, if Christ were always made "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last " of every thought, desire, and work.

This thought applies too to every day. Here let Christ always be "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." When morning dawns, and consciousness returns, and refreshed faculties begin to move, let the mind fly up to Him, let the first thoughts be sanctified by converse with Him. David testifies, "When I awake I am still with You." (Psa. 139:18) As the day advances, let His image be constantly before the eye. Let His word be diligently studied. Let passing hours bring Him nearer to the heart. Let new views of Him be gained. Let devoted consecration be given to His service. Let His praises flow from the lips. Let some testimony to His worth be given. And when evening calls to repose, let communion with

Him close the curtains of the couch.

Thus Christ should be "All in All" on earth, as He is "All in All" in heaven. The Father's eye is ever on Him, the holy angels ever worship Him, the spirits of the just ever adore Him. Each day will be as heaven to us if similarly we ever make Him our Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. "O Lord, accomplish this work in us, and to You be all the glory." Amen.

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