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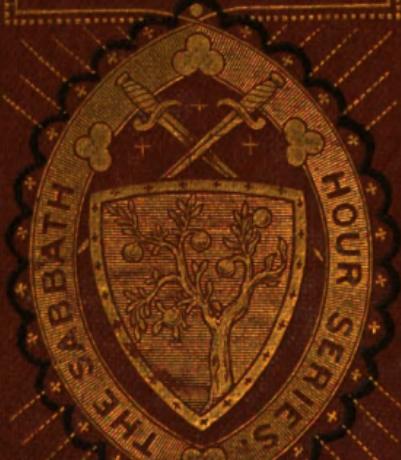
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THE
TREE OF LIFE



O. WINSLOW D.D.

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THE
TREE OF LIFE;
ITS
SHADE, FRUIT, AND REPOSE.

BY
OCTAVIUS WINSLOW, D.D.

"On either side of the river, was there the tree-of-life, which bare twelve manner of fruits; and yielded her fruit every month."—Rev. xxii. 2.

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PREFACE.

THE simple design of this little volume is, not so much to unfold the varied and striking phenomena of our Lord's life, as to illustrate some of its leading *incidents*. His life can alone be properly studied in the light of its doings. It was pre-eminently a practical life. "Not words, but *deeds*," might have served for its motto. "He went about DOING GOOD." It was life for life—life set apart, life spent, life sacrificed for man. Living in a world that hated Him, He yet loved it. Dwelling among a race that injured Him, He yet toiled for it.

PREFACE.

Belonging to a nation who insulted and rejected Him, He yet died for it. Behold the man!—the God-man, Christ Jesus—and let your admiration deepen into love, and your love constrain you to go forth and live, and, if need be, die, for Him. Would we be Christ's true disciples, we must be practical. Our Christian life, not to vegetate in action, or evaporate in words, must, like the dew of night and the light of day, diffuse, invisible and noiseless, its vital and illuminating influence along all our pathway to eternity—*blessed* of God and *a blessing* to man! Oh, it is a solemn thing to *live*! We have but *one* life—yet that life may act for weal or for woe upon the deathless lives of countless beings, speeding, like ourselves, to the judgment. “No man liveth to himself.” He cannot, if he would. Man lives for man, his friend or foe!

PREFACE.

It has been the aim of the author of the present volume so to unfold the "way of life" that each chapter should contain an epitome of the gospel plan of salvation. It may thus be found an appropriate work to place in the hands of those—alas! how countless the number!—who are living in blinded ignorance or in criminal neglect of the claims of God, the interests of the soul, and the solemnities of eternity. Nor this alone. Equally has it been his object gently, as beneath the floating banner of Christ's love, to lead the experienced believer into the banqueting house of God's truth, supplying such doctrinal and preceptive instruction as may aid the growth of that vigorous, manly, and practical Christianity which can alone with effect meet the demands and confront the foes of this extraordinary age. Nor has the suffering, the tried, and the

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tempted believer been overlooked. "All manner of fruit" clusters upon our "Tree of Life." It has been the aim of the writer to bring all believers within its reach ; that those who, by reason of weakness of faith, or sorrow of mind, or suffering of body, cannot touch the top-most bough, may at least pluck from the lowest the spiritual nourishment that shall make sorrow less bitter, suffering less keen, sin more hated, and Christ more precious. The writer has but to add that it is his purpose, the Lord permitting, to follow the present volume with a similar one on some of the leading TITLES OF CHRIST, which he proposes shall, like the "Tree of Life," yield its fruit "*every month.*" The Lord add His blessing, and to the Triune-Jehovah shall be ascribed all the praise !

BRIGHTON, June 1868.

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THE SHADOW OF CHRIST; ITS FRUIT AND REPOSE.

"I sat down under His shadow with great delight,
and His fruit was sweet to my taste."—SONG OF
SOL. ii. 3.

THESE words may not embody an incident in the personal life of Christ, such as in these pages will engage our study; nevertheless, they refer to Christ Himself, which is better still; and they supply an appropriate introduction to the interesting events in His personal history upon which we propose to concentrate the reader's attention. We premise, in the outset that, the religion of Christ is essentially and intensely *experimental* in its character. There is nothing in it theoretic, speculative, or ideal. Its history

a

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is true, its facts are authentic, its doctrines are divine. It appeals to the intellect, and takes it captive ; it enters the heart, and finds a home. It blends with every faculty of the mind, entwines with every passion of the soul, and is absorbed with our entire mental, moral, and spiritual being. The Word of God thus becomes the *engrafted* word—incorporated with, and inseparable from, ourselves. This is the only knowledge of Christ worth possessing, because it is the only knowledge of Christ that *saves* the soul. What we need is *salvation*. What we want to know is, how we may escape the eternal damnation of the lost, and how secure the eternal happiness of the saved. Our knowledge of Christ is real and precious, as it gives reality and certainty to the transcendently momentous fact that—**WE ARE SAVED!** One feeble touch of His hem, one dim sight of His cross, one drop of His sprinkled blood, has more in reality of Christ in it than the most accurate intellectual knowledge, or the most refined, speculative theory. The passage, then, of which this opening chapter of our volume is

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a brief exposition, is essentially experimental. There is nothing in it borrowed, imitated, or stolen. It does not refer to what the Church had heard, or had read, or had imagined of Christ ; but it unfolds the actual, spiritual, and personal experience of Jesus and the truth. Oh, holy and precious experience this ! Blessed is that soul that can put its seal to this truth ! And happy if, as we close this volume, unfolding—as we humbly trust it will—something of the divine glory and the practical grace of Jesus, we can say concerning Him, "*I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.*" Let us, taking up each particular of the passage, speak in order of the *shadow*—the *repose*—the *fruit*.

Our first object of consideration is—the *shadow of Christ*. "His shadow." Not as the worldling's shadow is the Christian's. All is but shadow that appertains alone to this present life. The toil for wealth, the strife for honour, the pursuit of pleasure, is but the race of shadows. I summon the worldling as a witness. Does not your past

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experience confirm this melancholy fact? Has your lust for gold been satisfied with wealth? Your thirst for happiness, with worldly pleasure? Your longing for rest, with earthly repose? Your sighing for creature friendship, sympathy, and love, with the creature? Truth and honesty compel your emphatic answer, "No!" And yet see how persistent is your folly! Although bubble after bubble has burst, and dream after dream has vanished, and shadow after shadow has dissolved, you are as eager and earnest as ever in chase of those phantoms of earth-born bliss which dazzle but to bewilder, and which allure but to destroy. The Lord awake you from your sleep of spiritual insensibility, convince you of your folly, give you to see your sin and danger as a dying man, and to realise your position as a responsible being, as one who has to give account of himself to God, that, ceasing from the vain pursuit of earthly, carnal good, you may lay hold on eternal life.

Equally shadowy is *the religion of the world*. To the dim religious eye it appears the very perfection of devotion. Its forms

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are many, and its ceremonial gorgeous ; its spirit is devout, and its doings abundant even to oppression, and costly even to sacrifice. And yet, what is the ritualism of the formalist and the pharisaism of the self-righteous but the religion of mere empty shadow ? And when the shadows of time meet the shadows of eternity, when the gorgeous, glowing shadows of life blend with the cold, darkling shadows of *death*, then will all the hopes built upon a religion of form, of self-righteous observance, of mere religious profession, dissolve and perish, leaving nothing for the naked soul to enfold itself in but the pale shroud of deep despair and the dark pall of eternal death. Look well, my reader, to your hope of the future, and to the foundation upon which it rests. Take nothing in so momentous a matter for granted. Bring your religion to the test of God's word. Try it by the gospel of Christ. You are on your way to another, a future and eternal world—see that your chart is a sure one, your map a correct one, your light a true one. There are false charts, and there are spurious maps, and there are decoy lights, in

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the soul's travel to eternity. Heretical teaching abounds, and erroneous doctrines are rife, and superstitious worship prevails. Men are teaching from the pulpit and the press that baptism is regeneration, and that the Lord's Supper is the real body and blood of the Saviour, and that ritualism is spiritual worship; that, confession of sin is to be made to man, and that to man is given the prerogative and the power to absolve from its guilt; that, religious duties and alms-giving, and like works of human merit, render the soul worthy of, and fit for, the enjoyment of heaven. But all these are false lights kindled along the rock-bound shore of the soul's transit to eternity, by "*the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*" Your only authentic chart and your only safe map in your solemn and momentous journey to the other world is, God's word. The Gospel tells you how your person may be justified by the righteousness of Christ, how your sins may be forgiven through the blood of Christ, how peace with God may be obtained through the mediation of Christ, how your corrup-

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tions may be subdued by the grace of Christ, and how all your trials may be sustained, your griefs assuaged, and your sorrows soothed by the loving sympathy of Christ ; and that *faith*, or simply believing in Jesus, is the channel through which all these blessings become yours.

But we turn to the only true and substantial shadow—*the shadow of Christ*. “ His shadow.” The metaphor is of frequent and significant occurrence in God’s word, and in almost every instance it refers personally to Christ. One example shall suffice. “ *And a man shall be . . . as the SHADOW of a great rock in a weary land.*” This “ man ” is none other than the God-man, the divine man, Christ the Lord. Now in what point of view may we regard Christ as the shadow of His people ? The following particulars will briefly illustrate this truth.

Christ is a *protecting shadow*. He stands between the believing soul and divine justice, between the saint of God and the fiery darts of Satan, between the tempter and the tempted, between the tried saint and the fiery trial. Thus in Christ is fulfilled, as in

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Him alone it could be, the precious promise, “*There shall be a Tabernacle for a SHADOW in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.*” In this point of light how suitable and precious does Christ appear ! We needed a shadow that could effectually interpose itself between us and the law’s loud thunder and the flaming sword of justice—*that shadow is Christ.* “He was made a curse for us.” He “who knew no sin was made sin (or a sin-offering) for us.” Christ threw Himself between His Church and the righteous administration of God’s moral government. Upon Him, as their Surety, fell the crushing vengeance, the consuming fire, the bitterness of death. All this He bore for us ! Come and sit down beneath His shadow, and you are safe. Not a flash can scathe you, not a spark can kindle upon you, not a dart can wound you. Christ is your “shadow from the heat,” and in simple faith and assured peace you may repose with great delight and perfect security beneath this divine-human canopy, and gaze without fear upon the lurid lightning, and listen

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without dread to the peeling thunder. "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*"

Christ is a *refreshing shadow*. There is no real refreshment to the believing soul but from Christ. And how deep is our need of it! The eastern pilgrim travelling across the burning sands welcomes the spreading and luxuriant foliage that greets him on his way. How grateful and refreshing to him its shadow in a weary land! Such is Jesus to Zion's pilgrims. How much there is in our travel to endear to us His sacred shadow! The roughness of the way wounds us, the narrowness of the way wearies us, the trials of the way sadden us, the loneliness of the way depresses us, the heat of the way scorches us,—our mind droops, our spirits flag, our hearts faint, and our discouraged soul is "ready to halt." But Jesus interposes. Taking our hand, He gently leads us to His cross, yea, leads us to Himself! and then we sit down beneath His shadow with great delight, and find His fruit sweet to our taste. Oh, the refreshment we now find in Him! For example—

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How refreshing is *the Communion of His body and blood!* “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*” What a refreshing shadow is this! Let those testify who *by faith* eat of the body and drink of the blood of Christ, what soul-refreshment they have found beneath it. How one believing sight of Jesus, one endearing thought of His love, one close view of His cross, has dissolved their hearts into penitence, love, and praise at His feet. Absent not yourself, my reader, from this Sacred Banquet because of your unworthiness to partake. Wait not, ere you approach these simple yet expressive symbols, for self-fitness and preparation, which never can be found. The Lord, whose dying love you commemorate, and for whom your own love is expressed, asks not and expects not this at your hands. He who provides the banquet, invites and prepares the guests. The love that spread the feast, provides the festal robe. Jesus supplies His merit for your demerit, substitutes His worthiness for your unworthiness, freely gives

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and graciously imputes the righteousness that entitles you to take your place at His table and, in grateful remembrance of His atoning death, to eat and drink of His provision abundantly. Oh, let the saints on earth and the saints in glory testify to the soul refreshment found beneath *this* shadow of Christ ! Here have you fed and feasted on the fruit bending down from the tree of life to the feeblest, lowliest saint as, clustering around His board, you sought to remember Him who will remember you when He comes in all the glory of His most glorious kingdom. What soul-refreshing seasons, what heaven-attracting moments, what Christ-endearing feelings have you experienced, and how has the fragrance of your graces poured forth as the King has sat at His table, and you have bowed your head upon His breast at supper !

“ Come, let us join a joyful tune
To our exalted Lord,
Ye saints on high around His throne,
And we around His board.

“ While once upon this lower ground
Weary and faint ye stood,

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What dear refreshments have ye found
From this immortal food."

Will you then, living and professing the Saviour, turn from this sacred feast refusing obedience to His command—"Do this in remembrance of me?" When again He spreads the banquet, and you are prompted by your feelings to regard lightly the invitation, imagine that you hear the gentle accents of His winning, pleading voice saying, "Will ye also go away?" Let your heart respond, "No, Lord, to whom shall I go if I turn my back upon Thee? How can I ever cease to remember One who has done so much for my soul?"

" Gethsemane can I forget ?
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat—
And not remember Thee ?

" When to Thy cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my sacrifice !
I must remember Thee.

" Remember Thee and all Thy pains,
And all Thy love to me ;
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains
Will I remember Thee.

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“ And when these failing lips grow dumb,
And mind and memory flee,
When Thou shalt in Thy kingdom come,
Jesus, remember me.”

What refreshment, too, is found beneath
the shadow of Christ's mercy-seat! Christ is inseparably associated with every true prayer we breathe to God. In His name it is presented, through His merit it is accepted, and by His intercession it is answered. We draw near, and, lo ! we find ourselves overshadowed with a cloud ! It is the cloud of Christ's presence ! And, oh, the refreshment which it diffuses throughout our spirit ! We come weary, and find repose ; sad, and we experience joy ; weak, and our strength is renewed like the eagle's ; exhausted and faint, and we retire as giants refreshed with new wine. Sweet communion with God, believing fellowship with unseen and eternal realities, has dissipated the shadows that rested so darkly and coldly upon our hearts, and we have felt ourselves as if floating in a higher and holier region. Brother, sister, arise amid your weariness and woe, *and give yourself to prayer!* Your Father's sceptre bids

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you approach, your Saviour's blood provides your plea, the Spirit's grace gently draws you. Come and sit down beneath this shadow; sweet and refreshing will it be to your soul.

Christ is a *fruit-promoting* shadow. There are some flowerets in nature which only grow in the shade. Too rare and delicate for the sun's heat, they are often found blooming amid the shadows and snows of Alpine scenery. This is strikingly illustrative of the kingdom of grace. There are some graces of the Spirit which are seldom seen in full bloom and beauty but as the shadow covers them. The Heavenly Husbandman knows best what soil and atmosphere suits them. God therefore puts these His plants of righteousness in the shade to grow. Withdrawing them from the scorching beams of the ungodly world, and taking them apart from the feverish excitement of the religious world, He gently leads them to the Tree of life, and bids them sit beneath its shadow. There faith buds, and love blossoms, and the blossom of faith and love sets in the fruit of holiness. How seldom are the graces of patience and lowliness and submission

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found in their vigour and beauty save in the shadow of some enshrouding adversity ! God has put thee, thou suffering saint, in the lonely shade of separation, or in the chill shade of neglect, or in the vailing shade of obscurity, or in the funereal shade of bereavement, or in the darkling shade of some overshadowing trial ; but He has put thee there, thou precious floweret of His own right hand planting, to grow, to bloom, to bear fruit. It is when in separation, and neglect, and obscurity, and bereavement, and trial, He draws near and covers us with the shadow of His wings, and assures us that we are not all alone, nor all unknown, that He knoweth them that are His, that He withdraweth not His eye from the righteous, and that His encircling presence is with them in all places whither they go. Thus we learn the wisdom and the love of our heavenly Father in all His dealings. We needed the shade ! The drought of prosperity had dried up in a great measure the spring of our grace, and with it our graces drooped—for it should ever be remembered by us that when the well-spring of spiritual life in the soul is at a low ebb,

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the fruits of the spirit are painfully conscious of its decay. In the warm glow of the world's sunshine, our hearts had strayed from Him we loved. Like Jeshurun, we "grew fat and kicked." We walked distantly, self-sufficiently, and proudly. Our love to Christ chilled, our communion with God was restrained, the flesh grew strong, and the world seductive, and religious pursuits lost their attraction, and gray hairs—emblems and witnesses of spiritual declension—accumulated around us, and we knew it not. But the Lord loved us too well to permit us to remain long in this state of heart-backsliding. He saw that His tree of righteousness was unfruitful, that the plant of His own right-hand planting was sickly, that the floweret of His heart drooped, and He resolved upon its recovery. The rod is uplifted, it smites, and its stroke falls just where it was most instinctively dreaded and was most keenly felt. And now our God has brought us out of the sunshine into the shade—the shadow, as it were, of death ; and we exclaim, as of old, "*He hath led us and brought us into darkness, and not into light.*" And now we

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have found a Shadow within a shadow—the shadow of life beneath the shadow of death! The shadow of the cross, where hung, and bled, and died the “Man of sorrows,” the sympathising high priest of His Church, overshadows with its own vital, soothing, healing influence the dark, cold shadow of our adversity. Never did we feel the Saviour so sensibly near, or so unutterably precious as now. We thank Him for the dark shadows that have fallen on life’s landscape. Never before were we so conscious of spiritual growth in graces which previously were undeveloped, or, if developed, but partially visible; the graces of patience and humility, of meekness and submission, now shoot forth with a vigour, unavail a bloom and breathe a sweetness we could never have imagined, and from the depth of our heart’s deep love we exclaim, “Lord! I thank Thee as much, nay, even more, for the dark cloud-vail as for the radiant sunshine. I have learned more experimentally Thy truth, and have known more fully of Thyself in the darkness than I ever did in the light. My Christianity has deepened, my religion has become more

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real, my hope more confirmed, and my peace and joy and happiness more substantial in this one sanctified affliction than during the whole of my previous religious life. O my God, I see Thy wisdom and Thy love in placing Thy poor, sickly plant, that withered and drooped in the sun, now to grow and bloom and bear fruit in the shade. I have learned more of myself and of Thee, have been brought into closer relation with Him I love, in this isolated and dreary path than was ever my experience when the candle of the Lord shone upon my head." Rest assured, my reader, the Lord is leading you by a right way in leading you along a dark one. It is good at times to walk in the shade of the world's opinion and favour; even to be thrust aside, neglected, and forgotten by the Church. The Lord would not thus put us in the shade did He not love us, and were it not for our good. His darkest shadows have more of sunshine in them than earth's brightest beams; His paternal frown more of real love in it than the creature's blandest smile; His severest rebukes more of tenderness than the world's softest caress.

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But the shadow of Christ!—*how fruitful is it!* Possessing a vital influence on all upon whom it falls, it quickens into life and verdure and fertility the soul so happy as to be led beneath it by the Spirit. It is then we are more personally and immediately alone with Christ. The world's din is hushed into the quietness of peace, the Church's contentions subside into the stillness of communion with God, and the fevered excitement of religious duties and engagements gives place to holy reflection, self-examination, and prayer. Never, perhaps, did the Church of God more need to sit down beneath His shadow as now! The exciting subjects of thought and the Christian activities of the age—its ecclesiastical conflicts, its theological controversies, its religious feuds—are calculated to exert a baneful and deteriorating influence upon the individual piety of the Christian and the spiritual life of the Church itself. How important, then, to retire from the close, sultry atmosphere we breathe, and sit down beneath the refreshing and invigorating shadow of Jesus. Would you, my reader, be a fruitful branch of the

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Living Vine, you must be much beneath its shade. “*Abide in me and I in you,*” says Jesus. “*As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.*” Retreating from earth’s shadows, which, alas ! are but shadows of death, we must be in closer fellowship with Him who is our life, from whom our fruit is found, and without whom we can do nothing.

This conducts us to another idea—the repose of which the Church speaks. “*I sat down* under His shadow.” It will thus be seen that not only is Christ a protecting, a refreshing, and a fruit-promoting shadow to the saints, but He is also a shadow of *rest*. Could language be more expressive of this condition of the soul—“*I sat down?*” It is the attitude of perfect repose. Look at this attitude in one or two points of view. It is the rest of *choice*. It was a repose of her own free, deliberate choosing—“*I sat down.*” Is not this the experience of all whom the Spirit has made willing in the day of His power to choose and accept the Saviour? Most assuredly. Is it not yours, my Christian reader? There was no hesitation or

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doubt when the Holy Spirit led you by the gentle yet irresistible force of His grace to receive Christ. The rebellion of your will conquered, the reluctance of your heart overcome, the enmity of your carnal mind dislodged, you exclaimed, with all the earnestness of your new-born emotions, "What have I to do any more with idols? Henceforth Christ shall have the pre-eminence. He chose me ere I made Him my choice. He loved me before I surrendered my heart. He called me, or I had never come. And now that His grace has conquered, and His Spirit has made me willing, and His love has drawn me, henceforth and for ever I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." Can you ever forget that hour? No, never! Other memories have vanished, other bright spots have faded, other joys have blended with the shadows of the tomb, but upon the hour when the angels celebrated in their nuptial song your union with Christ, the sun of glory will never set!—eternity will enshrine it in deathless light. And oh, what a repose is this! It must be experienced to be understood, and even though experimentally

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understood, it cannot be fully described. What are some of its distinctive features ? It is the repose of *certainty*. It is, in fact, the believing soul's only sure repose. Driven from billow to billow in its battle with unbelief, the believer can only rest on one object, which is Christ the Lord. As well may we expect the needle to fix at any other point of the compass than the north, as to expect that the believing soul can rest on any other object than Christ. In Christ he finds a righteousness that freely justifies ; in Christ, a pardon that fully forgives ; in Christ, grace that personally sanctifies ; in Christ, truth that combats all error, annihilates every doubt, answers every argument, and meets to its utmost the earnest, yearning inquiry trembling on a thousand lips, "*What is truth ?*" The moment the soul returns from its distant but fruitless travel, and finds Christ, it feels it has found a sounding upon which it may firmly drop its anchor—an ark within which it may fold its weary wing. Come to Christ in faith—in simple, child-like, unquestioning, faith—and you, too, will, with the Church of old, exclaim, "*I sat down*

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under His shadow with great delight, and found rest for my weary spirit."

It is the *repose of love*. Love will never rest but on the object of its choice. Christ is the one object of the regenerate soul's true love. We have sought repose beneath other shadows of the heart's love, and they refreshed us the while ; but when the morning's sun arose, lo ! like the prophet's pleasant shade, they had vanished as in a night ! Oh, how unsubstantial and fleeting, though fond and precious, the human shadows we have loved ! Even while we pressed them to our hearts, admiring their beauty, and rejoicing in their presence, in a moment they dissolved into the shadow of death, and disappeared within the vail of eternity ! But the Object of divine love is no mere unsubstantial, passing shadow. They who, through grace, set their hearts on Jesus, have found an object worthy of their supreme affection, concerning whom they can with the Psalmist say, "*My heart is FIXED, O God; my heart is FIXED. I will sing and give praise.*" Here true love finds its perfect repose. Here is an Object that meets all its yearnings for affec-

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tion, friendship, and sympathy. Here is love that satisfies the soul. No infirmity impairs, no change affects it. The heart that loves Jesus trembles at no passing cloud, dreads no painful vicissitude, anticipates no stroke of the fell destroyer. Removal cannot affect its love, distance cannot separate it from its object, sickness cannot imperil, death cannot shade, nor the grave vail it from our view. How triumphant the challenge of the apostle ! *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”*

Here let your love repose. It needs to rest on His love who rests on His own. Its sensitiveness is often wounded, its serenity often disturbed, its glow often shaded, and it needs just the repose and fixedness found only in Him it loves. Has sin pierced it, has guilt burdened it, has sorrow shaded it?—come and sit down beneath this tree of life, and you shall find its shadow refreshing, and its fruit sweet to your taste.

ITS FRUIT AND REPOSE.

It is also the *rest of faith*. Faith and love have a common object of rest — JESUS. They both travel to the same source, and like twin-sisters, repose on one maternal bosom. In fact, faith in Christ begets love to Christ ; and in the same degree in which we have believing transactions with the Saviour, our love to Him will increase and intensify. We love Him so little, because we know Him so little. To know Christ, is to love Him. He is a Friend towards whom an increasing acquaintance increases affection. He grows upon you. The more you know Him, the more you love Him. Now, faith delights to lie down under His shadow. Thither it travels in weariness and woe, as in joy and gladness. In the dark and cloudy day, as in the sultry heat, with its wound of sin, its burden of guilt ; with its bruised, crushed spirit, and its broken, bleeding heart ; its pressing need and its approaching troubles. Jesus is the magnet of faith. He attracts it, draws it, binds it to Himself, and simple faith clings to and has dealings with Him the more He is adored, and loved, and trusted in. Here, then, beneath this sacred shadow,

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beloved, let your faith repose. It is, perhaps, weary in its wanderings, pained by cruel unbelief, tossed from billow to billow in many a surging tide ; almost engulfed in the waves of care and sorrow ; sick and sad, weary, yearning, and footsore, and ready to halt,—let it travel to this Tree of Life, and beneath its shadow find rest. Christ is all that your faith requires. Does it need vigour ? Christ will strengthen it. Fixedness ? Christ will confirm it. Is it wounded ? Christ will heal it. Does it ask increase ? Christ will replenish it. Does it need encouragement and comfort ? Christ will say to it, “ Be it unto you according to your faith.” Is it ready to sink ? Christ will take it by the hand, and will reassure it with words of hope : “ O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ” Come, then, thou believing soul, whatever may be the measure of your faith, its trials, its tremblings, its temptations, let it lie down under His shadow with great delight, and it shall find, in a full, a present, and a loving Christ, all that it needs.

“ Jesus it owns a king,
And all-aton ing priest ;

ITS FRUIT AND REPOSE.

It claims no merit of its own,
But looks for all in Christ.

“ On Him it safely leans,
In times of deep distress ;
Flies to the fountain of His blood,
And trusts His righteousness.”

But the Church speaks *of fruit*. “ *And this fruit was sweet to my taste.*” There is no difficulty in determining whose fruit is here meant. “ *His fruit.*” How important to observe the distinction ! The Church never speaks of her own fruitfulness apart from Christ. It is more her barrenness than her fertility, her unprofitableness than her productiveness, she is wont to mention. The religionist who plumes himself on the splendour of his gifts, and boasts of the abundance of his grace, and trumpets the success of his services for Christ, encompasses himself with sparks of his own kindling, and shall lie down in sorrow ; but the most spiritually-minded and fruitful saint is he who is little in his own eyes, and like the full and ripened ear, bends the lowest to the ground. “ Lord,” exclaims the humble soul, “ I will not make mention of any fruit that I have borne, but

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of Thine only. If in my soul there beats one pulse of spiritual life, Thou hast inspired it. If there glows in my heart one spark of divine love, Thou hast kindled it. If my walk and conversation is sanctified and adorned with one bud of grace, or blossom of holiness, Thou hast formed it ; and Thou shalt have all the glory !

But it is of Christ's fruit the Church speaks. The saints of God find real sweetness in no other. You cannot live, beloved, on your own grace, or toy with your own graces. There is such a mixture of imperfection and sin with all we are and do,—the loveliest so marred, and the holiest so tainted, the gracious soul cannot extract one drop of merit from aught that springs from himself. True is it, blessedly true, that “there is a reward for the righteous ;” that holiness is happiness ; that, “if we be willing and obedient, we shall eat of the fruit of the land.” Nevertheless, the best saints have to complain that, after all they have done, they are but unprofitable servants. But how sweet is the fruit that grows upon our divine “Apple-Tree,” beneath whose ever-pleasant

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shade we sit with such ineffable delight. The fruit of His obedience and suffering, of His blood-shedding and death, of His resurrection and ascension into glory, how sweet is it to the gracious soul ! The full forgiveness of our sins by His blood, the free justification of our person by His righteousness, the sanctification of our hearts by His grace, and the upholding of our feet in His ways by His power, is blessed fruit, the real sweetness of which can only be known by its experience.

A few remarks must close this introductory chapter of our volume.

Are the gray shadows of adversity and sorrow falling thick and fast upon you ? Come and lie down beneath the Shadow of Christ; and all will be well. Or, is the shadow of death upon your eyelids, does the darkness of the tomb vail from your view the form you once so loved, and whose ashes are still so precious ? There is a place for your sad and shaded heart beneath the spreading foliage of this sacred Tree, where you may lie down in a “ quiet resting-place.” “ *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the SHADOW of the Almighty.*”

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Especially is it needful for those who are bearing the burden and heat of the day in the Lord's service to heed the invitation of Christ once addressed to His weary disciples : “*Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.*” Those who labour to bring others to rest, must themselves rest. Those who water others, must themselves be watered. Those who feed others, must themselves be nourished. Let all Christian labourers, then, look well to their own vineyard, that it be not neglected, and find time to come and lie down under Christ’s shadow, and “*rest awhile,*” lest they should have to take up the lamentation of the Church of old, “*They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*”

Remember that the fruit of this wondrous Tree bends so low that the feeblest faith may lift its hand and pluck it. This divine Tree of Life bears all manner of fruit, and at all seasons ; so that there is nourishment for every measure of grace, and for every degree of knowledge, and for every stage in the Christian life—for babes and little children, for young men, and fathers. Christ

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meets each and all, and all may eat and find His fruit sweet to their taste. Oh, what a heart-cheering and encouraging truth this is to you who have but "*tasted*" that the Lord is gracious." To have *tasted* only the graciousness of Christ puts you in a condition more exalted and enviable than that of the greatest philosopher on earth. May this be our condition and privilege?

Thus, the precious fruit that springs from Christ is not known to the gracious soul by mere report. His is the knowledge of personal and blessed experience. "*His fruit is sweet to my TASTE.* Sweet the streams that flow from His inexhaustible fulness,—sweet the gracious manifestations of His presence,—sweet the unfoldings of His love and the expressions of His sympathy,—sweet to lean upon His arm and know His power,—sweet to recline upon His bosom and feel His love. But let us not be content with this. Having *tasted*, let us press onward to know more of Christ. Be not satisfied with gathering fruit from the lower boughs of this "Tree," but ascend to the higher ones. The nearer the sun, the riper and sweeter the

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fruit. *Go forward* in your acquaintance with the doctrines of grace, and seek to eat of the “strong meat” that belongeth unto them who are of “full age.” Thus will your sanctification deepen, sin will become more hateful, self more loathed, the world more crucified, and the Saviour more precious. Then, when we shall have passed from all earth’s shadows, and even from the shadow of Christ on earth, we shall go and lie down beneath the overspreading shadow of His throne, and bask for ever in the sunshine of His glory.

“ Beneath His cooling shade I sat,
To shield me from the burning heat ;
Of heavenly fruit He spread a feast
To feed mine eyes, and please my taste.

“ Kindly He brought me to the place,
Where stands the banquet of His grace ;
He saw me faint, and o’er my head,
The banner of His love He spread.

“ O never let my Lord depart ;
Lie down and rest upon my heart ;
I charge my sins not once to move,
Nor stir, nor wake, nor grieve my love.”

THE HOLY CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE ;

OR,

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"They found Him in the temple."—LUKE ii. 46.

THERE is no object in nature more exquisitely beautiful, or richly suggestive, than a brilliant *sunrise*. Those who have watched the gorgeous spectacle as from an Alpine height have felt themselves amply repaid for the tax it imposed upon their morning slumbers. But the student of the Bible dwells with infinitely more delight upon those events in the early life of Christ which traced the day-dawn of the "Sun of Righteousness"

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upon our world. It is true but little is recorded by the inspired historian of His early years ; and still less of what may be termed the ripening of His youth into the maturity of His manhood. But the incidents that are narrated are of sufficient importance to supply ample material for thought, rich lessons for holy living, and clear indices of our Lord's future and eventful history. Entering, as we are, upon the holy and joyous commemoration of His Nativity, it may quicken our spiritual conception of the grandeur and significance of this illustrious event, if we select for our study, as one of the incidents of His life, *the early appearance of the Holy Child Jesus in the temple of Jerusalem.*

Our blessed Lord would seem to have obeyed the laws and hallowed the condition of each stage of human life. He may be said to have passed from the bloom of childhood into the worn and weird appearance of age. For, although He was only about three-and-thirty years old when He died, yet the gravity of His demeanour, and the air of sadness which He wore, together with the lines of premature age which would seem to have

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pencilled His sacred countenance,—doubtless produced by toil, privation, and grief,—imparted to Him all the resemblance of life's autumn. “Thou art not yet *fifty years old*,” was the exclamation of the Jews to the young man Christ Jesus, implying, in all probability, that He *looked* this age. But, of the consecration of *childhood* by His own remarkable passage through this interesting period of human life there can be no question. The recorded incidents of His early life, as I have remarked, are but few; and yet how significant! The sun of His being burst forth with sudden and overpowering effulgence, pouring a flood of light upon the world's darkness, and then as suddenly disappeared, as though it had gone down while it was yet day. But if it disappeared, it had not set; and if for a while its golden light withdrew, it yet left some living, lingering beams to show the path trodden by His infant feet. One of those beams will illumine these pages—*the Holy Child Jesus in the temple.*

The narrative will be familiar. Jesus, who was now about twelve years old, accompanied His parents to Jerusalem at the annual

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observance of the passover. At the termination of the festival they set out on their return to Nazareth in company, in all probability, with a large number of Jews travelling to the same city. At the close of the day, the child Jesus was missing. His parents, greatly distressed on discovering their loss, left the company and went in search of their stray child. Not finding Him in the crowd, they returned to Jerusalem, and, after three days' anxious search through the city, they at length "found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions."

A difference of opinion has existed as to the fact whether Jesus, on this memorable occasion, was a *learner* or a *teacher*—whether He was now sitting as a disciple at the feet of these Jewish doctors of the law, or, whether they were sitting as disciples at His. I am of opinion that the circumstance admits of both explanations. His reverence for the law and the prophets, which distinguished Him in after years, together with His great humility of mind, would prompt Him on this occasion to listen with lowliness and respect

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to their instructions. “ Think not that I am come to *destroy* the law or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to *fulfil*.” But, on the other hand, to suppose that He now sunk the teacher in the learner, would involve us in a difficulty in our attempt to interpret the meaning of His answer to the gentle upbraiding of His parents—“ How is it that ye sought me ? *Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business ?* ” And what was the ‘business’ thus confided by the Father to His hands ? Certainly not to be instructed in the law and the prophets, *but to reveal to mankind both Himself and His truth*. And when we read that, “ He asked them questions,” we may suppose that He but adopted a catechetical, or, as the schoolmen would term it, the Socratic mode of conveying to them the divine instruction which He had come from God to impart—thus seeking to win these doctors of the law from Judaism to Christianity, and from Moses to Himself. We may therefore infer that when Jesus sat in the midst of the doctors hearing them and asking them questions, He was illustrating both the docility of the disciple, and the

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wisdom of the teacher on this first public and instructive occasion of His early life.

Reserving for the present any further reference to the childhood of Jesus, let me proceed to notice the great event around which, as its central truth, the chief interest and instruction of this narrative gathers — CHRIST'S FIRST ADVENT to our world. Alas! that so many should make the commemoration of Christ's Birth a season of carnal festivity and social intercourse, rather than of devout study and holy praise. Instead of its being an occasion of sacred meditation and holy joy, of quickened faith and intensified love, it is with multitudes rather one of worldly amusement and sensual feasting, of “ rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness.” These are “ spots upon their feast of charity.” Approaching as we are this the greatest of sacred festivals—the commemoration of Christ's blessed Nativity—it behoves us to enter upon its observance intelligently, devoutly, soberly. I propose, then, in the remarks that will follow, to endeavour, with all simplicity and godly sincerity, to lead the mind of the reader to such a scriptural

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and spiritual view of this stupendous event—the appearing of the Son of God in the flesh—as may enhance his conception of its greatness, deepen his sense of its love, and instruct his mind in some of the precious truths learnt at Bethlehem.

The first point which presents itself, is *the fulfilment and truth of Scripture*. And the Scripture to which we especially refer as thus fulfilled is, that famous one found in the prophecy of Isaiah, (chap. ix. 6,) “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” In the course of your Bible-reading you will often have been struck with the frequent occurrence of these words, “*That the Scripture might be fulfilled.*” What a stupendous fact do these words embody—*the truth of God’s Word.* This fact is everything to us who believe. If the Bible is not divinely and plenarily inspired—if it is not from the beginning of Genesis to the last of Revelation wholly and verbally the Word of God—divine truth, all divine truth, and nothing but divine truth—then our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins. Everything that is precious to us in time, soothing in sorrow, sustaining in

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trial, hopeful in death and in eternity, is bound up in the truth, unimpeachableness, and immutability of God's Word. "Thy word is truth," is the foundation of our belief and the sheet-anchor of our hope. Beloved, you cannot press this fact to your heart with too strong confidence. It is everything to you. If this beautiful staff breaks, if this strong foundation yields, if this living spring fails, whither shall we go? But the staff will never break, and the foundation will never yield, and the spring will never fail, because it is of God. God was in the bush, and it was not consumed—He is in the Church, and it shall not be destroyed—He is in the Bible, and heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word shall not pass away. "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: *but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.*" Satan will devise every engine of power, and employ every agent of error, to shake your faith in the divinity of the Bible. He will, to accomplish his hellish purpose, use both the professed friends and the avowed enemies of revelation. But, "hold fast the profession of your faith

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without wavering." Cling to the Bible amid the surging waves as the limpet to the rock, as the drowning mariner to the plank, as the storm-tossed bark to its anchor. It will never betray your confidence, mock your expectation, or falsify your hope. In doubt and perplexity, in trial and sorrow, fly to the Scriptures of truth. Your soul's experience of their power will be your strongest evidence of their truth, and your best preservation against the assaults of its foes. Every attempt, then, of the enemies of the faith to shake your confidence, to stagger your belief, will prove but like an attempt to shatter the rock with a bubble, or to penetrate the adamant with a feather. Few books of men there are which endure the test of time and trial. When all is smooth and sunny in our experience, we can read, admire, and even revel in them. But when the season of sorrow, temptation, and darkness comes, they fail to emit one ray of light, or to distil one drop of consolation. Then we run to the Bible and find it all that we want—the pure wine unmixed with water, divine sunshine undimmed by cloud,—and learn its preciousness above all

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other books, and its value above all price. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is indelibly inscribed upon all that is human,—"Verity of verities, all is verity," is emblazoned upon every page of Inspiration. Hesitate not, then, to bring your doubts and perplexities, your sorrows and sins, to God's Word; your soul drinking from these two breasts of consolation, the Old and New Testaments, which, like the same 'nursing mother,' impart the same nourishment, both testifying of Jesus, the Saviour of sinners and the "Consolation of Israel," and both bearing witness to Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

The second thought suggested by the birth of Christ is, *His consecration of the period of childhood*. He was but a child when He sat encircled by the Jewish rabbis in the court of the temple. How impressively and condescendingly has He, by coming in the flesh, honoured and sanctified this interesting age! How significant and appropriate the title—"The Holy Child Jesus." One of the fathers observes, touching this point, "that Christ came not disdaining, nor going in any way above nature, nor breaking in His own per-

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son the law which He had set for mankind ; but sanctifying every age by the likeness it bears to Him. For He comes to save all men by Himself—all, I mean, who are by Him born again unto God—infants, and little ones, and children, and youths, and those of older age ; for the sake of infants, being made an infant, sanctifying infants : to little ones He was a little one, sanctifying those of that age, and giving them an example of godliness, righteousness, and dutiful subjection.”* How beautifully and touchingly did our Lord exhibit His peculiar interest in, and regard for, young children, when, despite the rebuke of His disciples, He took them in His arms, blessed them, and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Are we not justified by this touching incident in the life of Christ—nay, does it not come with all the solemnity and force of a positive command—in dedicating our infants to God *by prayer*, and in seeking the *early conversion* to Christ of our more intelligently and responsibly advanced

* Irenæus.

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children? Who can for a moment question it? The Church of God is yet to be more deeply instructed and more thoroughly roused upon this subject—the subject of *early conversion*. The emissaries of papal and infidel error—equally with the agents of an ungodly world—are directing their most potent batteries, and are exerting their most strenuous efforts in securing the conversion of the young to their deadly creeds and their fatal sway. The next generation will be just what the religious or the irreligious forces of the present age make it. It is of the utmost moment that pious parents, Christian ministers, evangelical guardians, Sabbath-school teachers, and gospel labourers should make the *early conversion* of the young the great object of their most vigilant, strenuous, and prayerful efforts. To this end instruction in the great doctrines of Christianity, and in the distinctive principles of the Reformation, as also in the nature of vital, experimental, and practical religion, should be simply, scripturally, and earnestly enforced. The Bible is replete with instances of early piety, which at once settle the question as to its practi-

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cability, while they hold out every encouragement to its attainment. Samuel, Josiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Timothy are among the witnesses left on sacred record to show that such piety has existed in the Church of God; and we are confirmed thereby in our belief, and are justified in stating that, through the instrumentality of godly parents, and praying teachers, and devoted ministers, such instances may exist in any dispensation of the Church and in any age of the world, and may exist—and would exist if sought in the prayer of faith—*now*. We are speaking in these pages of that sacred and illustrious example—the Holy Child Jesus in the temple. While this fact stands recorded in the Bible, we have both the warrant and the encouragement to seek on behalf of our offspring, the early converting grace of the Spirit, “that our sons may be as plants, grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace”—that they may be “planted in the house of the Lord, and flourish in the courts of our God.” Let it not be supposed that the doctrines of the gospel

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are too recondite, or that its precepts are too spiritual, for the comprehension of young children. It is this fatal mistake that has led in so many instances to the abandonment of the soil to other more earnest but soul-destroying labourers. Children for the most part have a quicker understanding and a more tender conscience than many of riper years. I could fill these pages with examples. Let one or two suffice:—

An ungodly father, accompanied by his little son, went into a corn-field one Sabbath morning, when all others had gone to the house of God, for the purpose of robbing it of grain. Before entering the field, he rested on the fence, and cast his eyes around to ascertain if there were any one near that would be likely to notice him. Finding no one, he entered upon his work of depredation. While gathering the corn, his little son thus accosted him, “Pa, what made you look round so when you were on the fence?” “Be still,” replied the father. “But what made you do so, Pa?” “To see if there was anybody in sight,” was the reply. “And doesn’t anybody see you, Pa?” “No.”

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“But can’t God see you in the corn-field, Pa ?” This reproof was enough. The father’s conscience was touched. The idea of an omniscient God roused him, and he left the field and his ill-gotten grain, and returned to his home a wiser and better man.

Another instance. A godly mother was giving vent to the anguish of her lacerated heart upon receiving intelligence of the death of her husband at a distance. Her sorrow was intense, and she refused to be comforted. Her little child inquired the cause of her grief. The reply was, “To think that you are a little orphan girl.” “But what is an orphan, Ma ?” “Your Papa is dead, my dear. You will have no Papa to take care of you any more.” The little thing covered her face with both hands for a moment, and then lifting her moistened eyes to her weeping mother, said, “Ma, don’t cry so ; is God dead, too ?” It was the message of God. Out of the mouth of a babe and suckling the God of all comfort; even the God of the widow and the Father of the fatherless, spake sweet consolation and hope to that widow’s broken, bleeding heart.

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One more fact shall suffice. In a New England town, where it had formerly been the practice to urge all moral persons to unite with the Church, lived a wealthy man who had in this way become a professor of religion, but alas! a professor only, having the form without the experimental and practical power of godliness; so that he lived in the entire and sinful neglect of *family worship*. On one Sabbath afternoon, after returning from the funeral of a child, where the clergyman had taken occasion to urge upon parents the necessity of faithfulness in giving their children religious instruction, and in accompanying their instruction by their prayers—as the family to which we have alluded were sitting at the tea-table, a little daughter interrupted the conversation by inquiring, in the simplicity of her heart, “Ma, did not Mr —— say at the funeral that Christians should pray in their families, and talk to them about religion?” “Yes,” was the reply. “Well, Ma, *Pa does not do it.*” This appeal was an arrow of conviction to the father’s heart, resulting in his hopeful conversion to God, and the erection of a

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family altar where God was worshipped morning and evening. Who, in view of these facts, will for a moment doubt that young children can understand the truth, feel the power, and recognise the obligations of true religion? Truly, “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise.”

But, in this our faith’s travel to Bethlehem to see this great sight which has come to pass there—the birth of the Holy Child Jesus,—we who are of full age are instructed in some of the greatest and most precious truths of our Christian faith. In the first place, the doctrine of the *true Humanity of our Saviour* is thus vividly brought before us. In this doctrine, lies the great mystery of godliness—that God should take up into union with Himself the nature of man; that the Word—the Eternal Logos—should become flesh. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” “God was manifest in the flesh.” We attempt not to unravel this great mystery, to fathom this awful profound—or to explain, still less to understand, the *mode* of the Incarnation. Enough for us

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that God's word declares it—that it was essential to our salvation, and that its believing reception is a true mark of those who are born of God. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." Behold, then, the grace and love displayed in this wonderful stoop of the Son of God. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We behold in the Humanity of our Lord a Reservoir of all saving truth, of all divine grace, and of all rich consolation. Upon that humanity, so holy and pure, met all our sins, curse, and condemnation. It was bruised and put to grief for us. For us it was bowed with sorrow; for us scourged and spit upon; for us crowned with thorns, mocked, and insulted; for us it was led to Calvary, tortured, bled, and put to death. Oh, how has our nature been ennobled and yet abased, dignified and yet abused, bathed with glory and yet covered with shame in the Person of the Son of God! Oh, what blessing, inconceivable, indescribable, flows

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from the humanity of our Lord, thus so humbled, so crushed, so slain ! Its real power and sweetness can only be fully exhibited under the pressure of the wine-press. It must be subjected to trial, must pass through the furnace, must be crushed and bruised, ere its sweetest fragrance could be breathed or its greatest power be felt. The human nature of our Lord was holy, essentially and entirely holy, free from all taint of sin. And yet it bore sin. Upon it God made to meet all the transgressions of His elect Church. It could come in contact with sin and not be defiled, because it was essentially holy. It could pass through the searching furnace of temptation, and come forth unscathed by the fire because it was impeccably pure. The idea has been broached by those who have strongly contended for a theory closely bordering on the idea of our Lord's sinfulness, that the assault of a temptation supposed the existence of a liability to succumb to the temptation. Never was reasoning more unsound and illogical. We ask, How was it that Adam fell ? He was pure and sinless, and yet he was tempted. There

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was no sin in Adam, no tinder upon which the spark might light and the flame be enkindled. Why, then, did he succumb to temptation and fall? Because God made him free to stand or fall. God withdrew His power, and he yielded to the tempter's assault. But when the same Enemy came to our Lord, and shot at Him with arrows drawn from the same full quiver, and sped by the same malignant hand, he found no sin in Him. How true and impressive the words of Jesus—“The prince of this world cometh, *and hath nothing in me*. Nothing by which he can accomplish his malicious design—nothing of evil he can allege—nothing or sin upon which he can work.” Precious truth is this to the soul that finds nothing but sin and all manner of evil in its own self, but yet believably and humbly trusts in the one sin-atoning sacrifice of the sinless Saviour.

Not the least precious truth we learn at Bethlehem is, *the oneness of the Son of God with all the instincts and circumstances of our nature*—the perfect identity of His humanity, though entirely sinless, with ours, though entirely tainted with sin. The humanity of our Lord was not human because it was more

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holy than ours. In a former work * I have endeavoured fully to show that *sin* was not a *necessary* element of humanity, that it did not enter into our original creation, and that our nature would be all the more human, and therefore all the more ennobled, were sin entirely extirpated from our being. Our Lord's humanity, then, was essentially identical with ours in all but its sin. Thus we read—"As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also took part of the same." "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." And why, among other reasons, this perfect identity of His humanity with ours? Even that from this well-spring, pure and undefiled, might flow a stream of sympathy which should soften, soothe, and mollify ours in all the sufferings and sorrows it meets with in its travel through this vale of conflict and of tears. Thither, then, repair, believer in Jesus, with the sin, the burden, and infirmity that clings to you, with the sorrow that bows, with the disease that wastes, with the wound that bleeds, and

* "The Sympathy of Christ with Man; its Teaching and its Consolation." Nisbet & Co.

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with the spirit that mourns and weeps in secret places. Jesus is touched with the feeling of your sorrow and your infirmity. From the shrine of Bethlehem's manger shall flow a brother's tender sympathy—even the Brother born in that lowly place for your adversity. Over that stable-door is written, in words which only faith can see and read, “IMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.” God with us in our sin-burdened nature, God with us in our sorrow-stricken nature, God with us in our Satan-tempted nature, God with us in our sick, suffering, and bruised nature. Let us with the shepherds now go even unto Bethlehem, and “see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.” Let us with the wise men from the East, “fall down and worship Him, open our treasures, and present unto Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh”—the *Christmas* offering to Jesus of a contrite, believing, and loving heart.

Yet another precious truth we learn. *Where did Joseph and Mary in their anxious search for the lost child at length find Him?* Failing in all other places, they at length directed their steps to the temple, and found

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Him there ! Thither we, too, must repair. Weary and disappointed, perhaps, in our search, how often have we found the Lord in the sanctuary where His name is recorded, where His gospel is proclaimed, and where His people assemble together to sing praises to His name. But, be it the public sanctuary or the private closet where the soul is alone with God, Jesus is there waiting to welcome and to bless. We have gone in weariness, and have found in Him rest ; in grief, and have found Him the “Consolation of Israel ;” in perplexity, and have found Him the “Wonderful Counsellor.” He has soothed and comforted us, has turned our water into wine, our sorrow into joy, has untangled our web, and has brought us out of a strait into a large place, and we have exclaimed, “*I have found* Him whom my soul loveth.” Of what infinite importance that those who occupy pulpits should faithfully and fully preach the Lord Jesus Christ ! There will always be those present who have come to the temple in earnest, anxious search for the Holy Child Jesus, inquiring of the watchman, “Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth ?” What, if

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through our *Christless* ministry they should not find Him! What, if they should be compelled to retire from the sanctuary mournfully exclaiming, “They have *taken away my Lord*, and I know not where they have laid Him.” How great *their* loss ! how terrible *our woe* !

We learn another precious truth—that, with the Holy Child Jesus in the arms of our faith, the *sting and dread of death is removed*. What a touching spectacle that of good old Simeon in the temple, when the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the law—“Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” How many of the Lord’s people will read this page, who, all their lifetime have been in bondage through the fear of death. But why, beloved, this bondage? Why this fear? Jesus died to break your every fetter—to break even this, the last, the latest, and most solemn one. He took upon Himself the bondage, the fetters, the imprisonment, that you, His loved and

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ransomed one might be released. Because He has died, there is a sense in which you, blood-bought one, *cannot die*, yea, shall not His even *see* death ! “ Whoso liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this ? ” “ If a man keep my saying *he shall never see death.* ” Christ has *abolished* death, leaving to His saints nothing but its *shadow !* Go forth, then, sick and drooping one, and meet the ‘last enemy’ without dread ! With the Holy Child Jesus enfolded to thy believing and loving breast, thou shalt not *see death*, but Jesus only. Death, through Christ, shall lose all its terror, as through Him it has lost all its sting. And as thou passest down the valley, thou shalt wake its echoes with thy song—

“ Jesus, the vision of Thy face
Hath overpowering charms ;
Scarce shall I feel death’s cold embrace
With Christ within my arms.”

What a holy and impressive lesson for *pious youths* does the subject of these pages teach ! Our Lord was still a young man when He finished as a faithful servant, as an obedient Son, the business intrusted to

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His hands. And yet His worn and aged look bore witness to His faithful, untiring devotion to His Father's business. We have all a work to do for God, a testimony to bear for Christ. Our Divine Lord and Master has given "to every man his work." And to each youth called early by this grace, His loving command is, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." Let your grateful and responsive heart inquire, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Show me my mission, open to me the door of service, and then give me grace to enter and labour for Thee,—however humble my work, or obscure my sphere, or unrewarded my toil, if Thou art but glorified." Be up, then, and doing in your Lord's vineyard. Why stand ye all the day idle? There is no lack of service for souls, and for Christ. Our Sabbath schools need teachers—the highways and hedges of our cities and towns demand evangelists—our pulpits lack ministers—and the foreign field cries aloud for missionaries. "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few." And what, though like your Lord and Master you early consume in this

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blessed service—what though your locks become prematurely silvered—your countenance becomes less blooming—your browless smooth—your features stamped with an early expression of care and thoughtfulness—your spirit less light and your heart less buoyant—great and consolatory will be the reflection that you employed the *first* of your life and the *best* of your powers for Jesus, and the well-being of your fellow-man. Rich will be your present happiness, and bright your future career. Your work soon done, your rest will soon be gained, and your crown sooner won.

Unconverted youth ! these pages have a message from God unto you. For whom are you labouring, and for what are you living ? Is it for sin, and for Satan, and for self ? or is it for God, and for Christ, and for man ? Are you living for time or for eternity ? for this world, or for the world that is to come ? Decide this momentous question with a certain, and a solemn, endless future before you. Awake to righteousness and sin not. “ Flee youthful lusts.” Go to Bethlehem, and learn from Jesus the happiness of a *holy life*, and the blessedness of an *early consecration* to

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God. You will find ‘the way of transgressors hard,’ and the ‘wages of sin death.’ But, on the other hand, ‘Wisdom’s ways, ways of pleasantness, and all her paths, paths of peace.’ Choose you whom you will serve!

“ Let not, O generous youth, thy mind recoil
At transitory pain, or manly toil ;
Nor fondly linger in the painted vales,
Nor crop the flowers, nor woo the summer gales,
Heedless of Pleasure’s voice, be thine the care
Nobly to suffer and willingly to dare ;
While Jesus waves on high the radiant prize,
And each firm step but lifts thee to the skies.”

The last truth to which we refer is one most appropriate and consolatory to bereaved parents *mourning the infant dead*. I think we may fairly infer from this subject *the eternal safety of all those who die in infancy*. Our Redeemer was once Himself a little child. He manifested a peculiar interest in, and a warm affection for, little children. He commanded them to be brought to Him. He invited them to come to Him. He placed His hands upon their head, and blessed them. He said, “ Of such is the kingdom of heaven. In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my

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Father." And then He went to Calvary and died for them. What need we more? All who die in infancy are saved—not because they are innocent of sin—not because of holy parentage—not because of baptismal dedication—not because they knew not good or evil—for none of these things are infants saved; but they are saved through electing love, and sovereign mercy, and the precious blood of Christ. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but the name of the Holy Child Jesus. And through that One Name all who die in infancy—even "infants which never saw light,"* whose spirits passed away amid the perils of their transit to our world—go to heaven and join the infant choir, and sing "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Are there, then, *infant choirs* in heaven? Oh yes!

"The harp of heaven
Had lack'd its least, but not its meanest string,
Had children not been taught to play upon it,
And sing, from feelings all their own, what men
Nor angels can conceive of creatures born

* Job iii. 16.

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Under the curse, yet from the curse redeem'd,
And placed at once beyond the power to fall."

There are few events of human life which pierce the soul as with a sword more keenly than, *the death of an infant*. It was, perhaps, the first-born. It had been long desired, fondly looked for, joyously welcomed, and tenderly cherished. It had, probably, arrived at that age in which the first beam of intelligence and love played upon its infant brow. It has begun to discriminate between objects around it, and to discover that on earth it had but one deity—its ever-present *mother*; and but one heaven—that mother's bosom. But sickness seized it, and, like a snowdrop smitten by autumn's early frost, it faded, drooped, and died. It lived—

" To wake each tender passion,
And delightful hopes inspire ;
Died to teach us resignation,
And direct our wishes higher.'

But not lost is that faded flower.

" A lovely bud, so soft and fair,
Call'd hence by early doom ;
Just sent to show how sweet a flower
In Paradise would bloom."

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The consolations appropriate to your bitter sorrow, bereaved and sorrowing parent, are many and precious. Your little one is now with Jesus, once the Holy Child. It has fled from sin and suffering and gloom to a world where all is pure and blissful and bright. Its embryo being has reached a full development, its love is deeper, its mind is larger, its bliss is greater than the most cultivated intelligence upon earth. It knows more and feels more than the loftiest angel in heaven—itself an angel. A redeemed spirit, it sees and understands more of the glory of God and the love of the Saviour in redemption than the flaming cherubim bending for ages in profound study over the mercy seat. Jesus has but transferred the little daisy from your bosom to His own—and you shall find it there again. Thither let your affection travel. The Shepherd has gathered your lamb to His arms that you might follow Him more closely. Press hard after Christ, and soon you and your little one shall meet in glory—and meet forever! “It is well with the child.” Let your bleeding, sobbing heart respond—“IT IS WELL.” “Thy will, not mine, be done!”

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“ When I can trust my all with God,
In trial’s fearful hour,
Bow all resign’d beneath His rod,
And bless His sparing power ;
A joy springs up amid distress,
A fountain in the wilderness.

“ Oh ! to be brought to Jesus’ feet,
Though sorrows fix me there,
Is still a privilege ; and sweet
The energies of prayer,
Though sighs and tears its language be,
If Christ be nigh, and smile on me.

“ An earthly mind, a faithless heart,
He sees with pitying eye ;
He will not let His grace depart ;
But, kind severity,
He takes a hostage of our love
To draw the parent’s heart above.

“ There stands our child before the Lord,
In royal vesture dress’d ;
A victor ere he drew the sword,
Ere he had toil’d, at rest.
No doubts his blessed faith bedim,
We know that Jesus died for him.

“ Oh, blessed be the hand that gave ;
Still blessed when it takes.
Blessed be He who smites to save,
Who heals the heart He breaks.
Perfect and true are all His ways,
Whom heaven adores, and death obeys.”

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“Behold how He loved him!”—JOHN xi. 36.

NEVER did our blessed Lord appear more completely like Himself as when, dissolved in tears, clad with power, and glowing with love, He stood by the grave of Lazarus. It would seem as though this was His most befitting place. He had come from a state of pre-existent glory to destroy death, and him that had the power of death. He had come to unbar the grave, to restore life, and to blend

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His sacred sympathy with man's deep woe. And now, on an occasion entering deeply into His own personal feelings, and in the presence of competent witnesses—some fortified with scepticism, others warped with prejudice, yet others more with hearts bursting with grief—He presents one of the most touching and signal displays of His power as God, and of His love and sympathy as man, which marked His illustrious and eventful life. Let us bend our devout thoughts to the scene before us. One feature alone will engage our attention—that one enough to employ our study and wake our praise through eternity—the LOVE which Christ illustrated and displayed at the grave of Lazarus : “ Behold how He *loved* him.” I am not about to present for your study an affection alien from yourself—a love in which *you* have no share. The love which Christ exhibited for His deceased friend—which first bedewed and then unsealed his grave — enfolds within its embrace and pillows upon its bosom alike each member of His elect and redeemed Church ; and if you believe that Jesus died and rose again, if He is all your salvation and all your

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desire, then I am about to illustrate *a love* in which *you* have a personal, inalienable, and most precious interest.

"Behold how He LOVED him!" Such was the exclamation of the Jews as they gazed with awe and wonder upon the tears of Jesus. They resolved the whole scene into *love*. Blinded as they were to His Messiahship, and prejudiced against His religion, yet the *love* of the Saviour, which had now found so touching and sympathetic an outlet, inspired their wonder and awoke their praise. This exclamation of the Jews was but an echo of the expressive declaration which introduces the narrative, "Now Jesus LOVED Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Jesus *loved* them. He loved them from everlasting. He loved them when He called them by His grace. He loved them in their domestic relation, and His love now culminates at the grave. What are some of the leading features of Christ's love as displayed on the occasion of this bereavement, and which, in similar manifestations, embraces all His disciples in all places? Oh, that while we meditate upon this *great love* with which Jesus

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loves us, the theme may enlighten our minds, warm our hearts, and take captive every power, thought, and affection for the Saviour. Turn we now to the instructive incident.

The first feature of Christ's love which it exhibits is seen in *the delay* which attended His coming to the sisters in the earliest stage of their anxiety. Lazarus was sick, but Jesus was not there. This we find in the sixth verse, “When He heard therefore that he was sick, *He abode two days still in the same place where He was.*” It was for this apparent neglect on the part of Christ that Martha in her impassioned and impetuous grief thus gently chided Him, “Lord, *if thou hadst been here,* my brother had not died.” But the Lord had a reason for His conduct, which He thus condescendingly explains, “I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, *to the intent ye may believe.*”

What a striking and instructive feature in the Lord's love is presented to us here—the *delay* which often attends His coming to His people's help. We should have supposed that the moment Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, and that his sisters were filled with alarm, He

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would not have hesitated in presenting Himself at the door of an abode which He had often visited when bathed in sunshine, but which He now deserts when enshrouded in gloom. But oh, how replete with instruction is this incident of the narrative. It was the *delay of love*—what a holy lesson of Christian experience! If the Lord sees proper to suspend for a time His help, to postpone for a season His coming, He has reasons for His conduct, which do not in the slightest degree contravene His wisdom, or the great, the tender love, wherewith He loves us. And yet how apt are we to misinterpret this delay, and call in question His love when its manifestation is for a moment suspended. This was the case with the Church of old, “Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,” (Isa. xlix. 14.) But how does God meet this charge?—by reproof?—by indignation? Oh no! He meets it like Himself, gently, lovingly, touchingly,—“Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, *yet will I not forget thee.* Behold, I have graven thee

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upon the palms of my hands ; thy walls are continually before me.” If possible, still more touching are the accents of His faithful, unchangeable love towards His people in those remarkable words found in the 54th chapter of the same prophecy : “ For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.” Is there a stage in your experience, my reader, corresponding with this ? Is there a mysterious pause, a solemn silence, a strange delay on the part of God in His dealings with you ? Is there a tarrying of the vision, a hiding of His power, a veiling of His purpose ? No immediate response to prayer, no divine interposition on your behalf, no joy or comfort or hope imparted ? Does God seem deaf to your entreaty, Jesus ignorant of your position, or indifferent to your distress ? And are you ready, like the agonised sister, to misinterpret His conduct, and to chide His delay ? Go to Bethany and learn that the Lord, in this delay, in coming to your help is but waiting

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the *appointed* and the *best* time to interpose on your behalf. He is but concealing His purpose to make your deliverance appear all the more divine, His sympathy all the more tender, His love all the more faithful. The darkness which, for a moment, obscures the sun of His love will, when the cloud shall have withdrawn, but deepen its splendour and heighten its effulgence. He is veiling His designs of mercy and His loving-kindness, that when He does manifest Himself, He may be all the more glorious in your eyes and precious to your heart ; while you will take a lower place in the dust, instructed, disciplined, sanctified, by that very silence which you thought so mysterious, and by that very delay which you deemed so unkind. God knows your present position ; Jesus is not indifferent to your present sorrow, and will appear on your behalf. He is cognisant of the need that presses, of the sickness that alarms, of the bereavement that crushes ; and only waits the ordained, the best time to come to your help, the time that will give you the most touching, overwhelming demonstration of the great love wherewith He loves you

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“ For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie : though it tarry, *wait for it* ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry,” (Hab. ii. 3.)

We find another characteristic of the love of Jesus in the *friendship* which subsisted between Him and Lazarus. “ Our *friend* Lazarus sleepeth,” said the Lord. The love of Christ is *the love of friendship*. There is something exquisitely sweet and costly in the affection of a true, loving, confiding friend. Real friendship is one of the few blessings of our humanity which sin, though it has tainted and impaired, has not entirely crushed out. But where shall we find a friendship like Christ’s, so pure and unselfish, so constant and real ? There is no sin or infirmity in Jesus. He was without sin. Purer than light flowing from the sun, or water from the spring, is all that emanates from Christ. We cannot inhale earth’s sweetest flower, or sip its purest stream, or take to our bosom the choicest friend God has given us, and not find a secret something which, in a measure, lessens its enjoyment. But all the blessings which we have in Jesus partake of the pure, benevo-

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lent source from which they flow, and are perfect; and whatever may be the smiting of His rod, the utterance of His voice, the movement of His hand, it but reflects the holy and loving nature from whence it springs. The love of Jesus thus toward you is the love of a Friend possessing all the attributes both of a Divine and human friendship. "I have called you *friends*." He admits us to the confidence and affection of His heart, and asks, in return, that we reciprocate the same, and admit Him to ours. Oh, what a Friend is the Lord Jesus! how little we know of the reality, depth, and constancy of His friendship! how faintly we believe in it, how slow to employ it, how ready to misinterpret it, how prone to wound it! And yet never was there *such* a friend as Christ—a Friend loving us at all times, ever showing Himself friendly—yea, a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Yes! "closer than a brother." A brother's heart, in your adversity, may be hardened, his door closed, his love and sympathy alienated, or else, with a will, he may be powerless to aid you. The wise man saith, "Go not into *thy brother's house* in the day

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of thy calamity : for better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off,” (Prov. xxvii. 10.) But Jesus is that Friend who more than takes a brother’s place. He is both a *Friend* loving at all times, and a *Brother* born for adversity.

“ A Friend more tender, true,
Than brother e’er can be :
Who, when all others bid adieu,
Remains the last to flee ;
Who, be their pathway bright or dim,
Deserts not those who turn to Him.”

Another feature of the Lord’s love as illustrated in the history of Lazarus is, its *resurrection power*. Jesus said to Martha, “ Thy brother shall rise again.” God often sees fit to write the sentence of *death* upon His promises and upon our blessings. The Bible is replete with examples of this. Perhaps, the most eminent and instructive one is that of Abraham. God made him a great promise, viz., that he should be the father of many nations, and that in his seed all the nations of the world should be blessed. But before this promise was fulfilled, age was to impair all the means naturally leading to its accom-

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plishment. " Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Thus did God write the sentence of *death* upon this great and precious promise before He accomplished it. And even after its accomplishment, and the son of promise was given, God commanded him to "offer up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Thus God, as it were, wrote the sentence of death, first upon the *promise*, and then upon the *blessing*, after the promise was fulfilled. He may deal thus with you—ask the surrender of your 'Isaac,' and when obediently made, yield it back to you again. And was not this the case with the patriarch Joseph? Long before the vision of the sheaves should be realised, he was to be sold as a slave and imprisoned as a criminal, God thus writing death upon the vision. And so was it with David, king of Israel. God promised him a kingdom, and gave command to the prophet to anoint him king. But before the promise

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is fulfilled, it must apparently die. David is thrust out, became a fugitive and a wanderer from the vengeance of Saul, is hunted upon the mountains like a partridge, and hides himself in the dens and caves of the wilderness, like a traitor. And thus, too, was it with Job. The sentence of death must be inscribed upon children, and upon substance, and upon health, and upon all his comforts, before God's purpose of love was accomplished in “ blessing his latter end more than his beginning.” And take that illustrious example of this mode of God's dealing presented to us in the life of our blessed Lord. How truly did the sentence of death pass upon Him ere “God highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name.” He must first be made of no reputation, must take upon Him the form of a servant, must be despised, rejected, insulted, slain. All this must be before He is glorified. Thus was fulfilled His own words, “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except an ear of wheat fall to the ground *and die*, it abideth alone ; but *if it die* it bringeth forth much fruit.” Such are some of the illustrations of this truth that, before God

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fulfils a promise, or bestows a blessing, He often seals it with the impress of *death*. But then follows the glorious *resurrection*! In all the cases we have thus cited, the bringing back to *life* of the promise and of the blessing, followed the *death* which God wrote upon all. Beloved, there is a resurrection power in Christ's great love to us. He may permit—as in the case of Lazarus—the precious blessing to *die*; but, as in his case, He can come and stand by the grave that entombs it, and with one word raise it up to life again. Deem not, then, your mercy gone, your blessing lost, when death seems to veil it from your view. There is the *germ* of an imperishable life in every new covenant, blood-purchased mercy, which no death can kill, and which no grave can retain. God hides it for a while that *He* may take its place. Christ buries it that *He* may be our All-in-all. And when the holy lessons are learnt, and God takes His rightful place, and Jesus has the pre-eminence in our hearts, the love of the Lord will give us back our dead and entombed mercy. What a glorious foreshadowing have we here of our personal,

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happy, and eternal re-union with the holy dead ! The sentence of death has passed upon them—the grave contains them—the veil of the invisible world conceals them from our view. But, at the Lord’s second coming, His trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will rise first, and then will come the complete re-union and the perfect fellowship, when the risen body is re-united to the glorified spirit, and all the saints, clad in their resurrection-robes, will meet, recognise, and banquet together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Yes, wait but the Lord’s time, and your smitten mercy shall quicken into life again, your lost joy shall be restored, your departed happiness shall return, and your buried hope shall rise from the tomb all the brighter for its transient eclipse. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

Another feature of Christ’s love most touching and marvellous, as illustrated by this narrative—is, *its sympathy*. “Jesus wept.” These are among the most wonderful words recorded in the Bible. They mark the most

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exquisitely tender, touching, and expressive incident in His whole life. God has constituted us *emotional* beings. He has not only endowed us with intellect, but also with *sensibility*. He has given a *head* to think, and equally a *heart* to feel. The religion of Jesus, as embodied in His own life, was not intended to congeal the fine feelings of our nature, to crush and annihilate the sweet, tender sensibilities of our being, to convert us into monsters. His religion is not the religion of stoicism. It is the religion of God, and is therefore the religion of *love*. It is the religion of Incarnate love, of Him who left the realms of glory and tabernacled in this vale of tears, who exchanged the anthems of angels for the sighs and groans and tears of men, who was laid in a manger and sorrowed in Gethsemane—who died upon the cross, and left the lustre and fragrance of His risen life in the tomb. The gospel of Christ does not therefore petrify our sensibilities, forbid our feelings, or chide us when we go to the grave to weep there. “Jesus wept,”—wept from emotion, wept from sympathy. Is there a more consolatory, soothing view

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of Christ's love than this ?—it is a compassionate, sympathising, weeping love. “ We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” “ Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest.” He is touched by our infirmity, sympathises with our sufferings, weeps with us in our bereavement. His sympathy is of the highest, purest type. No taint of sin mars it—no element of selfishness warps it—no ingredient of weakness impairs it. It never wearies or slumbers, it never chills or forgets. It entwines with our every cross, attaches to our every burden, and frosts with sparkling light each darkling cloud. It is not the vapid sentiment of fiction, nor the morbid sympathy of romance. It is a divine-human reality—the sympathetic love of the Incarnate God. Let your faith, then, repose with confidence on the reality of Christ's sympathy with your grief. Deal not with it as a fable, but as a fact, a gospel fact, an actuality in the experience of all the afflicted, suffering members of His body. Oh how sacred and precious are the tears of

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divine love, the tears of Jesus ! Soothed and sustained by such a sympathy as Christ's, we may well drink meekly the cup our Father mingles ; we can well afford to be severed from all other sympathy, and weep out our sorrow in lonely places.—Jesus weeping with us by the couch of languor, by the bed of darkness, and at the grave of buried love. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, refuse not this cup of consolation which the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, would give you—the sympathy of your Lord and Saviour, your Friend and Brother in the time of your calamity. Yield yourself to its irresistible power, and it will draw you submissively to His feet, and hush to rest your sobbing heart upon His bosom.

But there is a *practical lesson* taught us in the tears of Jesus, which we must not overlook. If there is any one thing in the saints of God more unlike Christ than another, it is a hard, unfeeling, unsympathising spirit towards *others* —the spirit that looks coldly upon those who through sinful infirmity may have erred : who have been overtaken by a fault and have fallen—or, who are enduring some severe per-

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secution for truth,—or, are bearing some heavy cross for Jesus,—or, are passing under the correcting rod of their heavenly Father. Oh, did we drink more deeply into the spirit of Christ, were we more like Him, patient and gentle, tender and loving, we should go forth among the frail, the afflicted, the mourning, bearing the honoured title of, “ Sons of Consolation.” Let us cease, then, to censure and condemn, to reveal the shame, and speak of the faults and frailties of others ; and, in the spirit of self-condemnation, let us, like Jesus, learn to weep with those that weep, while we rejoice with those that rejoice. Then shall we be as the dew in all places whither the Lord directs our steps—we shall support the weak, and raise the fallen, we shall strengthen those who are combating with infirmity, and cheer on those who are struggling against sin ; we shall sweeten with honey the cup of gall, and gild with sunshine the cloud of woe, and so prove ourselves true disciples of Him who took upon Him our sorrows, bare our sicknesses, and who went about doing good. Does Jesus weep with *you* ? Go thou and weep with *others* !

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One more feature. The love of Jesus is a *spiritual, life-restoring love*. This is beautifully brought out in the words which He addressed to Martha, "Thy brother shall *rise again*." The love of Jesus is the love of essential life: what a thought is this! what a view it gives us of the reality, power, and preciousness of this love. *It restores to life*. What love other than a Divine, Essential love could do this? In its spiritual sense how true and blessed is this fact. Are we truly converted? Are we *living souls*? Has the life-giving love of Jesus wakened us from our spiritual sleep, unsealed our grave, and said to us "Live?" In a word, is Christ our life? "Thy brother shall rise again." Is the soul of him you love wrapped in the profound sleep of moral death? Has nothing prevailed to raise it? Has warning failed? has threatening failed? has judgment failed? has mercy failed? Have the thunders of the law rolled, and the lightnings of justice flashed over that grave, and it still remains unopened? Have the beams of goodness shone upon it, and the dews of mercy distilled upon it, and is it still sealed? Now let

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Jesus draw near, and with tears of compassion like those which He wept over Jerusalem, and with a voice like that which raised Lazarus from the sleep of death, address Himself to the spiritual resurrection of the dead, and thy brother—thy long sinning, long dead, long buried brother—shall rise—and the voice of life-giving love shall do it.

The power of Christ's life-giving love is not less exhibited in the *providential* dealings of God in our history. I venture once more to recur to this thought, so important is it,—God often sees fit in infinite wisdom and righteousness to write the sentence of death upon His promises and upon our blessings. In the words of the apostle, “We have the *sentence of death* in ourselves,” and there is the sentence of death upon the blessings, upon the promises, and upon all the means leading to their fulfilment. Is God thus dealing, beloved, with you? Is the blessing dead? has the sentence of death passed upon the promise? Is the barrel of meal failing, the cruse of oil exhausting? Is the human arm upon which you so fondly leaned power-

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less in death? and the friend upon whom you so long relied gone? Listen to the words of love as they flow from the Saviour's lips, "Thy brother shall rise again." His mercy, beloved, is not dead, but sleepeth. The promise is not dead, but slumbereth; there is *life* in the blessing—there is immortality in the promise, because there is life Essential, restoring life in the Promiser. That mercy enshrouded by the shadows of the tomb—that mercy once possessed but now gone—that promise once given but still delayed, has enfolded within it a deathless being, and the resurrection-power of the Saviour's love shall restore it again to life, all the more loved, loving, and precious, by the very discipline which for a while veiled it from your view. Thus the love of Christ possesses essential life within itself, imparting life to all it touches. It will fulfil the promise upon which you rest, even though the sentence of death be written upon all the means which lead to its fulfilment. He will restore to you the blessing which long delay in coming to your help seemed for a while to have robbed you. "*Thy brother shall rise again.*"

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Thus Jesus gave back to Martha and Mary their dead and interred brother. Oh, what *a blessing* to them now was the very *loss* of the blessing they mourned ! They never knew so much of Jesus as they learnt during those four days that Lazarus lay in his winding-sheet within the tomb. A lifetime of divine and holy teaching, of spiritual and experimental experience, was compressed within the space of those four days of bereaved grief. Beloved reader, the Lord intends that *the very loss* of your mercy shall be a greater blessing to you than the possession of the mercy lost ! If the Holy Spirit sanctify it, if it lead you closer to God, if Jesus steps in and fills the void, you shall be richer and holier and happier than when you once clasped the now vanished and buried blessing to your heart. He intends by its *very removal* to enlarge your experience, to increase your knowledge, to deepen your holiness, to enrich you with all spiritual blessing, and to endear Himself sevenfold to your heart. You shall now learn more of the character of God, know more of the heart of Christ, partake more richly of the inworking of the Holy Spirit, and

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realise more fully your calling and election than has yet been your experience.

And what a shadowing forth, as previously remarked, have we here of *the certain and glorious resurrection of the saints*. The resurrection of Lazarus was a type, as the resurrection of Christ was the *earnest*, of the final resurrection of the just. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." The same voice which said, "Lazarus, come forth!" will wake the peaceful slumbers of all who sleep in Him. Believers anticipate too faintly the resurrection-glory that awaits them when Christ, who is "the Resurrection and the Life," will raise us from the dust, and fashion our bodies like unto His own glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Oh what a blessing the first resurrection will be! No more sin—no more deformity—no more infirmity—no more pain—no more death. We shall be raised a *spiritual body*—the material, the gross, the perishable for ever annihilated; and we shall re-enter the same body, personally and identically the same which we bore about with us

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on earth, but now spiritualised, re-organised, and adorned with all the beauty of holiness.

“ Array'd in glorious grace
Shall these vile bodies shine,
And every face and every shape
Look heavenly and divine.”

But we must not overlook the marvellous display of the union of the divine and the human nature of our Lord which now transpired. Jesus never appeared more truly GOD, nor yet more really MAN, as now. As *Man* He wept tears of sympathy over the grave of Lazarus ; as *God* He unsealed it ; as *Man* He mourned the dead ; as *God* He raised the dead to life. Here is blended in marvellous union all the tenderness and sympathy of the human, with all the power and majesty of the divine. Such is the Saviour with whom we now are privileged to do. Because He is God-man, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto the Father by Him. His atoning death —sealed and accepted by His resurrection from the grave—has provided a full and free salvation for every penitent believing sinner. Do you feel yourself sinful, self-destroyed, and

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lost? His Holy Spirit has taught you this, and now you have nothing to do but to accept in faith the full atonement and sacrifice the Lord Jesus has made to God for your sins, and you shall be saved! Within the great love with which He loved Lazarus He is prepared to enfold you. The voice which brought him back from the dead is ready to pierce your spiritual grave and raise you into newness of life. Listen to His words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live." Have you thus heard the life-giving voice of Jesus? Rest not until the question is fairly answered by the Holy Spirit's sealing testimony in your conscience, that Christ is the life of your soul. Oh that voice of Jesus! it is the strongest, yet the sweetest; the most powerful, yet the most gentle voice ear ever heard! It is the VOICE OF LOVE! "Behold how He LOVED him!" Remember that Jesus is with you at the grave when you go there to weep. He will, too, accompany your body when those who love you bear the sacred remains of what

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was once a “temple of the Holy Ghost” to their final resting-place. And when they slowly and sadly return from the solemn scene, and leave you there in lonely silence, Christ will watch over your sleeping dust with an eye of love that never wearies until that day when “all that are in the grave shall hear His voice, and come forth ; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

“The resurrection of damnation !”—solemn words ! but not more solemn than the final state of the ungodly to which they refer. The awfulness and solemnity of that state no language can describe. There will be a resurrection of all—of the *just* and of the *unjust*. But God has put a marked difference between the two, both as it regards the *time* and the *character* of the event. A thousand years will intervene between the first and the second resurrections. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the *first resurrection*; on such the second death shall have no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a

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thousand years.") My reader, for which of these two resurrections are you preparing—the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation? A part you *must* have in one or in the other. The resurrection of damnation! What is it? It is to rise to shame and everlasting contempt. It is to rise with all your sins unatoned, unpardoned. It is to rise with all your sinful affections, and carnal passions, and evil habits still and for ever clinging to your being. It is to rise clad in the robe of eternal death, and to join in the dirge of mourning, lamentation, and woe, whose dismal sounds will burst from every churchyard, from every cemetery, and from every sea, on that dread morning. It is to rise but to sink into the abyss of endless woe! Are you prepared for so fearful a catastrophe? Are you resolved upon so terrible a doom? If not, then fly to Jesus without a moment's delay. Seek immediately spiritual resurrection with Christ now, that you may partake of the "first fruits of them that sleep in Him," and so have your "part in the first resurrection." He is willing and He is able to save you. Your sins shall not debar you.

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Your unworthiness shall not exclude you. Your age shall not discourage you. Christ receives *sinners*, and He will not reject you. But you must come *as you are*, and accept His salvation *as it is*. You must come empty, priceless, worthless, and receive as the *free gift* of God's grace the salvation which no worthiness could merit, and which no price could procure. The same redeeming love that raised up Lazarus from the grave, is prepared, if prayerfully and earnestly sought, to raise you from a death of sin into a life of righteousness. Son of God! speak the word, and the soul shall come forth! O Thou who art the Resurrection and the Life—whose great love led Thee to die that we might live—cause me to feel the power of Thy resurrection, that I may live by Thee, and live upon Thee, and live for Thee now: and that when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, I may rise to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, and live *with* Thee for ever. O Thou whose love wept at the grave of Lazarus, let those warm tears of love fall on me—even *me*!

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Jesus wept ! Why, Saviour, didst thou weep ?
What meant Thy sighs and falling tears ?
Couldst Thou not break the dreamer's sleep,
And rob the grave of all its fears ?

That man, poor sinful man, should shed
A thousand drops of bitter grief—
That on his curse-devoted head
Earth's woes should pour without relief—

Were but the gall his hands have wrung
From fruit of sin's forbidden tree :
His pangs are but a conscience stung
By poison fangs he cannot flee.

But, Saviour, Thou no sin didst know :
Thy holy heart from guilt was free ;
From Thy pure soul no grief could flow—
The tears Thou shed'st were not for Thee !

No, no, but Thy responsive heart
Thrill'd to the wail of *others'* woe ;
Thou felt'st Thy soft affections start,
When others' tears began to flow.

When Martha's sobbing voice awoke
The music of a brother's name ;
When Martha's gushing spirit spoke
In sad responsive tones the same ;—

Oh, then, from purest sympathy,
Thy meekly listed eyes did weep,

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And from Thy heart’s deep fountain clear,
Thy friendly, jeweled tears did leap !

The wasting form before Thee laid,
Immured in cold Corruption’s cave,
To Thee, O Saviour, was not dead—
Thou mighty Conq’ror of the grave !—

Thou knew’st that Thy Almighty Word
Would pierce the cold, dull ear of Death ;
That at the summons of the Lord
The wasting lungs would heave with breath :

Thou knew’st that ere Thy tears were dry
Laz’rus upon Thy neck would weep ;
That ere was hush’d the sister’s sigh,
Her bounding heart with joy would leap ;—

Thou wept’st ; but oh, ’twas not the grief
Of Mary, Martha’s heavy heart :
Thy tender soul sought sweet relief—
To share in others’ griefs a part.

Perhaps Thy heaven-directed eye
Beheld, before the Great White Throne,
The weeping spirit backward fly,
Again in cumbrous flesh to groan.

Perhaps the motive of Thy sigh
Is Laz’rus,—not his sister’s tears :
Not in the *grave*, but in the *sky*,
The cause of grief, perhaps, appears.

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As on a rude and treach'rous tide,
The storm-chased sailor sighs for home,
And long, 'mid heaving waters wide,
Prays for a safe and quick return :

And when, at last, far off he sees
His snow-white cottage on the shore,
He bends to Heaven his grateful knees,
Thanks God for sight of home once more :

When, bounding to the long-sought shore,
With kiss a waiting mother greets,
And, safe within his cottage door,
To friends at home his toils repeats :

Could *then* some hard and sad decree
Tear him from fond parental arms,
And hurl him back beyond the sea,
Again to battle with its storms,—

Oh, then his failing heart might know
What grief a sainted spirit pure—
Who's left this stormy world below,
And made the port of bliss secure—

Endures, when summon'd from the skies,
To wear his load of flesh again ;
To fight once more to win the prize ;
Again to sin and suffer pain.

So thus 't was meet, Thy power to prove,
And stubborn unbelief to slay,

" JESUS WEPT."

To drag a spirit from above
To dwell once more in house of clay.

No doubt Thou also didst bewail
Man's sin and bold rebellion vile ;
What curses o'er his heart prevail—
How guilt and sin his soul defile.

No doubt, the thought of Joseph's tomb,
Which open for Thy body lay,
Cast o'er Thy mind a saddening gloom,
And wrapt Thy soul in dread dismay :

The grave a lesson had for Thee,
Which man, alas ! too rarely heeds ;
It told how dreadful sin must be
Which such severe chastisement needs.

At Laz'rus' grave this truth I scan,
Whilst faith its sacred silence trod :
Thy gushing tears have proved Thee MAN,
The bursting grave hath proved Thee GOD !

“BE NOT AFRAID;”

OR,

THE VOICE OF JESUS IN THE STORM.

“And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.”—MARK vi. 50.

OUR Lord had just performed one of His most notable miracles. He had fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. Let unreflecting doubters, wont to impugn the integrity of the Bible, and to reject the evidence of miracles, candidly and solemnly weigh this fact, as those who are

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responsible to God for their belief; and accept with humility and faith the conclusion to which it must inevitably lead them—a firm persuasion of the Deity of Christ and the truth of His Word.

Anxious to avoid the popular excitement to which this benevolent display of Divine power gave rise, our Lord retired to a mountain, and was there alone. His disciples, thus dismissed by their Master, “went down to the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum.” It was during this voyage the incident occurred which supplies our present subject. The topic which it naturally suggests is, “THE VOICE OF JESUS IN THE STORM”—a topic replete with deep instruction and sweet comfort. There is a chapter in every Christian’s higher life corresponding with this incident in the life of Christ. The believer’s path to glory is “through winds and storms and waves.” His spiritual life is, figuratively, a voyage—tempestuous seas his pathway, but heaven the port he will ultimately and surely reach. It is *in the storm* the voice of Jesus is now heard. Let us consider the disciples in their

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present condition as illustrating much of the spiritual history of the Christian.

The first spiritual storm he combats is, *his earliest conviction of sin*; and a blessed storm it is! The Holy Spirit like “a mighty rushing wind,” breathes over the soul, and the anxious cry of the Philippian Jailer is heard, “What must I do to be saved?” Until now the soul has lived in all the quietness of spiritual insensibility. There has indeed been a calm, but it was the calm of *death*, — peace, but the peace of the *grave*. The soul has been *dead* in trespasses and sins. But now there is a storm, an awakening, a resurrection from a death of sin. The law of God has been applied to the conscience, its holiness is seen, its condemnation is felt, and the soul cries out, “Lord, save, I perish!” My reader, has this storm of sin’s conviction passed over *you*? Has it roused you from your deep, Jonah-like sleep? Has it driven you out of your lying refuges, your false pleas, and your fatal hope? Have you felt the vessel of your soul foundering amid the dark, surging waves of condemnation yawning to receive

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you ? Spirit of the living God ! blow upon the soul that it may live ! Alarm the carelessness, awaken the sleeper, quicken the dead, and create such a tempest of sin's conviction, as the voice of Jesus alone can still. We do not assert that *all* conviction of sin, in its first stage, partakes of the same character. There is a diversity of operation in the Holy Spirit's work. With some, the first storm of conviction is not so violent ; it is more the soft, gentle breeze, breathing as from the sunny south. With others, it is the north wind that blows powerful and penetrating ; but, in both cases it is the same Spirit that quickeneth, and both operations illustrate the mystery and sovereignty of divine grace. Be careful, therefore, of ignoring your conviction because, measuring your experience by others, you find your early conviction of sin was not of so pungent and marked a character as theirs. This would be unwise. There are two gates into the great temple of God's converting grace—the *north* gate and the *south* gate.* Two individuals entering,

* Ezek. xlvi. 9.

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the one by the north, and the other by the south gate, will meet together in the same sacred edifice, and together unite in the same eternal song, "By grace are we saved!" To deny, then, your conversion, because you were rather *drawn* to Christ than *driven*, were borne to the cross upon the gentle wing of the south gale, rather than upon the strong, rude wing of the north wind, would be both unwise to yourself and dishonouring to the Spirit. You felt yourself a sinner, you saw enough of the plague of your own heart to despair of all salvation in and of yourself, and thus spiritually convinced you went in faith to the Lord Jesus with the acknowledgment,—

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

See, then, that you do not grieve and disown the Spirit by denying His most blessed work of grace in your soul. Wait His time; sooner or later, He will show you more of your sinfulness, will reveal to you greater abominations than you have yet seen, when your deeper experience, your increased knowledge of Christ, and the blood that

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cleanseth from all sin, will enable you to look into this new ‘chamber of imagery’ in your soul without despair. Acknowledge, then, the sovereignty of the Spirit in conversion, be thankful, and praise God that you know anything at all of yourself as a sinner, and anything of Christ as your Saviour. “ It is the Spirit that quickeneth.” Blessed are they who feel His gentlest breath !

“ As blows the wind, and in its flight,
Escapes the glance of keenest sight,
So are the wonder-working ways
Of God’s regenerating grace.

“ As o’er our frame we feel the gale,
Gently or mightily prevail,
So some are softly drawn to heaven,
And others as by tempest driven.”

The disciples in the storm is also symbolic of some of the *spiritual exercises* of the believer in his Christian journey. Probably, when these disciples of Jesus embarked upon their voyage, they little dreamt of the tempest that awaited them. They, doubtless, expected a smooth and safe passage to the other side. And thus when many of God’s people set out upon the Christian voyage, and spread

their sails to the fair, gentle breeze, they little anticipate the tempestuous winds and high seas they will encounter ere they reach the haven whither they would be. But the Lord sees the *needs be* for those storms, and so in wisdom and love He sends them. Hence soul-storms consist often of a more painful acquaintance with self—a deeper knowledge and conviction of indwelling sin—the power of the law brought into the conscience—a sense of divine wrath—the hidings of God's face—the fiery darts of Satan. All this is needful to help the soul onward. We have need to be shaken out of our spiritual slothfulness—to be roused from spiritual apathy—to be stirred up to prayer. Light winds help us onward but little, smooth waves still less.

“ More the treacherous *calm* I dread
Than tempests bursting o'er my head.”

This, perhaps, is in answer to prayer. You have long asked the Lord to speed you in your heavenly course, to advance you in the divine life, to increase your personal holiness, and to endear Himself to your soul.

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You have longed to feel the Saviour more precious, for a closer walk, for more matured meetness for heaven, for a stronger and more favouring gale wafting you more truly and rapidly onward to the eternal haven. The Lord has answered your prayer in a way you may not have expected, but still it is the right way. He has sent the storm ; the waters have come into your soul ; and the frail, trembling bark has well-nigh foundered ! But what line can measure the increased speed your soul has attained through those tempestuous days and dreary nights pursuing its way homeward-bound ? The character of God has been more blessedly unfolded to you ; you have got a firmer hold upon Christ ; the faithfulness of the Covenant has been more thoroughly tested ; the promises have become more precious ; and all this has been in answer to your many earnest and long-offered prayers that your soul might “ grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” God has answered you, but in His own way.

There are, then, *the storms of adversity* which the believer encounters in his course.

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Our Christianity does not exempt us from those afflictive events which are alike common to the world. Life is a troubled sea ; and all who plough it more or less encounter the storms of adversity which sweep its surface. Affliction, sooner or later, in some one or more of its endless forms, is our portion here. It is a necessary discipline. It is a preparatory process for the appreciation and enjoyment of heaven. I do not think that heaven would have the enjoyment it possesses without trial. Its happiness is so great, there must be an education, a fitness of the soul for its enjoyment. That education is obtained in the school of sorrow. All the saints in glory, headed by Christ their Leader, came out of great tribulation. And if the Elder Brother—He, the sinless Saviour, He, the blessed Son of the Father —was not exempt from tribulation, shall we ask, shall we desire it ? Diversified are the storms of God's people, deriving their character often from the peculiar position in which each believer is placed in life, just as the storms which sweep the ocean derive their intensity from the latitudes in which

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they occur. Do we possess affluence ?—the storms of adversity sweep it away, and we are poor. Are we in places of power ?—the wind of popularity changes, and the idol of to-day becomes the football of to-morrow. Is our table encircled by loved olive branches, or does the gentle vine entwine in clinging beauty around our dwelling ?—death enters and bears away the fond treasure of our heart; the olive branch fades, the tender vine is smitten and dies. “ *Many* are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth out of them all.” “ Through *much* tribulation we are to enter the kingdom.” But oh, how helpful in our heavenly course are these rude and fierce tempests ! Many of the Lord’s people will testify that their souls make little or no real progress in the divine life, but under the pressure of adversity. As we have remarked, light breezes and smooth seas help them on but little. The vessel is so slow a sailer, and withal so heavily-laden, that nothing but strong winds and tempestuous waves, and cross seas, speed it on in its heavenly way. To change the figure : just as the tempest impels the root more deeply and firmly

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into the earth, the tree thus acquiring vigour and growth by the very means that threatened to sweep it from the forest, so God's "trees of righteousness," trees of His own right-hand planting, are "rooted and grounded" in Christ and in faith and in love by those very trials, afflictions, and sorrows which seemed the most adverse to their well-being. Affliction is a sowing time, a growing time, a harvest-time—the discipline not pleasant now, but afterwards yielding the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Testify, O thou afflicted one, what a precious, priceless blessing that affliction has been to your soul. Testify how the storm that made you poor, enriched you with God's love,—how the tempest that broke the stem of your beautiful flower, brought you more closely beneath the shadow of the tree of life,—how the contrary winds, and the cross seas, and the surging waves impelled your bark onward, giving you, through the glass of faith, a closer, brighter view of the desired haven whither Jesus is bringing all His spiritual mariners. But for the storm how little should we know of His power who

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controls our tempest, and of His love who quells our fears.

And where was Jesus while the disciples were in the storm? He was alone in the mountain in prayer—*in prayer for them!* Why did He withdraw His presence well knowing that dangers and fears awaited them? That they might learn the great lesson of the Christian life, viz., that, “without Me ye can do nothing.” It is thus the Lord now deals with us. He will have us know our weakness, and dependence upon Him our strength. He will wean us from ourselves, and deaden us to the world, and teach us where our great supplies of grace and power and comfort are. And all this time of our earthly storm and danger, where is Christ? He is in heaven, “now to appear in the presence of God for us.” He is in glory praying for His Church. With a sleepless eye of love resting upon our storm-tossed souls, He is interceding for us with the Father, that our afflictions engulf us not, that our faith fail not, that our fears prevail not, but that we may be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

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Oh how sweet a truth is the intercession of Christ! How soothing and sanctifying the thought, that we are now resting upon His bosom, are entwined with His prayers, that our names are borne upon His heart, that our wants are breathed from His lips, and that our persons are ever represented before God in His own ! We make too little use of the intercession of Jesus, our great High Priest within the veil. It is too seldom the subject of our meditation, is too loosely entwined with the events and experience of our daily, professional, and home life. By this neglect what losers we are ! What a fount of sympathy our own hands seal, and from what a source of succour we sever ourselves ! Is there any thought more strengthening, animating, and promotive of our holiness, than that Christ is each moment praying for us in heaven ? We ask the prayers of the Lord's people, and are strengthened thereby. How much more needed, precious, and prevalent the intercession of Christ ! Earthly friends die, or distance removes them, and in process of time we, perhaps, lose their sympathy and prayerful remembrance. But, "Jesus *ever*

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liveth to make intercession for us.” Exalted though He is in glory, the same heart beats within that breast that throbbed and sorrowed and bled on earth. Encircled by myriads of glorified spirits, He is not neglectful of His saints below. He trod the path you now tread, and sanctified it. He passed through your temptation, and foiled it. He drank your bitter cup, and sweetened it. He travelled through your darkness, and illumined it. He bore your cross, and lightened it. He suffered your persecution, and disarmed it. He experienced your death, and plucked the sting from the last foe. He lay in the grave, and left an undying light and fragrance there. Look up to Him, then, as your Intercessor. Nothing that He asks the Father is refused Him. He never receives a denial. Your suit, blended with His own, prevails in the Chancery of heaven. And when through suffering, or languor, or sorrow you cannot pour out your wants yourself, Christ is praying for you, employing His interest in your behalf with God. And Him the Father heareth alway.

And could the Lord be ignorant of, or

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indifferent to, the present position of His disciples? Impossible! He beheld them from the shore. They recognised not Him, but His wakeful, watchful eye rested upon them. "He saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them." The yawning ocean, the billow's spray, the misty storm could not veil *them* from His view. Lord, Thou knowest my present position. Thou seest my mental conflict, my spiritual exercises, my bodily infirmity, how high the waves, how contrary the wind, how fierce the tempest, how exhausting the toil in rowing. Sweet and comforting assurance, my reader! Others—the nearest and the dearest—may know nothing of your inner life, the world of excitement within, the anxiety of mind, the nervous pressure, the spiritual conflict, the trial, the sorrow, the want through which you are passing,—enough, that Jesus stands upon the shore of glory, and gazes down upon all the way you take with an eye of watchful, faithful love; nor will remove that eye until He brings you home to Himself in heaven.

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“ Begone, unbelief, my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear;
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform ;
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.

‘ His love in times past, forbids me to think
He ’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink ;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in view,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite
through.’

But Jesus, as in the case of Lazarus, *tarries*. “ It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.” Why this delay ? Oh, there was infinite wisdom and divine love in it. He waited but the fittest moment to appear on their behalf. In the same light, as we have already exhorted, let us view all the Lord’s postponements and delays in appearing on our behalf. He waits the appointed time. It is, perhaps, dark—oh, *how* dark !—and still there are no signs of Christ’s coming to your help. Be it so. He would have you now learn, that, “ it is good for a man that he hath hope, and *quietly wait* for the salvation of the Lord.” There is no obscurity with Him, “ He judgeth through the dark cloud.” And when the night, long and dreary, has deepened into a

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darkness that might be felt, at this juncture Christ appears walking upon the water. It has been a night of weeping, but now the morning dawns, and it is a morning of joy. There is a day-dawn, beloved, succeeding the darkest and longest night of our history. "The night cometh, *and also the morning.*" Faint not in the day of adversity. Let faith and hope hold out, and patience have her perfect work until Jesus comes. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." O yes, Christ is coming, and all these clouds shall quickly melt into the light and splendour of millennial and eternal day. The "Bright and Morning Star," already high in the heavens, shines through the interstices of the clouds which drape and darken the sky, and will soon beam forth in its full, unclouded effulgence. This night of weeping will soon have passed, and then will come the glorious morning, and the perfect and endless day of millennial bliss.

"And about the fourth watch of the night He cometh unto them *walking upon the sea.*" The fourth watch, or about three

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o'clock in the morning, the darkest and most wishful period of the night. *Their* emergency was *His* gracious opportunity. The height of *their* fears was the measure of *His* love. It is thus with his people now. It is dark, and Jesus has not come to us. But it must grow darker still! The “fourth watch” must be set. The darker the night the more visible the stars, and more brilliant the heavens. God’s interpositions on our behalf are never so marked and grateful as when our extremity is the greatest. Jesus’ love never shines so bright, His pity never appears so tender, His grace never so illustrious, as when we are brought to our wit’s end. He waits until the “fourth watch” of our night of tempest and of anxious toil; and then, when weary and exhausted with rowing against wind and tide, our difficulties only exceeded in their height by the fears which they inspire, treading the crest of the billows He advances to our deliverance. What marvellous words are those—“walking upon the sea.” He made it. He set its bounds and He controls it; and now, in all the majesty of His Deity, blended with

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all the sympathy of His humanity, He comes to the help of His disciples. How truly did He now appear the Sovereign of the seas, the Head of creation. "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee ; they were afraid : the depths also were troubled." They acknowledged the Godhead, and obeyed the voice of their Creator, proud that He trod their limpid pavement. Who can tread the broken and dark waves that often dash and foam and surge around us but Jesus ? What are our troubles, what our sorrows, what our wants, what our difficulties, to Him ? He can as easily control the huge billows which come into our soul, as He walked upon the sea to the rescue of His disciples. Oh, how we limit the Son of God ! What low views we have of Christ !—of His power, His grace, His love, His nearness to us at all times !

Turn we again to the disciples. So supernatural was their Lord's appearance as He approached them — His feet tipping with golden light the mountain billows—the disciples were afraid, for they knew not that it was Jesus. Little thought they how near to them, amid the storm and in their highest

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fears, was their best, most powerful, and ever faithful Friend. And thus we often, too, mistake our blessed Lord. We are so filled with fear, are so desponding and sinking, that, looking at God’s character through His dealings, and interpreting His promises by His providences, like the disciples in the storm, appalled and overwhelmed with terror, we cry out for fear! And when, too, the Holy Spirit gives us a deep, and still deepening, sense of our sinfulness, and we have a vivid perception of the justice of God, seeing Christ through this dark and hazy medium, just as the disciples saw Him only through the gray twilight of morning, we exclaim, “ Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,” mistaking our Saviour for an avenger, our Friend for a foe. How groundless for the most part are the fears of the believer in Jesus! There is but one thing we need fear—*sinning against God*. “ How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? ” “ So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord.” “ Thou, God, seest me.” Such is the strong language of a God-fearing man, a saint of God fearing only sin. But we have

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no reason to distrust God, or to fear that Christ will not come to us walking upon our troubled waves just at the crisis when our peril is the greatest and our alarm the highest.

"He *talked* with them." He brought them at once into communion with Himself. The first tones of His voice betrayed Him, and its first accents allayed all their fears. Jesus talks with His people *now*. They hear His voice amid the raging tempest, in the cloudy pillar, from 'the secret place of thunder,' and in the still, calm hour of pensive thought. "It is the voice of my Beloved," exclaims the Christ-loving disciple, speak how and when it may. "My sheep hear my voice, and they know not the voice of strangers." Have we this mark of the true sheep of Christ? Can we distinguish the voice of God from man, the voice of truth from error, the voice of Christ's true ministers from false teachers, the voice of Jesus from the voice of all others? "The sheep follow Him, for they **KNOW** his voice." Jesus still talks with His people. He speaks pardon to the guilty, peace to the troubled, comfort to the sad, heart-cheer to the fearful,

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and hope to the despairing. There is but *one* voice that can still the tempest of the soul and give it peace. Let no voice but Christ's assure you of your salvation,—no voice but God's ever pronounce you pardoned. He has delegated no priestly authority or power to man either to bind your sins or to loose them, either to confess or to absolve you. It is daring presumption that claims it, the deepest blasphemy that employs it, and the basest and most abject prostration of the intellect that acknowledges it. I return to the thought, yet no voice but that of Christ pronounce your sins pardoned. Let nothing but *an applied Atonement, the BLOOD sprinkled,* allay your convictions, quell your fears, and assure you that you are really, truly saved. And, then, with regard to *prayer*, endeavour to realise the idea of real fellowship and communion to be just this—*Jesus talking with you*, and you talking—as did the disciples on the mount—with Jesus. How will this conception of what true prayer is simplify your approach to the mercy-seat ! Prayer is, Christ talking with us, and we talking with Christ. Dwell upon this thought until all your vague,

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cold views of prayer vanish, and you find yourself sitting at the feet of Jesus, bathed in the sunshine of His presence, talking with Him in all the simplicity of a little child, and gazing up into His face in all the confidence of a loving disciple.

"It is I, be not afraid." Such were the thrilling words with which He calmed their excited feelings, soothed and assured their troubled minds. Words of marvellous significance! Of all the many titles which He wore, not one is mentioned now. Nor is this needful. This one word, this divine personal pronoun, contained and expressed them all: "IT IS I." Such is the voice of Jesus to us now. It speaks in every storm—faith hears it in every circumstance of life. Christ's union with His people involves His personal control of all the events of their individual history. Indeed, there is not an incident in your momentous life which does not bring Jesus to your side, riding as in a chariot, bright or sombre. The checkered events of your daily life are so many *comings* of Christ to you, and are equally so many *errands* bidding you go to Him. He wants us to meet

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Him in all His providential dispensations. If each one contains His heart—as it most assuredly does—He asks the union of our heart with His. Listen, then, to the voice of Jesus in the storm. “ It is I ”—who raised the tempest in your soul, and will control it. “ It is I ”—who sent your affliction, and will be with you in it. “ It is I ”—who kindled the furnace, and will watch the flames, and bring you through it. “ It is I ”—who formed your burden, who carved your cross, and who will strengthen you to bear it. “ It is I ”—who mingled your cup of grief, and will enable you to drink it with meek submission to your Father’s will. “ It is I ”—who took from you worldly substance, who bereft you of your child, of the wife of your bosom, of the husband of your youth, and will be infinitely better to you than husband, wife, or child. “ It is I ”—who have done it all. I make the clouds my chariot, and clothe me with the tempest as with a garment. The night-hour is my time of coming, and the dark, surging waves are the pavement upon which I walk. Be of good cheer, be not afraid ; “ It is I ”—your

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Friend, your Brother, your Saviour. I am causing all the circumstances of your life to work together for your good. "It is I"—who permitted the enemy to assail you, the slander to blast you, the unkindness to wound you, the want to press you. Your affliction sprung not out of the ground, but came down from above — a heaven-sent blessing disguised, an angel of light clad in a robe of sable. I have sent all in love. This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God. This bereavement shall not always bow thee to the earth, nor drape in changeless gloom your life. "It is I"—who ordered, arranged, and controlled it all : "Be of good cheer; be not afraid." Oh, responds not thus your heart : "Then, Lord, I bow humbly to Thy will. I welcome the affliction, and embrace the cross. It is no longer a baptism of fire since Thou art with me. This couch of weakness is strength; this bed of suffering is down; this flaming furnace is an elysium, while I hear Thy gentle voice floating above the storm, 'Be of good cheer: it is I ; be not afraid.' Enter, dear Lord, into the door of my heart, for Thou hast opened

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it. Then I shall rejoice in tribulation, glory in infirmity, and welcome the storm. I cheerfully drink the cup of sorrow Thou hast given me, and would return it to Thee overflowing with Thy praise.”

The moment the disciples received Jesus into the ship, the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. What an instantaneous and delightful change ! Thus is it with the tempest-tossed believer. When the Lord Jesus draws near and manifests Himself, all is peace. The storm of mental anxiety subsides, spiritual fear ceases, the burden is lightened, despondency vanishes, and a great calm diffuses itself over the soul. “ He stayeth His rough wind in the day of His east wind.” The fear that produces torment gives place to perfect love ; the legality that engenders bondage is succeeded by the spirit of adoption, crying “ Abba, Father ; ” and the heaven-bound bark glides placidly along the dimpled sea, and rides gently over the gold-tipped waves, and steers straight for the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, into which it has “ an abundant entrance ”—“ and so He bringeth them unto

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their desired haven." All believers may not have this "abundant entrance" into glory—that is, they may not all enter heaven in full sail—nevertheless, all shall assuredly enter there, though, like Paul's shipwrecked mariners, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship." Delightful thought, that all who are in the gospel-ship, all who have God their Father at the helm, all who have Christ for their pilot, shall weather every tribulation, and trial, and temptation of life, and reach heaven at last ! But let it not, my reader, concerning yourself, be a matter of uncertainty and doubt. Agonise for an *assured* hope of heaven. Be satisfied with nothing short of "Christ in you the hope of glory." Press forward until you have found the rest, the only rest, of a poor sinner in the blood and righteousness of Christ. Then you may confidently commit yourself to all the vicissitudes of the Christian's voyage. You may have cloudy skies, and tempestuous seas, and dark nights, but you will find Jesus a "hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest." He who created the winds will control them ; He who made

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the sea will command it ; He who formed the clouds will balance them, and through deep and dark waters will lead you to the Rock that is higher than you. In every stormy wind, in every darksome night, in every lonesome hour, in every rising fear, the voice of Jesus shall be heard, saying, "Be of good cheer: it is I, be not afraid." Do you shrink from the "swellings of Jordan?" Are you in bondage through the fear of death? Do you dread the solemn, the appalling hour? Why these fears? Jordan's waves are all under the control of Jesus. He has had more to do with death than we ever shall. He passed through the trackless deep, and left a path paved with the footprints of His feet; and when we reach its banks, and enter the cold stream, we have only to follow His footsteps—for He hath abolished death—and pass dry-shod over Jordan!

Repenting sinner, Jesus waits to receive thee. At the voice of thy weeping, He will be gracious to thee. His own Spirit wrought in thee this contrition, unsealed these tears, inspired these desires, awoke these confessions; and the work the Holy Spirit has be-

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gun in your soul, Jesus Christ will complete in your full, free, and present salvation. But you must believe in the Lord Jesus now, and with all your heart. You must accept Him just as He is and just as you are, without qualification or demur. There must be no adding to, or taking from, the Saviour's work. Not a thought or feeling that will cast the shadow of a shade upon His glory. It would not be a greater dishonour to Christ to deny His very being than to deny His ability and willingness to save a sin-distressed, wounded, broken-hearted sinner. As to one point there can be but one rational conclusion, viz., that unless you accept Christ as your only Saviour, and Christ receives you as an undone sinner, Christ and you can have no agreement, or fellowship, or union whatever. If you are looking at works, and duties, and fitness as grounds of acceptance with God, instead of looking wholly and exclusively to Jesus, it will cost you dear in the end. You must come to God, bringing nothing but your sins with you. You must renounce your baptism, your obedience, your duties, your graces, your sanctification, your

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tears, your humblings, your sacraments, as grounds of acceptance, and nothing must be seen, nothing trusted in, nothing held up but Christ. All these things, valuable in their proper place, yet mixed up with your faith and love and trust in Christ, will but poison and corrupt your graces, neutralise and defeat your salvation, and keep you out of heaven for ever. Christ must be, in the great matter of your acceptance with God, *all and in all*.

Be equally trustful and hopeful as to the well-being and safety of the Ark of God, *His Church*, now tossing amid the billows. It is true, the sky is lowering, and clouds are gathering, and the sea is swelling, and many of the officers and crew are mutinous against Christ and His truth; nevertheless, her great Captain and Pilot stands upon the heavenly shore, and He is present by His Spirit, and watches with a sleepless eye of love His storm-tossed Church ploughing through the deep its way to glory. All these things shall work together for its good; all shall conspire but for the furtherance of the gospel, the triumph of His truth, the increase of His kingdom,

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and the glory of His name. Error may for a time be in the ascendant, Infidelity, Ritualism, and Popery may have their day ; but, give Divine Truth time, and it shall, it must win. The victory may be deferred, the contest may be protracted, the end apparently uncertain, but the triumph is as sure as the result will be manifest and glorious. Were it otherwise, we might well enfold ourselves in the mantle of despair. If there be not in the gospel of Christ, if there be not in the Church of God, if there be not in the eternal principles of truth and righteousness, elements which give them a present superiority, and ensure them a final supremacy, what stimulus should we have for present effort, and what ground should we possess for faith and hope in the future ? But we have no misgiving. Possessing the consciousness of ultimate triumph, firm in our belief in the divine promises, and in the final reign of Christ,) we are calm in defeat, hopeful in discouragement, and trustful when all things seem against us. “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of

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the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled.” Amidst the raging elements we hear the Heavenly Voice, “ Be still, and know that I am God.” Yes, Lord, we will be still, trustful, hopeful. “ The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice ; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.”

‘It is well,’ my soul, though the dark cloud lowers,
And the reaper has gather’d thy choicest flowers ;
Though the tempest roar, and the waves run high,
A sweet voice whispers,—‘ Fear not, it is I ! ’

Those accents so tender, so loving, and kind,
Can scatter the tempest, and silence the wind ;
Can still the rough waves into perfect repose,
And cause the waste desert to bloom as the rose.

Then, since ‘tis the hand of an infinite God
That in wisdom corrects me, I ’ll smile at the rod,
Yea, rejoice in affliction, so graciously given,
To wean me from earth and allure me to heaven.

And when the wild storms of life’s journey are past,
And the haven of glory is enter’d at last ;
’Midst the songs of the ransom’d my anthem shall
swell

To the praise of His name who ‘ did all things so
well.’ *

* I. M. L.

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DAILY CLEANSING ;
OR,
CHRIST WASHING HIS DISCIPLES'
FEET.

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God ; He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments ; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He pour- eth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."—JOHN xiii. 3-5.

I HAVE remarked, in a previous part of this work, that never did the *sympathy* of Christ appear more true than when, suffused with tears, He bent over the grave of Bethany. I may observe, with equal truth, that never

did His *humility* appear more like itself as when the impressive act transpired which is now to engage our study—*His washing the feet of His disciples*. Our Lord's life was a *practical* gospel. He was no mere theorist. He embodied every doctrine He taught, illustrated every precept He enforced, fulfilled every command He enjoined, and was, in a word, a living, practical exemplification of His own gospel. With what confidence He could meekly say to His disciples, “*Learn of me.*” Let us now direct our devout attention, as the Spirit of God shall enable us, to this marvellous and most instructive incident in His life—*Christ washing His disciples' feet, as enforcing the necessity of our DAILY CLEANSING.*

The chief interest of this wondrous picture gathers around its Central Object. And who is He ? It is Jesus. We measure the condescension of an act by the rank of the person from whom it emanates. And yet it is possible for such an individual to occupy a false position. He may so far forget what is due to his station as to demean himself unworthily. Oblivious of all self-respect, he may so lower himself as to deprive the act to which he

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stoops of all true condescension on his part. So far from its being an attribute of greatness, challenging our admiration, it may be but an expression of littleness awakening our contempt.

Apply this reasoning to the present act of Christ washing His disciples' feet. It was no *false* position which He now occupied. In the eyes of man it may have been regarded as mean—in the estimation of a proud Oriental, as the act of a slave,—but viewed in all its bearings, the Person, the occasion, and its significance, it presents our Lord in one of His most true and dignified positions. Glance at the expressions which conduct us to this conclusion: “Jesus *knowing* that the Father had given all things into His hands.” There was no forgetfulness of His personal dignity on the part of Jesus. He knew who and what He was at the moment that He stooped to perform the most menial service of His life. He knew that “*the Father had given all things into His hands.*” A precious truth meets us here. All things were given to Him as Mediator. All power, all authority, all wealth, all grace,

all worlds, all beings, the whole elect Church of God, were by the Father placed in the hands of Jesus. And yet at the very moment that He possessed all this opulence, He was, as man, poor, friendless, homeless, and had not where to lay His head ! If this be the mediatorial wealth of Christ, then let us repair to Him for all that we want. Pharaoh placed all the resources of Egypt in the hands of his prime-minister, and when the people in their hunger cried to him for corn, he said, "*Go to Joseph.*" And thus God has dealt with Jesus. He has deposited all the unsearchable riches of grace and glory in the hands of His beloved Son, in whom it "*pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell.*" And when we need grace and strength, wisdom, comfort, and counsel, as we do each moment and for every circumstance, God's command is, "*Go to Jesus.*" If all things were given of the Father into His hands as the Mediatorial Head of His Church, it was not for Himself, but for His Church, for whom He was thus appointed the Trustee and Guardian ; and we are warranted, nay, invited, to repair to Christ, that out of His fulness we may receive grace to

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help in every time of need. Yes, the grant of the Father to Christ is comprehensive and illimitable. “**ALL THINGS.**” The salvation of the Church, the government of the world, the final judgment of all men, and the universal supremacy of his kingdom in its millennial glory,—all, *all* is given into the hands of our Saviour.

Our Lord then alludes to His *mission* to our world. “Jesus knowing that *He was come from God.*” Here was another evidence of His dignity. He had come from a *pre-existent* state, and from a heaven of glory, on a mission of mercy to man. Behold how low He stooped! He who bowed to bathe the feet of His disciples bowed the heavens and came down on an embassy of love. Yes, of *love!* He came not to roll the thunder and to flash the lightning of God’s wrath, but to proclaim the fact and to breathe the accents of His mercy. He came not as a judge but as a Saviour, not to condemn but to save. Here is salvation for the vilest, pardon for the guiltiest, hope for the most despairing. If the Spirit of God has shewn you to yourself, has revealed to you the

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plague spot of sin, and has filled you with self-abhorrence and sin-loathing, then Jesus came from God for the express purpose of saving *you*. Having done all the work, completely accomplishing His mission from the Father, He issued a proclamation which He commanded should be made known to all the world, extending a free pardon to every sinner who will accept in penitence and faith the great salvation God has provided for the chief of sinners. What glad tidings for poor, self-destroyed souls do these words contain—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Cast yourself in faith upon His mercy in Christ Jesus, and you are saved !

As if to add the completing link to the chain of evidence touching His dignity, reference is then made to *His return to His glory*. "*And went to God.*" His ascension into heaven, His return back to the kingdom and the glory which for a while He relinquished, was as much His right as God, as it was His reward as man. "*What and if you*

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see the Son of man ascend up where He was before." "I ascend to my Father and to your Father." The atoning work was done, the victim slain, the sacrifice offered, the oblation accepted, and every claim of God's moral government met, and now the great High Priest returns to heaven and enters into the holiest to present, as the ground of His intercession, His own sacrifice for sin on behalf of His elect. Such is He whom now we are studying, from whom we are to learn one of the lowliest acts and one of the holiest lessons of our Christian life.

"He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash His disciples' feet." Look at the act first as setting forth *a doctrine*—the doctrine of the Atonement. There cannot be a doubt but that our Lord intended by this act to impress His disciples with the importance of the blood-cleansing of which they stood in need, without which they could have no part with Him. The Atonement is so great, essential, and precious a truth—the central doctrine of the Bible—that our Lord made every act of His life a finger-post pointing to this fact. *"Without the shedding of*

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blood there is no remission." No pardon of sin, no cancelling of guilt, no covering of transgression, without BLOOD. There must be Atonement. The death of Christ supplies it. His blood, containing all the virtue of the Godhead, possesses a moral and sovereign efficacy. It is the only thing in the universe that really, savingly touches SIN. Sin—the greatest evil—the vilest, darkest, direst thing—laughs to scorn all expedients to cleanse, to subdue, to annihilate it, but—the ATONING BLOOD of the Son of God. Before this it trembles and falls. Brought into believing contact with this, its guilt disappears, its stain vanishes, its power is conquered, and its every threat of condemnation is hushed in the music of the cross. Remember the words of Jesus—" If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." No part with Christ in His obedience and sufferings, no part with Him in His great salvation, no part with Him in the glory into which He has entered, no part with Him when He shall come in all the majesty and triumph of His kingdom, unless we are washed in His blood. " If I wash thee not."

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My reader, are *you* washed in this blood? Have you bathed in this fountain? Has it cleansed you from all sin? Remember, it is the blood that gives you union with Christ. He cannot unite Himself with a soul which He has not first washed. He can have no union with uncleansed, unpardoned sin. Washed in the fountain of His blood, you have *a part* with Christ in His sufferings now, and will have a part in the glory of His Second Coming. Oh the purification this blood of Christ imparts, the peace it speaks, the confidence it inspires, the hope, the blessed hope, it reveals to faith's eye! Who, enlightened by the Spirit, with such a sovereign remedy for sin, with such an effectual balsam for the wounded conscience, with a truth so heaven-assuring, would toil and labour and strive to work a salvation of his own? Away with your own works, lay down your deadly doings, cast overboard your oars, wash and be clean, believe and be saved!

But this lowly act of Christ had a *preceptive* as well as a doctrinal significance. It was intended to inculcate the precept of

humility. Here was the Infinite Majesty of heaven, the Maker of all worlds and the Creator of all beings stooping to wash the feet of His disciples ! What a needed precept, what a holy lesson this ! The *pride* of our hearts is the deep-rooted evil of our depraved nature. It is perpetually cropping up notwithstanding all the prunings by which God seeks to keep it down and lay it low. Its forms are many, its name is ‘legion.’ There is the pride of ancestry, the pride of rank, the pride of wealth, the pride of place, the pride of intellect, and the worst of all pride, the pride of self-righteousness. There is nothing too little and trivial with which it will not plume itself. It can find its aliment in a fine dress, in a beautiful equipage, in a splendid mansion, in tasteful furniture, in a rare picture, in any work of man’s device—“the *lust of the eyes and the pride of life.*” Nay, more, it will engraft itself upon our *holy* things. From hence springs what is termed ‘spiritual pride.’ What but pride of heart keeps you from coming to Christ to be saved just as you are ? What but pride refuses the salvation of God upon His own terms ? You are will-

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ing to receive it as a *purchase*—your pride of heart scornfully rejects it as a *gift*. If you can but *do* some little thing yourself—if you may but be a partner in the matter—merit it in some degree, be worthy of it in some shape, supplementing the work by some doing of your own, you are then prepared to be saved. Your pride rises in opposition to a free-grace salvation—refuses to take its place by the side of the poor, the blind, the naked, the bankrupt, and to cry with them, “*God be merciful to me a sinner!*” Pride compasses you about as with a chain ; and that chain, unless broken by the power of God, will bind you down to regions of eternal despair. But if you are saved by Christ, the pride of your heart, rising in rebellion against the doctrine of a gratuitous salvation, must be brought down, mortified, and slain root and branch. Christ must receive all the honour and glory of emancipating you from your sins, of delivering you from condemnation, and of bringing you to heaven. And well does He deserve that glory! He has fulfilled the law to the utmost—has paid the last farthing of the debt—has honoured the Divine govern-

ment — has vindicated the Divine glory, and has secured to Jehovah's great Name endless anthems of praise from countless tongues of ransomed sinners. Think you then, O sinner, that He will allow one thread of your filthy rags to be woven with the divine and pure robe of His righteousness? Think you that He will permit one single doing of yours to be added to the work which He finished on the cross when He bowed His head and died? Will He admit you to participate the honour, divide the glory, share the crown of that wondrous redemption which He achieved on Calvary? Never! But *one* note shall rise, but *one* song shall be heard in heaven—"WORTHY IS THE LAMB!" And, oh, how worthy will Jesus be of every note of music, of every act of adoration, of every expression of love, and of every diadem laid at His feet! Believer in Jesus! does not your spirit pant to love Him and to adore Him and to serve Him as the spirits freed from sin and sorrow in heaven do? But wait patiently your time. A little more service for Christ, a little more suffering with Christ, a little more glory

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brought to Christ, a little more conformity to Christ, a few more trials, a few more conflicts, a few more stages, and *then* the angel-chariot will descend and escort you up to Him you love, and so shall you be for ever with the Lord.

We trace, too, the working of this pride of the human heart *in the bearing of the Lord's people under the Divine dispensations*. How restive under the yoke, how rebellious against the discipline! and when the strong staff is broken, and the beautiful flower is plucked, and the sparkling stream is dried, we question the wisdom and faithfulness and love of Him who has done it, and so pride covers us as with a garment, and binds us as with a chain. But the grace of Christ is all-sufficient, and the believing soul will be entirely emptied, root and branch, of this hideous, this God-abhorring sin before it reaches that bright and holy world where all bow in the profoundest humility before the throne of God, and all the glory of the creature is lost in the splendour of the Lamb.

How much sinful, hateful pride of heart, too, is intermixed with all our *service* for Christ!

Proud of our spiritual gifts and graces, proud of our ecclesiastical place and power, proud of our popularity and usefulness, we taint and shade and mar all we do for God. How little of that self-abnegation which led the great apostle of the Gentiles to exclaim, "Though I be *nothing*;" and of another to say, "*After we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants.*" And yet another— "*The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose.*" Oh, were it not for ATONING BLOOD, the blood that washes our holy as our unholy things, 'spiritual pride' would hurl us from our lofty temple-pinnacle of power and glory into the nethermost abyss of hell!

How much, too, does this pride of the human heart exhibit itself *in our carriage towards the Lord's people!* To how great and painful a degree does *class* religion and ecclesiastical *caste* prevail in the Church of God! and Christian intercourse, or, what is so beautiful in its conception but so imperfect in its practice, "*the communion of saints,*" is sadly marred thereby. How much stateliness of bearing and haughtiness of spirit, what cold-

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ness and restraint, what distrust, misinterpretation, and judging, what isolation and distance traces the conduct of many of God's people towards their fellow-saints ! Alas ! how little of the *spirit* that stoops to wash the disciples' feet—in other words, how little of the mind that was in Christ Jesus ! God enable us to learn this holy lesson !

But let us view this marvellous and expressive act of Jesus in another point of light. “He poureth water into a basin, *and began to wash the disciples' feet.*” And first, who were those disciples upon whom this wonderful condescension was bestowed ? Were they in any degree *worthy* of such a marked distinction ? Had they *merited* this refreshment from the hand of their Divine Master ? Quite the contrary. They had proved themselves utterly undeserving of so distinguished a favour. One of them was about to deny Him, a second was plotting His betrayal, while *all* of them had but just murmured at the costly box of fragrant ointment with which a holy woman, as an expression of the depth and sincerity of her love, had poured upon His head.

Yet, behold the Son of God, forgetful of all this denying, this treachery, and this ingratitude, rising from supper, laying aside His garment, and pouring water into a basin, washes His disciples' feet! Oh, how the grace of the Saviour beams forth from this wonderful act! How great the love that could tide over all this base unworthiness, effacing, as it were, every record from His memory. Such is Jesus *now!* He is immutably the same. His love to sinners is as deep as ever, His grace is as overflowing as ever, His condescension is as great as ever. We have no sin which He will not obliterate, no sorrow which He will not compassionate, no infirmity which He will despise, no want which He will not supply, no act of lowliness to which He will not stoop. But turn to the holy *need* which our Lord now enforces—*the need of daily cleansing.*

What member of the body did our Lord wash? This part of the narrative is most significant. It was not the head, nor the hand, nor the whole body, but it was the *feet*. How impressive and important the teaching conveyed by this fact! It suggests

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one of the most necessary and holy engagements of the Christian's life—*the washing of the feet*, after the bathing of the body. The believing soul has already been washed, not in the laver of baptism, but in the fountain of Christ's blood, and his "*body washed with pure water*," emblematic of the sanctifying grace of the Spirit. But here is another, a continuous, and daily washing enjoined—*the washing of the feet*. We all know that the feet are that part of the person which, because of their literal and constant contact with the earth, need the daily ablution. Now, when Jesus performed this lowly act, He sought to illustrate *the necessity of the believer's renewed cleansing each day of his heavenly travel*. Our Christian walk is kept pure and unsullied only as the feet, symbolic of that walk, are brought into habitual contact with atoning blood. It was a quaint but true remark of a puritan divine, "The devil lets no saint reach heaven with clean feet." His meaning is obvious. In the separate paths we tread, and in the several engagements in which we are occupied—be it business, or recreation, or intercourse, or Christian service, or religious duty—we touch

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that fearful, that all-defiling thing, SIN, *and need the blood.* So polluted and polluting are all created things that, after our day's travel, we need to wash our feet, that we may keep ourselves "*unspotted from the world.*" Who that takes account of daily omissions and commissions, the things which he has done and the things which he has left undone—the Bible slurred over, devotions slovenly performed, duties imperfectly discharged, misused riches, misspent time, double aims, self-interest, self-gratification, self-glory sought, unguardedness of speech, ebullitions of temper, the little that has been really said and done promotive of God's glory—who, I say, that closely scrutinises his daily Christian walk, finds not out that he NEEDETH daily *to wash his feet*—thus having his feet shod with the preparation (or preparedness) of the gospel of peace. Ye Christian men of business, look ye well to this! You cannot retire from your place of traffic, your round of professional life, into the tranquil bosom of your homes, into the more hallowed stillness of your closet, and solemnly reviewing the day's history, not feel the necessity of loosening

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the sandal and washing in the blood that cleanseth from all sin. Let not the necessity of *repeated* and *daily* ablution discourage your continuous coming. Come by night, by day,—come with the failure of your holy and with the guilt of your unholy things,—come, though you have a thousand times before, wash and be clean. He who washed the feet of His disciples, knew the necessity of repeated cleansing. The Fountain is an OPEN one for this very purpose. Come without one fear of being upbraided for having come before, or of one chiding for the infirmity or the sin that brings you again.

“ So shall your walk be close with God,
Calm and serene your frame ;
So pure a light shall mark the road
That leads you to the Lamb.”

The relation of this daily feet-washing with our *religious progress*, is close and essential. A habitual acknowledgment of sin, and a constant recurrence to the Sacrifice that removes it, are among the most powerful as the most precious preservatives in the way of

holiness. These are most sanctifying engagements. They keep the heart in close communion with itself, and in closer communion with Christ. They promote wakefulness of conscience, tenderness of spirit, hatred of sin, watchfulness, and humility of walk. And, just as the turf which fringes the fountain and is washed by its spray, always blooms with life and beauty, so the heart that builds its home fast by the Fountain of Calvary will ever exhibit the quickening, sanctifying influence of the blood in its daily and constant application. Would we "*walk* in newness of life"—would we "*walk* not after the flesh but after the Spirit"—would we "*walk* worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called"—would we "*walk* circumspectly, not as fools"—would we "*walk* worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"—in a word, would we *walk* with Jesus in white, we must bring the FEET daily to Him to be cleansed, saying to every sinful allure-
ment that would fain turn us from the way of holiness, "*I have washed MY FEET, how shall I defile them ?*" (Song of Sol. v. 3.)

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While upon this subject of *washing*, let me earnestly caution you against the substitution of any other laver whatever for the laver of Christ's atoning blood. The water of *baptism*, administered either in the unconsciousness of infancy, or to the individual of full age and with consenting will, has no moral efficacy whatever either in changing the recipient from nature to grace, or in effacing from the soul one spot of sin. Awful and fatal delusion ! Awful in those who preach it, fatal to those who believe it ! Woe to those who blindly accept this doctrine, and still heavier woe is theirs who daringly and presumptuously propagate it—"teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Greatly do they err, not knowing the Scriptures. When our Lord said to Peter, "He that is washed needeth not save to *wash his feet*, but is clean every whit," He referred not to the laver of *baptism*, but to the laver of His own most precious BLOOD,) in which whoever is washed, though he were morally black as the Ethiopian, or spotted as the leopard, "*is clean every whit.*" The believing soul stands before God washed from every sin, and justified from all things. He is

clean every whit. His sins are all and wholly forgiven, his person is fully and for ever justified. "Such were some of you, *but ye are washed.*" Oh marvellous cleansing this! wonderful atonement, precious blood that can wash the sin-dyed, guilt-stained soul "*whiter than snow.*" When Christ affirms this to be the state of every believing soul, He palms upon us no fatal lie, He builds us up in no vain delusion, He mocks us with no shadowy promise or illusive hope. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life—is passed from death unto life." Oh, distrust not this great cleansing ! Disbelieve not this precious blood. Walk in the holy, happy experience of its daily application by the power of the Holy Ghost. Live upon it, and live it out, in your daily life. Esteem nothing so precious, estimate nothing so costly, regard nothing so reverentially, exalt nothing so highly, deal with nothing so constantly and holily, as the ATONING BLOOD OF CHRIST. "The soul that sinneth it shall *die*;" but "the BLOOD is the LIFE of the soul," and that life is ETERNAL.

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The subject of these pages addresses itself pointedly and solemnly to the *unconverted*, the *unwashed*. What were the words of Jesus? "*If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*" There exists not a greater sin, a crime of deeper dye, a guilt whose turpitude no words can describe, than that of neglecting this atonement, despising the blood, and trampling it under your feet as an unholy thing. The blood of Jesus, God's Son, is the divinest, the most costly and precious thing in the universe. It is the *only* thing that cleanses us from all sin. Imagine, then, what must be the guilt, and what the consequent doom of that man who scorns and rejects ATONING BLOOD! It is alone the washing of this blood that gives you a part with Christ. It is the blood that gives us union with Jesus—it is the blood which brings us near to God—it is the blood that *speaketh*, and that speaketh peace to the conscience and pardon to the soul. Apart, then, from this blood, you are *unwashed*. Your soul is still tainted and darkened and covered with the poison and pollution and guilt of *sin*. Not one spot of original, and not one stain of actual, sin

is effaced ; and you are hurrying to the dread judgment of the great day all covered, all laden, all condemned by sins red like crimson, and countless as the ocean sands. No part with Jesus !—then you are separated from all that is holy, gracious, and saving ! No part with Jesus !—then you are enrolled among His foes, and are walking in the counsel of the ungodly, and are standing in the way of sinners, and are sitting in the seat of the scornful. No part with Jesus !—then you must have your part with those of whom it is written, “*The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have THEIR PART in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*” Are you prepared to accept this as your doom ? To burn for ever and ever in quenchless fire —to be gnawed for ever and ever with the undying worm ? Awful thought ! appalling destiny ! Better never to have been born than to live the servant and to die the slave of sin, and then to wear its galling chain unbroken, unfastened, through eternity. But

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the blood you hitherto have disbelieved and neglected still flows, and still washes the vilest clean. Lose not a moment in applying to its sovereign efficacy. Repent of your sins. Ground the arms of your rebellion against God. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die ? If the believer, who is clean every whit, yet needs the daily cleansing of this blood, how deep and imperious must *your* need be upon whom not one drop of this precious, sin-cleansing blood has yet fallen ! Repair, then, to Christ without one moment's delay. Take your sins, great as they are ; take your burden, heavy as it is, and in faith plunge into this "*fountain, open for sin and uncleanness,*" wash, and be clean. Once more, remember the words of Jesus—" *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*" Throw yourself upon His pardoning mercy, who will in no wise cast you out.

" O Thou who art yet 'without Christ' in the world,
‘I’ve a message from God unto thee !

Before the last thunders of earth shall be hurled,
Jesus whispers, now, ‘Come unto me ! ’

" 'Twill soon be too late ! but 'yet there is room ;'
The Lamb that was slain now appears !

DAILY CLEANSING ; OR,

Oh wilt thou abide in perpetual gloom,
And only be washed in His tears ?

“ King David could weep, but his life he ne'er gave
From sin to set Absalom free !
But Jesus has died—He is ‘able to save,’
His blood is availing for thee ! ”

Should the eye of a sin-distressed reader light upon these pages, let him not limit the sovereign efficacy of the blood of Christ by doubting its power to pardon his sins and remove his guilt. There is no limit to the power of atoning blood but that which an unbelieving distrust of its efficacy presents. There is not a greater sin or deeper turpitude of guilt than a *disbelief* of the divine nature and sovereign virtue of the blood of the incarnate God. As it is the most costly and precious thing in the universe, so to doubt and reject it is a crime that has no parallel. And yet, oh weeping penitent, oh sin-distressed soul, as the blood of Jesus pardoned the sin and washed away the guilt of *shedding* it, so His blood can blot out the crime of having *disbelieved* its virtue and hesitated to accept its overture. “ The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, CLEANSETH us from ALL sin.”

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How impressive the *example* of Jesus in this act! Listen to His words, "Know ye what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye do well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*" In another place our Lord inculcated the same spirit of lowly bearing among the saints. "He that is greatest among you *shall be your servant.*" "He that is greatest among you let him be as the younger, and he that is chief *as him that doth serve.*" In the same strain the apostle exhorts, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind *let each esteem other better than themselves.*" "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," (Phil. ii. 3-5.) How many of the evils which affect society, still more, how much of the heartburnings and schisms which mar the peace of families and impede the prosperity of churches, are traceable to the non-observance of this precept. What a happy world, what a united household, what a holy Church, were

all animated with this spirit, and were all moulded in their intercourse by this illustrious example. Thus influenced, we should be ready to undertake any service for Christ, however humble, and to stoop to any office for the saints, however mean.

In a preceding part of this chapter we have dwelt at some length on the existence of *pride* in the believer. We would close it by remarking that the existence of its opposite—*humility*—is an essential element of the true Christian. As this is one of the first principles of our Christianity, so it is an ever growing and deepening one. Nothing more closely evidences an advance in the divine life as our growth in humility of mind. The nearer we approach to heaven the lower we grow in the estimate of ourselves. Not long after his conversion, Paul speaks of himself as *unworthy to be called an apostle*. As he advanced farther on in the divine life, he esteems himself *less than the least of all saints*. But as he approached the time of his departure, on the eve of his martyrdom, he speaks of himself as *the chief of sinners*. As the fruit ripens for the gather-

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ing it grows more mellow, so the soul that matures for glory becomes more humble and Christ-like, and is willing not only to wash the saint's feet, but even to be trampled under foot of the saints.

"If she have washed the saints' feet," was a scriptural and distinctive characteristic of the piety of the early widows, (1 Tim. v. 10.) Why should it be less so now? It will be so, at least in its spirit, in proportion to our real growth in grace. We learn to take the low place as we become more deeply sanctified, ready for any and every work and office the Master may assign us. It is the bough most richly laden with fruit that bends downwards and hangs the lowest. So those Christians who have the richest gifts and are favoured with the greatest usefulness think the most meanly of themselves, and hide their gifts and graces and usefulness deepest in the shadow of Christ's cross, and are the best prepared for the lowliest service of love to the saints. "The nettle mounteth on high, while the violet shrouds itself under its own leaves, and is chiefly found out by its fragrance. Let Christians be satisfied with the honour that

cometh from God only." Thus wrote that eminent man of God, Manton, his spirit and example presenting a true illustration of his own beautiful and expressive image.

" Lord, if Thou Thy grace impart,
Poor in spirit, meek in heart,
I shall as my Master be,
Rooted in humility.

" Simple, teachable, and mild,
Changed into a little child,
Pleased with all the Lord provides,
Wean'd from all the world besides."

Nor would we fail to remind you that the Lord sometimes employs the sanctified discipline of *trial* in order to quicken our spiritual sense of the need of daily cleansing. Not the least blessing flowing from *affliction* is this. We have, perhaps, lived at a distance from the Fountain. The blood has lost its preciousness, the cross its attraction; and we have travelled long and far—if travel we may term it—with the dust upon our sandals, and with the soil upon our feet. Affliction has brought us to a stand-still—has led us to reflection and self-examination, and we are roused to the conviction of the startling fact how much unrepented,

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unconfessed, uncleansed sin has accumulated, engirdling the heart, encrusting the conscience, clogging and impeding our feet in their heavenly way. Oh, how close to the Fountain does adversity now bring us ! How precious to our hearts does sorrow now make the Saviour ! We were unconscious of our heart's backsliding, had no suspicion of our spiritual declension, and knew not how far away we had strayed from Jesus and the fold until the voice of the rod awoke us from our deep, treacherous slumber, and brought us back. "*Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy law.*" Oh, sweet affliction that brings us in penitence to Christ's feet, that He might, in the condescension of His love, cleanse us afresh ! Be much in prayer and confession at the feet of Jesus, and, though you are often foot-sore and soiled in your earthly travel, His love will heal and His blood will cleanse you, and so shall you walk in white with Jesus here until, ere long, He shall say to you,— "Come up hither!"

Behold ! where in the Friend of man
Appears each grace divine ;

DAILY CLEANSING.

The graces all in Jesus met,
With holiest radiance shine.

Lowly in heart to all His friends,
A Friend and Servant found,
He wash'd their feet, He wiped their tears,
And heal'd each bleeding wound.

Be Christ our Pattern, and our Guide !
His image may we bear ;
Oh, may we tread His sacred steps,
And His bright glories share !

THE DISCIPLE WASHING CHRIST'S FEET ;

OR,

THE SERVICE OF LOVE.

"And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment."—LUKE vii. 37, 38.

WE have considered one of the most instructive and impressive acts of our Lord's life—His washing the disciples' feet. Scarcely less so is that one which is now to engage our study, and which we place by its side—

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the disciple washing the Lord's feet. The incident is one of those occurrences which illustrates the reciprocal interest which exists between Christ and His people. On His part, redeeming love and condescending grace; on theirs, the warmest affection and the most unreserved service. We need not speculate upon the identity of the woman who stole into Simon's house to perform this act of love to her Saviour. But little is known of her history. The only event recorded of importance to know is, her true conversion to Christ, and this fact will contribute to the praise of Jesus and the glory of God when the annals of the world and the exploits and pomp of the great will be buried in eternal oblivion. How indistinctly do we understand the nature, or estimate the importance of *conversion*. It is the only event in our history worthy of a thought. It is the *one* event of our present life, which moulds and colours all our endless future. All other events are grand impertinences in comparison of this one. Converted or unconverted! is the grand question. Converted—"life eternal!" Unconverted—

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“everlasting punishment!” So spake Him who is eternal truth. Let us turn to the woman who washed the Saviour’s feet. We are not to identify her with Mary, sister of Lazarus, who was of Bethany, nor with Mary Magdalene, who is supposed to have acquired this appellation because she was born in Magdala, an unimportant town of the tribe of Manasseh. But she, doubtless, resided in the city of Nain, and is described as “*a woman in the city*,” where in His walks of usefulness Jesus met her, to whom He preached the gospel of His grace—a gospel of glad tidings for poor, lost sinners—and who by His Spirit He drew to Himself in penitence, faith, and love. And now we are to view her as sitting at His feet, bathing them with her warm tears of affection, and illustrating the sweet service of love.

She is described as a “sinner.” Was she a sinner above all that dwelt in the city of Nain? Was she by nature viler than us? Nay, in the strong language of Scripture, “*All have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God.*” “*There is none righteous, no,*

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not one." We are all included in man's fall from original righteousness; all are conceived in sin and born in iniquity; all are by nature wholly depraved and universally tainted. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" This is the *first* lesson we learn in grace, the first stage we take in conversion—the lesson of our *sinnership*. If, my reader, the Lord is for the *first* time setting you to learn this lesson, if the fact has burst upon your mind as with electric power, startling you from a profound slumber, yea, awaking you from the sleep of death, hail with joy this new-born revelation *of yourself to yourself*, as the dawn of that day of grace which will assuredly terminate in an eternity of glory. Oh, it is a grand thing to learn spiritually and experimentally that we are *sinners!* To know it not merely in the judgment, but from the heart. To acknowledge it not only with the lip in the public service of the sanctuary, but to confess it in the private devotion of the closet, with the mouth in the dust, beneath the cross of Immanuel. Be assured of this, as of a most vital truth, that Christ will have no gracious

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dealings with you in the way of pardon, but in your capacity as a *sinner*. "He came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance." "He came to seek and to save that which was *lost*." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." "Sinners, of whom," says Paul, "I am chief." The Pharisee despised this poor woman because she was a sinner, but Jesus threw around her the shield of His sin-forgiving love.

But she was more than a sinner—she was a *penitent* sinner. God had given her a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and this had humbled her at His feet. Has He, my reader, wrought this grace in your soul? The world thinks meanly of a man who thinks meanly of himself; but God's estimate of self-abhorrence and man's estimate are essentially and widely different. The world passes him by as a being beneath its notice and regard, but God says, "*To this man will I look, even to him who is of a broken and humble spirit, and who trembles at my word.*" Make a personal and serious application

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of this truth to yourself, my reader. Has your proud spirit been humbled? Has the inmost and hidden fountain of evil been unveiled to your eye? Has Jesus, by His Spirit and truth and ministers, met you pacing along the highway of sin and rebellion, and shown to you the leprosy of sin, as, like a pestilential and fatal plague, it touched and tainted all within? Solemn, momentous questions! But how sweet and blessed is the grace of repentance! To lie in the dust before God is at once the most humiliating and the most exalting condition; it is the bitterest and yet the sweetest experience of the believer's life. There is no sweetness tasted of pardoning grace until this bitter. Like the little book which John received from the angel's hand and ate, which was "to the belly *bitter*, but in the mouth *sweet as honey*," so godly grief for sin is at first bitter as gall, but afterwards sweet as honey, in the experience into which it brings the soul of God's forgiving love.

She was also a *pardoned, saved* sinner. Her sins had been great, but the blood of Jesus had proved greater, and had prevailed

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to wash them all away. We too much overlook this assured truth—and its oversight is the secret cause of much spiritual despondency—the *present* salvation of a child of God. Salvation is always referred to in the divine Scriptures of truth in the *present* tense. “*By grace ye are saved.*” “*Who hath saved us.*” We shall never be more really saved than we now are if we believe in Jesus. Our salvation is not a past or a future blessing to be enjoyed, but a *present* one. Our sins are now all pardoned—“*Who hath forgiven you all trespasses.*” Our persons are now fully *justified*—“*Accepted in the Beloved.*” We are now adopted—“*Now are we the sons of God.*” Oh, let us not sink below the level of this precious and sanctifying truth, but rise to its highest reach and its fullest realization and enjoyment. We lose one of the most powerful incentives to holiness, and with this, one of the sweetest springs of happiness, when we lose sight of our *present* and *complete* salvation. How should our songs of praise wake the sweet echoes of every valley, and of every mountain, and of every plain, along which we travel home to

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God, for this great salvation which God has provided, which Christ has wrought, and which the Holy Spirit has applied, and which faith has freely received and is privileged fully to enjoy. "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*" Rest not until you know that you are saved. It is attainable—others have attained it, and so may you. The blood sprinkled, the Spirit's seal impressed, peace with God experienced, the Saviour's preciousness felt, and holiness breathed after, will leave not the shadow of a doubt upon your mind as to your present and eternal safety. How blessedly will this experience bear you through the trials and sufferings and sorrows of your pilgrimage ! It will extract poignancy from grief, will blunt the keen edge of affliction, will sweeten the cross, and fringe with gold and purple hues the dark and gloomy clouds which often drape the path we tread.

And mark the place where this loving disciple stood. It was at the feet of Jesus. "*And stood at His feet behind Him.*" How suggestive is this feature of her history. This is the true place of every believer—the feet

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of Christ. Everything which attaches to us as believers, and all the dealings of God, point to Christ's feet as our true place. All is designed to bring us *there*. Nor could we seek a place this shady side of heaven so favoured, appropriate, or blessed as this. That we may feel that this is the privilege of all, and that it is accessible to all, let us see what some of *the errands* are that brings us there.

In the first place, *spiritual ignorance brings us to the feet of Jesus.* The Lord Jesus is the great Prophet of His Church, her only Divine and authorised Teacher! All God's children are taught of Him, and their great Teacher is Christ the Anointed One. Thus spake the Lord, "*It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*" And again, "*Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*" There is a remarkable ignorance of this truth in the present day. Among the many and marked denials of Christ in high places, the denial of His *prophetical*

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office is not the least one. Men are setting themselves up everywhere as God-sent teachers of Divine truth, but who give undeniable evidence that they are but Satan-sent emissaries of human error—and, what is most lamentable and alarming, people love to have it so. But what is our safety? what is our true position? The answer is—humbly *sitting at the feet of Jesus*. Oh, honoured place! Oh favoured position of a poor sinner deeply sensible of his spiritual ignorance, and ardently desirous of being taught the truth as it is in Jesus. To this place we must bring all those mysteries of revelation, and apparently inexplicable truths, and discrepant statements, and things hard to be understood, which have perplexed and confounded us. The Bible can only be properly studied *in the light of Christ and at the feet of Christ*. If we read it merely as a history, or as a poem, or as a system of philosophy, and not as a Revelation of Christ only, we shall fail of compassing the grand end for which the Divine revelation was given. Or, if we sit at the feet of a human Gamaliel, and not at the feet of Jesus only, receiving in humility and faith

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the gracious words that proceed out of His lips, we shall most assuredly err, not understanding the Scriptures. Let your place of learning, then, my reader, be at the feet of Jesus. Are you perplexed about a doctrine, or an ordinance, or a question of conscience, or a path of duty ? take your place here, and seek instruction from Him, and in His light you shall see light. Human reason must come there, the pride of intellect must lie there, pre-conceived opinion must yield there,—sitting there as a little child, desiring the sincere milk of the word—as a humble disciple anxious to know the truth that quickens, sanctifies, and saves. Thus surrendering yourself entirely to Divine teaching, Jesus will show you the way of life, will enlighten your mind, resolve your doubts, and unfold to you more clearly the blessed truth that He Himself is “the Truth,” whom to know is life eternal ! I cannot sufficiently reiterate the averment that the Bible can only be clearly understood as it is studied in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, with one intent and aim only to know the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the Old and the New Testament unitedly testify. Thus the very closing

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book of the sacred canon, the Revelation of St John,—mystical and symbolical as it is,—is termed "*the Revelation of Jesus Christ*"—*i. e.*, not the revelation *by* Jesus Christ merely, but the revelation concerning Jesus Christ Himself. In other words, it does not mean so much Christ the Revealer, as Christ the *Revealed*. And so is Christ the revealed Messiah, Saviour, Redeemer of the entire Scriptures of truth. Jesus Christ is the same in the "*yesterday*" of the Old Testament, in the "*to-day*" of the New, and in the "*for ever*" of our endless study. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." "Search the Scriptures," said He to whom gave all the prophets witness, "*for they are they which testify of me.*" At the feet, then, of this Divine, skilful, gentle Teacher, humbly take your place as a sincere learner, as a loving disciple, and in His light you shall see light upon all that is essential you should know as a sinner on your way to the judgment. He will open your understanding as He did that of the disciples of old, that you may understand the Scriptures concerning Himself. Let us imitate Mary of Bethany,

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“which also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.”

Affection brings us to the feet of Christ. Love ever delights to be near the object of its preference and regard. In nothing does this sentiment find a truer, or more sacred illustration as in the experience of the believer. Christ is the Object of his supreme affection. He loves Christ more than he loves all other beings, single or combined. “*Lovest thou me more than these?*” awakes the ready and earnest response from every Christian’s heart, “*Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*” It is his supreme happiness, his heaven on earth, to be close to the Saviour who sacrificed His life for him, who called him by His grace, and has told him that where *He*, the Lord, is, there he the disciple shall be. This sensible realisation of the Lord’s personal presence constitutes the life and nourishment of daily personal religion. There are many religious professors who do not know what the absence of Christ is, because they know nothing experimentally of His presence. We cannot miss a joy we have never felt, nor pine for a blessing

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we have never possessed. We must experimentally and personally know Christ, and love Him, and walk with Him, to be conscious of the cold, dreary blank—a blank no creature-good can fill—which the withdrawalment of His sensible presence creates. Oh happy soul, so living in the sunshine of the Divine presence as to be sensible of the slightest cloud that veils it! who, wont to walk side by side and in face-to-face communion with the Lord, are more sensitive to any disturbance of your holy joy than the compass is to the slightest variation of the needle. Behold, then, the true place of love to Christ—*His sacred feet*. Prove your love to the Saviour, my reader, by being often there. Allow no creature to come between you and Jesus. Let not the world allure you from so dear a Friend. Be loving to His person, loyal to His cause, steadfast in His faith, valiant for His truth, holding fast your Christian profession without wavering. Let sensible nearness to Christ be the life of your religion and the characteristic of your walk. It is the *happiest* as it is the *holiest* life on earth. It is one remove only from

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the life of heaven. There, "*in His presence* is *fulness* of joy," and only there. We know the joy in part now when we feel our Lord near to us; but we shall know the "*fulness* of joy" then when standing in His beatific presence unshared by an object, unshaded by a cloud. Let the cold-hearted intellectualist call this the religion of sentiment if he may. I desire no other. To walk with God is the loftiest reach of the sanctified intellect, the highest and noblest desire of the human mind. We can only properly employ our thoughts upon God as we move in the orbit of His presence; and no object of contemplation and research, no theme of meditation and discourse, gives such development and expansion to the intellectual powers as the study of God revealed in His Word and manifest in His Son Christ Jesus. "*This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" How do we best become acquainted with the mental and moral qualities of an individual but by frequent, close, and confiding intercourse? Thus is it that in the Enoch-like walk of the child of God he gets to understand God's

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revealed mind and Christ's unveiled heart, and so his soul revolves near to the Divine, Eternal, and blessed Centre.

Not less does *the discipline of sorrow bring us to the feet of Jesus*. It is sent, indeed, by our blessed Lord for this purpose. Sorrow always brings Christ to our persons, and to our homes ; and, when sanctified, brings *us* to His feet in a closeness of acquaintance and fellowship, perhaps, unknown before. We become better acquainted with Him who Himself was acquainted with grief. Oh how *near* to Christ, our Friend and Brother, does one trial, a single affliction, a solitary sorrow, bring us. We seem scarcely to have known Him before. The stars we admired, the moon we worshipped of created attraction, have withdrawn their light, and the Sun of Righteousness takes their place, and we fall before Him with a depth of adoration and an intensity of love such as no Persian idolator ever felt in the worship offered to his god. What a volume on the hallowed benefits of affliction might the personal history of each child of God supply ! Would not this one stand first and foremost in the

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catalogue—"I have known *more of Christ* in this season of suffering, in this hour of sorrow, in the discipline of this one trial, than I ever knew in all my previous experience?" Truly is that sorrow a blessing when we can bless the Refiner for the sorrow, a sorrow that has brought us into the possession of a blessing like this. Oh, how we shrink from the discipline of trial as though some strange and needless thing happened unto us! How we recoil from this assimilation into which it brings us to Jesus, just as if the disciple must be above his Lord, the servant above his Master, the bride a wife of pleasure while the Bridegroom was a man of grief. O no! we wish it not. We would be like our Lord, and in nothing is the resemblance more complete than in the sacred sorrow which often drapes the spirit and crushes the heart. It is thus we "*have fellowship with Him in His sufferings*," and are made "*partakers of the afflictions of Christ*," drinking of the cup He drank, baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized, and treading the path He trod. And all this we come into the experience of when

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sorrow brings us to His feet. This, perhaps, in a measure, is a new place in our Christian experience. We have known something of the *head* of Christ, for we have felt the *power* of His truth ; we have known something of the *heart* of Christ, for we have tasted the *sweetness* of His love ; but little have we known of the blessing of lying down at the *feet* of Christ, chastened and humbled, emptied and weaned, willing that He shall be now, and in all future time, *our all in all*. For this the discipline has been sent. Your heart, perchance, has wandered far away from the Lord ; your walk with Him has been distant, your intercourse shy. Your mind has grown worldly, and your heart idolatrous ; your confidence has become timid, and your love has chilled. The Lord, whose eye has not for a moment lost sight of you, has seen it all, and, loving you, *in love* has sent the chastening that has brought you back to Himself, and once more you find your heaven at His feet. And then you sing—

“ Trials make the promise sweet ;
Trials give new life to prayer ;

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*Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there."*

Thither, tried and sorrowful believer, bring your grief. Those feet once pierced for you will now hide and soothe you within their very wounds, those wounds at once your healing and your shelter. It is a holy and costly sorrow that brings us closer to Christ. We never learn so much what He is as then. And when we arrive in heaven and fall down before His throne, how fully shall we realise the sentiment of the Christian poet—

*"Bless'd, there, with a weight of glory,
Still the path I'll ne'er forget,
But, exulting, cry, It led me
To my blessed Saviour's seat.
Sweet affliction,
Which has brought to Jesus feet!"*

Once more. *The feet of Christ is the only place of real safety.* There is much in the history of each saint of God to jeopardise his well-being. David was a giant in grace,—compared with whom the tallest of us are but dwarfs,—and yet listen to his petition, "*Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe.*" Paul was a veteran in the holy war,—compared with

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whom the most valiant of us are but raw recruits,—yet listen to his exhortation, “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” Ecclesiastical pinnacles are dizzy and dangerous places for a man of God. Have we ever met with one advanced to distinguished preferment who has not had need to seek a double portion of God’s Spirit to rest upon him? I received this holy acknowledgment once from the lips of a prelate whom in earlier years I had known and laboured with as the humble pastor of a village parish, but who since then had been advanced to one of the most important sees in the English Church; and God, I believe, gave him the request that he asked. The divine discipline, moreover, through which he subsequently passed, out of which fiery tribulation Christ took him to glory, brought him yet closer to the Master’s feet, from whence Jesus raised him to that bright world of bliss “*where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest.*” Here, then, is our true place of safety, wandering from which we are as “*a bird that wandereth from her nest.*” Peter had not

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denied his Lord but for this. Following his Master afar off, the enemy found room to come between him and Jesus; and thus, effecting a momentary separation of the disciple from the Lord, accomplished his downfall. Here, then, is our safety. "He that is down need fear no fall." He that lies "*low in a low place*" is safe. Here at the feet of Jesus the world is renounced, self is loathed, sin is forsaken. Satan flies, and God draws near, and we sit and bask in the sunbeams of His smiles. Oh that wherever we are, and with whatever we possess, to the place where this loving woman sat may we repair. Have you talents?—bring them here. Have you honours?—renounce them here. Have you wealth?—deposit it here. Are you useful?—lay it at the feet of Jesus. Accumulate, cluster, and concentrate all you are and all you have around those feet that trod for you Gethsemane's garden, and were nailed for you to Calvary's cross, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence.

We now reach an interesting and instructive part of this narrative—*the disciple washing Christ's feet*: "And washed His feet with

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tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head." Those tears!—who can analyse them? Where shall we find pearls so priceless, or stones so precious and of fairer colours? Away with the notion that true religion is the foe of sensibility, that the gospel of Christ is the patron of stoicism. The religion of Christ is the only religion that unseals the fount of feeling, while it chastens and sanctifies the tears it bids us shed. The Divine Author of that religion WEPT. What need we more? Let us turn, then, to the weeping disciple.

She washed Christ's feet *with the tears of penitence*. There are no tears in Christ's view more costly or precious than these. This woman was poor in spirit, humble and contrite, and as she stood behind her sin-for-giving Saviour, her tears of godly sorrow for sin rained fast upon his feet. Have you, my reader, wept for sin? Does the recollection of past transgression make you sorry? Does the memory of the sins of your youth, the transgressions of riper years, the sinful infirmities of old age, humble you in the dust? Holier and more precious tears were never

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shed than those wept for having sinned against God at Christ's feet. "*And Peter went out and wept bitterly.*" "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*" Good words these for penitent souls!

She washed Christ's feet *with the tears of faith*. Is faith, then, you ask, an emotional grace? Most surely so. "*With the HEART man believeth unto righteousness.*" And again it is written, "*They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn.*" It is faith that looks to a crucified Saviour, and the sight of the eye melteth the heart, and the believing penitent *weeps*. A humble *penitent*, this woman was a true *believer*. These are twin graces in the experience of the saints. *Repentance* towards God and *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ constitute the two cardinal principles of experimental religion. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus, my reader? The Bible does not ask if you work, or if you strive, or if you pray; its great inquiry is, "*Dost thou believe?*" "*To him that believeth is the reward not reckoned of works but of grace.*" Do

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you *believe* in Jesus ? Has your *faith* received Him ? Are you willing to be nothing ? to "cast your deadly doings down, yea, *down at Jesus' feet*," accepting Him as "*made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ?*" Come and wash the Saviour's feet with the tears that flow from a believing sight of Him whom you have pierced. Faith in Jesus will be as the rod of Moses smiting the rock and causing the waters to flow.

She washed Christ's feet, too, with *the tears of grateful love*. Jesus had pardoned all her sins, had absolved her from their guilt, and had released her from their power. How natural was the feeling of gratitude, how appropriate this service of love ! The most evangelical and genuine contrition for sin flows from a sense of its forgiveness. Nothing breaks the heart so thoroughly as the experience of God's pardoning love, love flowing from a sight of the cross. Sinai terrifies, but Calvary subdues. The law petrifies, but the gospel melts ; terrors repel, but love wins.

" Law and judgment do but harden,
All the time they work alone,

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But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves the heart of stone."

Let your love be a weeping love, then it will be a practical love, bathing the feet of Him who virtually bathes yours in the condescending acts of His grace, by which He is among us still as Him that serveth.

In lending ourselves to acts of Christian kindness, beneficence, and sympathy, we are still washing the feet of Jesus in the lowly service of love offered in His name to His saints. This fact is much overlooked—Christ as represented by, and as recognised in, His people. We but little reflect that when in any way we wound, or neglect, or despise a true disciple of Christ, we turn our back upon Christ Himself—such is the oneness, the essential, undeniable oneness of the Lord Jesus with His people. Oh how sweet it will be to hear Him say, when He comes in His glory to receive to Himself and to present to His Father His elect Church, "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" Then will the cup of cold water given—the soothing administered at the sick-bed,

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the visit to the house of mourning—be acknowledged and rewarded before an assembled world !

Then followed her *holy caress and the sacred anointing*. “And kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment.” This mode of courtesy, prevalent among the Jews, and also among the Greeks and Romans, received a peculiar and impressive significance in this instance. The kiss was her confession of Christ, the seal of her love to His person, the expression of her gratitude for His great and distinguishing grace towards her. The Church of old aspired to kiss the *lips* of Christ—“*let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth*”—but this disciple was content to kiss His *feet*. It is our happiness to know that the Lord will accept the lowliest service and the feeblest expression of faith in, and love to, Him. “If I may but touch the *border of His garment*,” is the highest ambition of humble faith; if I may but *kiss His feet*, is the ardent desire of lowly love. Judas soiled the *face* of Jesus with the kiss of perfidious treachery —this humble disciple anointed His *feet* with

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the sacred kiss of admiring and grateful love. Whose place would we prefer? Lord, let me kiss Thy feet, worship at Thy feet, keep close to Thy feet, until, springing from Thy footstool on earth, I find myself adoring, praising, loving Thee at Thy feet in glory.

“ That blessed interview, how sweet!
To fall transported at His feet,
Raised in His arms to view His face,
Through the full beamings of His grace.

“ Yet, with this prospect full in sight,
I ’ll wait Thy signal for my flight,
For, while thy service I pursue,
I find my heaven begun below.”

This narrative impressively illustrates *the true service of love*. Never did purer love offer a more grateful service to the Saviour than that which this sin-pardoned disciple presented. We behold the model of what Jesus desires and expects at our hands. We are Christ’s servants if we are Christ’s disciples—“*for we serve the Lord Christ.*” Our consecration to the service of Jesus is an evidence of our true love to Him. Love is not an inactive, selfish, indolent grace. “Faith,” which is the root of every other

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grace, “ works by love.” What will not mere creature-love do and suffer for the object of its regard! See its power in a mother’s heart, bending night after night in sleepless watching over her sick and suffering babe! See its power in a father’s heart nerving him for toil, and constraining him to plough stormy seas, imperilling life in distant and unhealthy climes, for *love* of that home-circle around which his untravelled heart still clings. But infinitely more potent, as divinely more precious, is the love which constrains the disciple of Jesus to consecrate his service to the Lord. Our Christian profession involves a service, as our Christianity imposes a cross. An inactive, indolent disciple of Christ is a contradiction of terms. The moment we become the Lord’s, we submit our necks to a yoke, and our backs to a burden, and love makes the one to be easy and the other to be light. Christ’s service has many fields and various departments—all may find employment here. There is a sphere for every servant, work for every labourer, employment for every gift. “ Son, go work to-day in my vineyard,” is Christ’s command to every be-

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liever, even to him of but *one* talent only. There is a field for the evangelist, a sphere for the teacher, scope for the visitor, work for male and female. Oh, how much is to be done for this fallen, sinful world, speeding to the judgment! What countless, goodly pearls are to be found! what hidden sheep are to be sought! what wandering children are to be brought home of the innumerable seed given of the Father to the Son, for whom He travailed in the sorrow of Gethsemane, the ingathering of whom He shall yet behold with infinite satisfaction, delight, and glory! To aid Him in this work of recovery, He asks our consecrated service, He bids us come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. And shall we, wearing the badge of the Christian disciple, renounce the livery of the Christian servant? Redeeming love, forbid it! We are the Lord's. Henceforth we bind ourselves to acknowledge no Master but Him, to wear no yoke, and to engage in no service but His. Oh impressive thought—“Whose I am, and whom I serve!” Up, then, my Christian reader, to the service of

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your Lord and Master. Awake thou that sleepest ! Rouse you from selfishness and indolence, and disinter your buried talent. Go to the cross, where, in tears and blood, in suffering and death, your hell was extinguished and your heaven won, and before that cross blush that you should for one moment have hesitated to yield your ransomed powers, gifts, time, and possessions entirely, freely, and supremely to the Saviour. From this solemn hour let love constrain you to a simple, self-denying, unfaltering devotion to Him who sacrificed His life for you, and who, at His second coming in glory and majesty, will make you sit down at the marriage banquet, and serve you. "*Where I am, there shall also my servant be.*" Weary, suffering, persecuted servant of Christ, take heart, for the Master is coming, and rich will be your reward. Bind to your heart His yoke more firmly, His burden more closely, His cross more fondly, for a glittering crown, and a snow-white robe, and a waving palm, and a golden harp await you in glory. Living or dying, be your place and posture that of the loving disciple we

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have been considering—*the feet of Jesus*. There you are happy and safe; there you will derive strength for duty, and grace for trial; and whatever clouds may shade other spots in life, *this* will be bathed in undimmed and eternal sunshine.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
Oh, what words I hear Him say;
Happy place! so near, so precious,
May it find me there each day.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
I would look upon the past;
For His love has been so gracious,
It has won my heart at last.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
I would seek to be much blest;
There I lay my sins and sorrows,
And, when weary, find sweet rest.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
I would wait my way to see;
Leaning, trusting, and confiding,
Since He orders all for me.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
Holy happiness I find;
In the secret of His presence,
He reveals to me His mind.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
There I love to weep and pray;

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While I from His fulness gather
Grace and comfort every day.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
I would choose that better part ;
Flee from earthly cares and pleasures,
While I tell Him all my heart.

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
I there learn His will divine ;
See His smile, and catch His sweetness,
As He whispers, “Thou art mine.”

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus,”
I would pray to be kept there ;
Clothed and hidden, wash'd, forgiven,
I may lay aside all fear.

Bless me, O my Saviour, bless me,
As I sit low at Thy feet ;
Oh ! lock down in love upon me,
Let me see Thy face so sweet.

Give me, Lord, the mind of Jesus,
Make me holy as He is ;
May I prove I 've been with Jesus,
Who is all my Righteousness.

E. F. DE M.

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING;

OR,

“HE WAS LED AS A LAMB TO THE
SLAUGHTER.”

“Patient in tribulation.”—ROM. xii. 12.

DOUBTLESS, the preceding chapter, illustrating the “service of love,” has found its way into many a sick and lone chamber. And as the suffering patient languidly turned over its leaves, the sad thought doubtless has risen in the mind—“*The service of love!* alas! I am but a dry tree, a useless cumberer of the ground, exiled from the world, hidden from the Church, and, lying upon this couch of weakness, an anxiety and care to many, a helper and succourer to none! How can

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I offer to Jesus the service of love ?” Suppress that desponding thought, hush that self-reflection, suffering child of God. Dost thou forget that there is a *passive* service of love, equally as an *active* service of love, for Christ ? That, there are graces of the Spirit which only find their true development and culture in the very school of God in which He has now placed thee ? And that, in that darkened room, and upon that suffering couch, and from that lonely exile, you may render to God a service of love, and yield to Him a sacrifice of praise not less precious, acceptable, and glorifying than that of the most active servant in the vineyard, or the most valiant soldier of Christ upon the battle-field. To endeavour to allay this mental depression, and to remove this unjust and painful self-reflection, the subject of these pages invites your devout attention — the PATIENCE of SUFFERING. “He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter.”

There is probably no grace of the Spirit in the believer more underrated or overlooked than that of *patience*. And yet there is not one which presents a stronger

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evidence or a more lovely illustration of the Christian character than it. Like some of those flowers God has pencilled with beauty and perfumed with sweetness, which unfold their tints and breathe their fragrance veiled from human eye, this lovely and lowly grace of *patience* is almost entirely lost sight of by those who are borne onward upon the sweeping tide of this ever-heaving, active age of the Christian Church. And just as those flowers are only to be found in turning aside from the beaten path and the excited multitudes who throng it, into some quiet, shaded nook, so those patient sufferers of Christ’s Church—those precious plants of His garden, so dear to His heart and so beauteous in His eye—are only to be met in scenes of suffering and sorrow, sequestered and shaded from all but God. Thus, in this age of Christian service, of rapid thought and of earnest action, there is danger of overlooking the hidden flowers of Christ’s garden ; in other words, of forgetting that there are *passive* as well as active graces of the Christian character which are as much the fruit of the Spirit, and requiring equally as

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skilful and diligent culture, and are as pleasant and glorifying to God, as an apostle's zeal or a martyr's heroism.

Let us, then, turn our attention to this hidden grace of the Spirit in the believer—the grace of patience in the season of suffering. “*Patient in tribulation.*”

And what, in the first place, is the school in which the holy lesson of patience is learned, the sphere in which this precious grace of the Spirit is developed and exercised? It is God’s school and sphere of *suffering*. The very existence of patience, or, in other words, a meek and quiet endurance of God’s will, implies the existence of suffering and trial. The passive graces of the Christian character have a sphere of development peculiarly their own. Like the stars of heaven, they only shine forth when night robes the world in darkness. We know but little of the character of others, still less of our own, until *adversity* draws it forth. It is thus with the Christian. It is seen but in profile by others, still more partially by himself, until brought under the discipline of trial. Adversity gives symmetry and com-

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pletiness to Christian character. A Christian man who is a stranger to affliction, a "vessel of mercy," who, though pencilled with the renewed image of God, has not yet passed through the fiery furnace which gives vividness and fixedness to the likeness—a child of God who, though a son, has yet to receive this unerring seal of his sonship, the chastening of a loving Father—must have much to pass through ere his Christianity receives its full and most beauteous development. And when we ponder these wondrous words respecting our Lord—
"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered,"
"He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter," can it be to us a matter of surprise, or even of regret, that, claiming a relationship to Him as our Elder Brother, we, like Him, should be "*made perfect through suffering?*" If He, our Brother, partook of our nature, and thus proved He was not ashamed to call us brethren, shall it be considered by us a strange and humiliating thing if we should be called to partake of His afflictions, to bear His cross, and thus have fellowship with His sufferings ?

Such, then, is God's school—the school of all whom He is training for heaven. There are various classes or departments in this school of suffering, just as there are varied lessons that we learn, and different degrees of grace to which we attain. All do not suffer, all are not chastened, all are not afflicted, alike. There is a *secret* in every cross we carry, a loneliness in every path we tread. The believer is of all beings the most inexplicable. A mystery to others, he is a greater mystery to himself. "*I am*," says David, "*a wonder unto many*," but a far greater wonder must he have appeared in his own eyes. Perhaps, in nothing does this deep, impenetrable veiling more signally appear than in the discipline through which the Lord leads us. Why we should suffer—why the suffering should come from such a quarter—or why it should assume such a form—be so dark, intense, and painful—is a profound in God's dealings which we cannot fathom. But, beloved, we shall never fully unravel this mystery of suffering until we arrive at that world where all the concealments of the present will be unveiled,

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where the mystery of suffering will then be found to have been but the mystery of love—love lovingly disguised—and when we shall know even as also we are known. It is this view of the concealment of suffering which invests it with a character so solemn and sacred. Nothing requires to be touched with a hand more gentle, nothing more delicately and partially unveiled, than *sorrow*. It would seem as if God alone had a right to do with grief, to enter within that most sacred of all human sanctuaries, the sanctuary of a heart which affliction has smitten, whose arteries are bleeding, whose fibres are quivering, whose tenderest sensibilities are crushed beneath a calamity God only can meet, a sorrow He only knows, as He only can comfort.

But what are some of those forms of suffering in each of which we learn the lesson and exhibit the grace of a loving, patient, acquiescence in the will of God? in other words, in which we illustrate, not the service, but the patient waiting of love. "*Patient in tribulation.*"

We reach many a home, and touch many a heart, when we place in the foreground of

our sad picture *the suffering of bodily ailment*. The world is a vast hospital. It is a lazaret-house of disease. Sickness is a result of the Fall, a direct result and fruit of sin. This form of parental discipline embraces a large portion of the suffering Church of God, perhaps, the largest. Enter what abode we may—the palace or the cottage, the palatial mansion of the rich, or the lowly cot of the poor—each has its bed of sickness, its couch of suffering, or its chamber of death. This, beloved, may be *your* school of discipline—the sphere in which you are called of God to exercise not the active service, but the *passive* waiting, of love. You were, perhaps, once an entire stranger to disease, and you could scarcely imagine that a form so stately could bow, and a constitution so robust could yield, and a bloom so brilliant could fade at the touch of sickness. But it has come ! The vigour, the elasticity, the flush of health are gone, and you lie prostrate upon that couch of suffering and weakness, the shadow, the wreck of your former self. And now, what gloomy thoughts and painful self-reflections crowd upon your mind ! You

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take up the stirring narrative that lies upon your pillow of arduous, brilliant, successful service for Christ and His truth wrought by others, and contrasting it with your own helpless inactivity and apparent uselessness, you are ready to write hard and bitter things against yourself, if not even tempted to cherish hard and murmuring thoughts against your God. But be still, my brother, my sister! Yours is a high school, a noble realm, an honoured sphere of love—love to God flowing forth and ascending to Him in a patient, cheerful, uncomplaining endurance of His will. What a witness for Christ and a teacher of men art thou on that bed of paralysed helplessness, that couch of unmitigated pain, that room of restless, ceaseless suffering! Superficial thinkers may imagine, and your own morbid feelings may suggest to your desponding mind the thought, that, because a child of God is confined to his room, or, in ordinary language, is laid aside, that therefore he has no duties to perform, no service to engage in, no testimony to bear for Christ. A great misconception is this, a lamentable error—the result, in most cases, of the gloomy, dis-

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torting effect of disease acting upon the mental and spiritual of our nature. The sick-room, the suffering-bed, has its peculiar and appropriate duties. Sermons are preached, truths are illustrated, lessons are taught there, heard from no pulpit and in no sanctuary in the land. To say nothing of the moral discipline to himself, of which sickness is instrumental — exercising and maturing the various graces of the Christian —what a testimony is borne from a sick-bed to the sustaining power of Divine grace, to the preciousness of the Divine promises, to the love of God, and to the faithfulness, tenderness, and sympathy of the Saviour! And, as we stand beside that sufferer, and silently gaze upon that beautiful quietness of godly submission, see the battle that is there waging between doubt and faith, despondency and hope, weakness and strength, fear and heroism, patience and irritability, and mark how the Christian shines, and how Christianity triumphs, surely there is a testimony borne in that sick, lone, quiet chamber to the Divine nature, the sustaining, soothing, death-conquering religion of Christ

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found in no battle-field of the Christian strife, though strewn with the spoils and resounding with the shout of victory. Oh yes, thou sick and suffering child of God, God has still lessons for thee to learn, a work for thee to do, and prizes for thee to win ! The lamp of life may burn long and sickly, but its dim and flickering flame may give light to some dark, bewildered soul feeling its way to Jesus ; it may guide some wandering footstep back to God, may nerve some wavering faith, dispel some gloomy fear, and plant a gem in the Saviour’s diadem that shall sparkle in the sunlight of glory for ever. Be patient, then, beloved, in this tribulation, for God is dealing well with thee, thou sick and suffering one, and thine is the patience of love.

Adversity presents another illustration of the passive grace of patience. Life has its moral seasons as nature its physical. It is not always spring or summer with us—oftener it is winter. The cold, withering storms of adversity sweep over us, and we are ready to take up the language of the weeping prophet, and exclaim, “ *I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath.* ”

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He hath led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is He turned; He turneth His hand against me all the day." Thus, perhaps, God is dealing with you, my reader. Affliction has arrested you. You have met with a sad reverse. Your commercial affairs are embarrassed, your extensive investments are imperilled, your hard earnings are swallowed up, and your entire social position is changed. And now let patience have its perfect work, lacking nothing. All is not gone ! The fruit may be blighted, the foliage may be scattered, the boughs may be broken, but the trunk and the root of the tree yet remain of spiritual life, of faith in God, of love to Christ, of integrity and uprightness, which no vicissitude of fortune can impair, no unruly blast of adversity destroy. All is not gone ! God is still your Father, Christ is still your Friend, hope is still your anchor, and heaven still your home. Let the quiet spirit exclaim, "*Thy will, my God, be done!*" Thus "*in your patience shall you possess your soul.*" From the whirl, excitement, and snares of busy, active life, God is leading you into the

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quiet, reflective repose of comparative exile. He has purposes of wisdom and thoughts of love by this timely arrest. He has wisely, righteously interposed a check to a course, a curb to a spirit, that may have imperceptibly beguiled you on to an unseen and fearful precipice. Stand still and see His salvation ; and learn from this holy lesson of your Christian life, that the patience of love, exhibited in your unswerving acquiescence, in your deadness to the world, and the closer drawing of your mind to divine things and eternal realities, may result in a richer blessing to yourself, and of greater glory to God, than the most successful enterprise in which your worldly interests were ever embarked. Hallowed discipline that yields such fruit, though it tear up and destroy, root and branch, every worldly gourd beneath whose grateful shade you sat.

Not less beneath *the correcting hand of God* is this heaven-wrought grace of patient acquiescence beautifully exhibited. He greatly errs who interprets the Divine chastening as a mark and token of judicial displeasure. He has read that magnificent chapter, the

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twelfth of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but superficially who so construes its remarkable and consolatory teaching. Thus we read—
“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?” I pause not, beloved reader, to inquire the cause of the Lord's present correction. It is a secret between Him and you, with which it behoveth not a stranger to meddle. The Lord has made known *His secret* to you—for “*His secret is with the righteous*”—and you have committed *yours* to Him; and well will He keep it, for you have confided it to a loving and faithful heart. All that we know is, that you are now the subject of His loving, wise, and holy discipline, and that as such we are desirous to aid you in the culture of that most attractive grace of the chastened child, which, while it will bring sweet repose to your own spirit, will result in a rich tribute of glory to Him, “even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is of great price.” Take God's servant David, as utter-

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ing the true language of a corrected yet patient and submissive child. He had been guilty of complicated crimes, and the heavy correction of a righteous Father was upon him. But mark his humble demeanour beneath the chastening rod—*"And the king said to Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation. But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him."* What remarkable language is this! How does this beauteous gem of patience in tribulation shine in this dark night of sorrow! Calm be your carriage, beloved, under the chastening hand of God. *"Wherfore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?"* Hushed be every murmur, quiet every rebellious feeling. Be patient, silent, even cheerfully acquiescent, behaving and quieting yourself even as a child that is weaned of its mother. Oh, sweet correction that embitters sin, endears the Saviour, unseals a new spring of love in my Father's heart, and gives me to see that in-

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finite wisdom, rectitude, and goodness maintain His throne and guard all my interests !

Patience in bearing the cross of Jesus is one of the fairest flowers blooming beneath its life-giving shadow. We have all, as Christ's followers, a common cross to bear after Jesus, and each bearer has a cross peculiar to himself. For the most part it is hidden. We but imperfectly know ourselves, and others, especially those who are the most eager to vault into the judgment-seat, know us still less. How little do men know the concealed cross that daily chafes and crushes us ! In our home circle, in our avocations in life, in our Church-relation, in our social position, the spirit droops and faints beneath the pressure of a trial which we can lay upon no heart but Christ's. Still heavier and more chafing, perhaps, the cross of our own irascible temper, murmuring, and fretfulness, our constitutional tendency to look always at the sombre shadings of the picture, the dark hues of the cloud spreading above us—to interpret as combining and working against us the varied providences of our God. Oh, what a heavy and sore cross lies deeply

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veiled in the heart of many a child of God ! But what, beloved, is the most sure remedy ? what the emollient which softens, soothes, and heals ? *It is the patience of love.* To be ready to carry the heavy yet sacred wood for Jesus, willing to bear reproach and contumely for His truth, willing to take the low place in His kingdom, to be set lightly by and considered as secondary, perchance to be laid entirely aside from His service altogether, oh, here is the patience and faith of the true saint and disciple of Christ, and rich the glory it brings to His great name !

But, probably, there is not a more impressive illustration of this elevating grace of Christian patience in the endurance of suffering than is supplied by a season of *bereaved sorrow.* "There is no sorrow," we are tempted in its first bitterness to exclaim, "like this." At least at the moment we feel that it is the greatest. When God takes from us affluence, we feel that by honest and persevering industry we may possibly regain it. When He deprives us of health, we hope that skill and science may restore it. Or, if the venomous tongue of slander has sought to

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poison and taint our reputation, we are conscious that time and holy living will confound our foe and bring forth our innocence as the noon-day sun. But when God enters our domestic garden to gather His lilies, breaks this strong stem, plucks that beauteous flower, fells this stately cedar or that strong oak ; or, to speak without a figure, when He justly takes the loved one that was but His, yet condescendingly asks it as if it were all our own,—transferring to Himself the being we had felt was more than half ourselves, whose love seemed essential to our very existence, and if *then* we bow meekly the head and exclaim, "*I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,*" oh this, *this* is indeed patience in suffering, the lustre of which adds a new beam to the splendour of Christ's grace ! The mute Christian in bereavement presents one of the finest specimens of the power of real religion recorded in its history. God said to the prophet Ezekiel, "*Son of man, behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke : yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry (i. e., be silent,) 178*

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because I have set thee for a sign to the house of Israel." What stupendous grace is this which can raise a man above himself and above the sorest affliction of his life, sealing his lips in silence, or, if permitted to speak, extracting the utterances of the most filial, uncomplaining submission to God's will. "*It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth to Him good.*" Be patient, then, beloved, under this sore bereavement. "Himself hath done it" who loves you as He loves Himself. "Am I not better to thee than ten husbands, or wife, or child, or friend? Have I divorced thee from myself? have I cast thee off? have I taken thine all? Am I not still thine, all thine, for ever thine?" "Yes," faith responds, "Thou, Lord, art mine, and through blinding tears I can now see how much better, far better, that the earthly treasure of my heart should be removed thus to prepare a wider, holier temple for Thyself. "Of *Thine* own have I given thee." Let "*patience*," then, beloved, in this season of crushing grief, "*have her perfect work*"—*i.e.*, give to it full play and development. Let it not be hindered, suppressed, or para-

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lysed by fretfulness, murmuring, or rebellion. “*That ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*”—i.e., that there may be nothing lacking essential to the symmetry of your Christian character; that it may be, as the original expresses it, whole in every part, nothing wanting. What apparently beautiful and perfect Christian characters we sometimes meet in the bright sunshine of prosperity; but when affliction comes, the elements and principles of their piety are not fully carried out, and the incompleteness of their Christianity becomes strikingly and painfully evident. There is opposition to God’s will, a questioning of the wisdom and love of His procedure, a restiveness and restlessness which at once show that Christian patience, in other words, meek, silent submission to God, has not had her *perfect work*. This thought suggests the closing observations of the present chapter—What are we to understand more fully by *patience in suffering*?

It is decidedly a *Christian* grace, wrought in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We must distinguish it from natural apathy and indifference. Apathy implies a want of sensi-

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bility; but Christian patience, in the midst of the deepest feeling, enables the sufferer to bear the weight of his affliction without a single murmur. It is often found in alliance with the acutest sensibility; yea, it is from the depth of the deepest feeling that the truest patience often springs up the purest and most sparkling. There may exist in the *unregenerate* a self-control, under circumstances of the greatest provocation, strongly resembling the patience of the believer, which we must be careful not to identify with the Christian grace. An incident in the life of Sir Walter Raleigh will illustrate this idea. On one occasion, when insulted by a young officer at court, he placed his hand upon his sword, and calmly said, “Young man, could I wipe your blood from my sword as easily as I can your spittle from my face, I would pierce you to the heart.” This, after all, was but a striking instance of natural self-command. But listen to the language and behold the patience of a greater man and of a more wounded sensibility than his. God had swept from Job all his wealth, had bereaved him of all his children, and had

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afflicted his body with a loathsome disease; the affection of his wife was alienated, and his “inward friends abhorred him, and those whom he loved were turned against him;” and the agony of his soul found vent in these exquisitely touching words, “*Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.*” But how did he demean himself before God? Did he fly in His face, dispute His right, impeach His goodness? Listen to his words—“*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.*” Sublime repose! magnificent faith! God-glorifying patience! “Ye have heard of the patience of Job.” Study it, pray over it, transcribe it, until it becomes, as it were, a part of your own moral being, thou tried believer, thou chastened saint of God. Was, then, this grace of patience in suffering peculiar to the patriarch? Nay, beloved, the feeblest saint who kisses God’s rod, who falls in the dust beneath its stroke, as the wheat beneath the flail falls down at the feet of the thresher, and who lies there chastened, yet subdued, sorrowful, yet silent, afflicted, yet

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submissive, possesses like precious faith with Job, and presents a spectacle of moral sublimity scarcely less magnificent and instructive than his. Can you bless God for all His dealings with you? Can you honestly bless Him for sickness—bless Him for bereavement—bless Him for poverty—bless Him for the spring He has dried, for the sun He has shaded, for the cloud-veil He has drawn over life's sweet landscape? Then you are enrolled among God's nobility; your "witness is in heaven, and your record is on high," and Jehovah looks down upon you with ineffable delight. Oh, what moral grandeur invests this patient and unreserved surrender of your being, your way, your entire history to God! How must angelic students study this spectacle of grace! How must it deepen the joy of glorified spirits!* How must heaven grow brighter and its music

* Is it speculative to suppose that the glorified saints are in some degree cognisant of what is transpiring in the Church below, through intelligence conveyed to them by the "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" If there is no positive Scripture to sustain, there seems no just reasoning to negative, the idea.

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sweeter by this and every other conquest of Divine grace, power, and love in the saints on earth, redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb ! Be this simple and entire surrender, my reader, yours. Suffering child of God, "ye have need of patience," and Christ can give, and His grace can sustain it, and its exercise shall be an unceasing source of praise to our great Jehovah's name. If this be so, your willing heart responds, "Then, Lord, not my way, nor will, nor pleasure, but Thine, and Thine alone."

Again, the Christian grace of patience is to be carefully distinguished from the sullen, stoical indifference of the man who recognises not God in his affliction. The essential difference of the two characters is this :—the unregenerate man looks upon his affliction as coming forth from the dust; while the Christian man traces it to God, accepting it as a Heaven-born, God-sent dispensation. The one is sullen and morose because he regards his reverse as the result of a misjudged step, or of cruel fate; the other is joyous and praiseful because he sees the hand of a loving Father in the discipline. Hence the

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language of the apostle—“ *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations,*” (or trials,) “ *knowing that the trying of your faith worketh PATIENCE.*” The same apostle, referring to himself, says, “ *I am exceedingly JOYFUL in all our tribulation.*” And again, writing to the Colossian saints, he speaks of their being “ strengthened to long-suffering with *joyfulness.*” Thus *cheerfulness* is an essential element of true Christian patience, as distinct from the petulant and gloomy spirit of the unregenerate mind, which is not resigned to God’s will, because it rejoices not in His sovereignty, but reluctantly and churlishly submits to His government, because it is too impotent to resist His power. Oh, what a high attainment in our spiritual education for heaven is *patience in tribulation!*

But turn we to that signal and illustrious instance of patience in suffering presented by our adorable Lord Jesus. As there never was suffering like unto His, nowhere shall we find such a perfect exhibition of Lamb-like, uncomplaining endurance. His infinite intelligence, His perfect sinlessness, and exquisite human sensibility, rendered

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Him all the more acutely alive to the extreme baptism of suffering through which He passed. Suffering to Christ was a school. "*Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.*" He learned, as I suppose the mind of the Spirit in the apostle to be, *experimentally*. Until our Lord came under the obligation of the law, and took upon Him sin, the path of obedience and suffering must necessarily have been to Him an untrodden path. It was necessary, therefore, that He should be an *experimental* Saviour. "*He learned obedience*" —He learned experimentally the *nature* of obedience, as also the *difficulty* and the *blessings* of obedience. He learned, too, the nature and the bitterness of suffering "*by the things which He suffered.*" He derived not His knowledge of obedience and suffering from His own intuitive consciousness, neither did He receive it through the predictions and writings of the prophets. He would accept nothing that was merely notional or theoretical. He would know it all, understand it all, and pass through it all by a personal experience of what it was. Thus

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our Lord Jesus becomes our perfect Pattern in this one particular of His life—His patient endurance of suffering. “*He opened not His mouth*” to murmur or complain. He repined not, fretted not, rebelled not ; but when reviled of man He reviled not again, and when afflicted of God He bowed His head and exclaimed, “*Thy will, not mine, be done.*” Suffering believer, come and learn how to suffer from your suffering Saviour. Admire His patience in suffering ; nor stop at admiration, but imitate it, transcribe it, and make it your own, for “*He hath left us an example that we should ‘follow His steps.’*”

“ Perfect through suffering ; may it be,
Saviour, made perfect thus for me !
I love to kiss the rod
That brings me nearer to my God.

“ Perfect through suffering ; be Thy cross
The crucible to purge my dross !
Welcome for that its pangs, its scorns,
Its scourge, its nails, its crown of thorns.

“ Perfect through suffering ; heap the fire,
And pile the sacrificial pyre ;
But spare each loved and loving one,
And let me feed the flames alone.

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" Perfect through suffering ; urge the blast,
More free, more full, more fierce, more fast ;
It reeks not where the dust be trod,
So the flame waft my soul to God." *

These pages are necessarily limited to a consideration of patience in suffering ; yet would I not overlook a class, a large class, who, in all probability, will scan them, who, like the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, have been long and patiently waiting the moving of the healing waters. But why this waiting ? Unlike that mystic fount, the waters of salvation are ever healing, and the atoning blood of Jesus is ever-cleansing, come when and where and how the poor, miserable, sin-burthened guilt-oppressed soul may. Hast thou been long in this state of conscious sinfulness ? Has no one helped thee to believe in Jesus ? Behold, Jesus Himself now passeth by ! He sees thee, knows thee, compassionates thee, thou sin-distressed soul, and is ready to make thee whole. Thy patient waiting for Christ alone to speak words of comfort, and to assure you with His own tender accents of love that

* Bishop Doane.

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you are saved, shall not be all in vain. Believe but in Jesus, believe in Him now, simply, *only* believe, and all the chimes of heaven will announce and celebrate the event of your soul new-born into Christ's kingdom. With joy you may now draw water from the wells of salvation, and henceforth that living stream shall be in thee a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Come without preparation, believe without demur, accept without price, and God will throw around you the paternal arms of His reconciled love.

The *blessings* that flow from patience in suffering are many and precious. Patience is more than half the removal of the cup, the unclasping of the burden, the healing of the wound. It brings with it peace and joy, and hope passing all understanding. The moment you cease to fret against the Lord, and assert your own will, to kick against His dealings, and to refuse to bow the neck to His yoke, that moment peace, sweet peace, lights upon you as a heaven-descending dove, and enfolds around your spirit her loving wings. Deeply *sanctifying*, too, is this grace of Christian patience in suffering. There

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can be no hallowed results of the Divine discipline while the heart is in a state of rebellion against God. The recipe can avail us nothing as a cure while we resist the hand that compounds and administers it. But let faith accept what reason cannot fully understand, let love interpret what sense cannot perfectly decipher, let the heart obey what the judgment cannot wholly grasp in the providential and gracious dealings, revelations, and commandments, of our Heavenly Father, and you are more perfectly conformed to His holiness.

Patience in tribulation will not only bring you into more perfect fellowship with Christ in His suffering, but also into greater nearness to, and a holier fellowship with, the "God of all comfort." You need comfort, you crave comfort, you ask for comfort; and who can grant it you but God? Into what heart does He the most delight to pour the deepest, richest streams of consolation? Is it not the heart of the meek and patient sufferer? Listen to His words, "*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the*

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high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one.” Take thy place, then, low at His feet, thou suffering child of God, drinking meekly the cup He hath given thee, and thy peace shall flow as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. “ *I, even I, am he that comforteth you.*”

Have I then, with God’s blessing, chased one gloomy shadow from thy brow, or quelled one trembling fear in thy heart, suffering Christian? Then give to Him thanksgiving. Paralysed and bed-ridden, you have deemed your life a blank, nay, more, a lost life, and have wondered God has not expelled you from His Church, or removed you from the world. Be still! Remember Him who commended the thoughtful, quiet spirit of Mary above that of the active, bustling Martha, and recall to mind the expressive words of the blind poet sublime—

“They also serve who only wait.”

Oh, no! thou art not in Christ’s garden a sapless tree, a fruitless branch, a withered, scentless flower. Thy lowly chamber has its

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teaching, thy suffering couch its mission ; and a more Christ-exalting and God-glorifying sermon never woke the rapture of a listening throng than you by your patient endurance, simple faith, peaceful love, and fervent prayer, may preach to all who shall glorify God in you. You have thought that you could glorify Christ more by the *service* of love—*He* sees that you can best glorify Him by the *patience* of love. And now, by a “meek and quiet spirit,” by exhibiting the strength of Divine grace in sustaining, and the power of covenant love in soothing the mind in the season of sorrow and weakness, you may scatter golden seeds of truth and comfort along your sad and suffering pathway, which, when the fashion of this world shall for ever have passed away, and the music of its harp and viol and tabret shall be hushed in the wailings of endless despair, will yield to you a harvest of thanksgiving and joy, and to God a revenue of glory and praise holy as His being and lasting as eternity. “*Ye have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God you may receive the promise.*”

“HE IS RISEN ;”

OR,

THE SIGHT OF A LIVING CHRIST THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

“Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.”—JOHN xx. 20.

THE three days of our Lord’s burial were days of gloom and sadness to the disciples. Not less truly or darkly did the shadows of the grave drape His sacred form than they did the hearts and hopes of His little band of followers. Their faith in His oft-repeated assurance that He would rise again from the dead was faint and fluctuating. To their spiritual eye, veiled by unbelief and dimmed

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with tears, the Sun of Righteousness, which set in darkness and in blood, had set for ever. Although He had forewarned them He should be delivered into the hands of men, that they should kill Him, and that after He was killed He should rise the third day, yet we are told, “*they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*” And even after His resurrection was an accomplished and indisputable fact, attested by eye-witnesses, angels and men, and confirmed by many infallible proofs, yet how slow of heart were they to give it their full and unhesitating credence ! See we not, beloved, a reflection of our own Christianity in these unbelieving, timid disciples ? We as faintly believe all that Christ is, all that Christ has done, and all that Christ has promised. The fact that He is risen from the dead, that He is alive in heaven spending His life for us at this moment, and that with His our life is essentially and indissolubly bound, is so faintly believed, so imperfectly realised, so little lived upon by faith, no marvel that, like the disciples of old, we “*walk and are sad,*” with tears gazing into the tomb in search of

a *dead* Christ, rather than looking above the grave, above sin, above sorrow, above a poor, changing world up to a *living* Christ in heaven. Strange that we should for a moment lose sight of the fact that true faith, "*the faith of God's elect*," has solely to do with all that Christ is. God has deposited all our grace and glory in the person of Christ. All the fulness of God, all the promises of God, all the supplies of the covenant, and all the granaries of the gospel, are lodged in the hands of our risen Lord. It follows, then, that faith, the receiving grace of the believer, has to do immediately, simply, and only with Christ. It can believe nothing that Christ has not taught, can obey nothing that Christ has not commanded, can practise nothing that Christ has not exemplified; in short, Christ to true faith is all and in all. It trusts in Christ as a Redeemer, obeys Christ as a Lawgiver, yields allegiance to Christ as a King, lives upon Him as his Preserver, and in grief, and trial, and want repairs to Him as the Brother born for adversity; in a word, turns to Him under all circum-

stances, as truly and spontaneously as the needle to the magnet, as the flower to the sun.

The *fact* of the resurrection of Christ must ever be regarded as one of the most essential, and, as a *doctrine*, one of the most precious of the Christian faith. The *argument* in support of the fact, as drawn from the experience of the early apostles, is simply this : They went forth enduring every species of scorn, submitting to every kind of persecution, and exposing their lives to every form of death in their firm belief that Christ was risen from the dead. Would they, or could they, have subjected themselves to all this in the propagation of what they knew to be a *lie?* Impossible ! In attempting to crush the new and rising religion, it was everything to the Jewish rulers to prove that Christ was *not* alive—in propagating and establishing that religion it was everything to the Christian apostles to prove that Christ *was* alive. This was the question of dispute between them. But when the Sanhedrim, in attempting to disprove the fact of the resurrection, substituted physical force for moral argu-

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ment, violence for proof, and cruelty for evidence, they but demonstrated the fallacy of their own statement and the truth of the apostles'. When, by bribery and corruption, they sought to win over to their cause the Roman soldiers, and by stripes and imprisonment to silence the apostles, who does not see that they betrayed the falsehood of the one statement, that Christ was *not* risen, and confirmed the truth of the other, that He *was*? Now we argue that the apostles—men who, on former occasions, had manifested so much natural timidity, and had betrayed so great a want of moral courage—when they went forth and throughout Jerusalem and the provinces, preaching the resurrection of Christ in the face of persecution and death, gave the strongest moral attestation to the fact that their Lord and Master was alive. In support of this truth, they were willing to wade through a sea of tribulation, to be regarded as false witnesses and wild enthusiasts, to suffer the confiscation of property and the loss of personal liberty, to go to a loathsome prison and to meet a martyr's death! My reader, are you a reli-

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gious sceptic ? do you disbelieve the truth of Christ’s resurrection from the grave ? Ponder, I beseech you, honestly, calmly, this one fact—the willingness of the apostles to suffer loss, persecution, and death for their belief of this truth. Who was it that supported these apostles in the fiery furnace which they endured for their faith in this doctrine ? It was by no natural, no human power and courage that they were sustained. They were suffering *for* Christ, and they were fortified, strengthened, and upheld *by* Christ. Think you that God would become a party to a lie ? that Christ would lend Himself to the propagation of a fiction ? that the Holy Spirit would impart might, energy, and fortitude to men who were seeking to palm a falsehood upon the world ? And yet to this monstrous, this awful conclusion you must come, if you deny the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith—*the resurrection of Christ from the dead.* The fact that the apostles bore about with them in their bodies the *death* of the Lord Jesus—in the sufferings which they endured—was one of the strongest evidences of the *life* of the

Lord Jesus—in the succour which they experienced.

But the resurrection of Christ is not only a historical fact, it is also an *essential doctrine* and an experimental truth of Christianity. It is in reality the foundation of the fabric—the key-stone of the arch—of our divine and holy faith. The resurrection of Christ is inseparable from the truth of the Christian religion. If Christ is alive, then the gospel of Christ is what it affirms itself to be—*divine*. Viewed in this point of light, it is inexpressibly precious. The believer sees in it the evidence and the pledge of his full pardon, his complete justification, of non-condemnation. There is now no condemnation to them who are mystically risen with Him. The argument of the apostle is conclusive—“*Who was delivered for our offences, and was RAISED AGAIN for our JUSTIFICATION.*” That is, Christ was surrendered to death to expiate our sins, and was raised again from the dead to justify our persons. By the *death* of our Lord a full atonement was made for sin, and by His *resurrection* our complete acceptance with

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God was sealed and secured. His death would have availed us nothing apart from His resurrection. The one would have been imperfect but for the other. It is true, justice would have been satisfied, but the evidence of that satisfaction had been wanting if Jesus had not come back from the grave. There was death so long as He remained a prisoner within the tomb. A great stone lay upon the hope and salvation of the Church. But when He rose from the dead, He rose as the “Resurrection and the Life” of His people. He then gave to the universe full proof that His work was complete and accepted of the Father, that His sacrifice was perfect and approved, and that henceforth whosoever believed in Him were fully pardoned, freely justified, and eternally saved. But we return to the apostles.

After much doubt and hesitation, the glorious fact burst upon their minds with overpowering conviction that their Lord was alive, that Christ was risen from the dead. A new world glowing with life and beauty seemed to unvail to their view. *“Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for*

the eyes to behold the sun." After three days of entombment, according to His promise, often made and as often disbelieved, He rose from the dead, and once more, as of old, appeared alive in their midst. Again they saw their beloved Friend, heard the well-known tones of His voice, gently touched His wounds, and ate the bread He brake. And now their gladness was great! Their night of weeping had brightened into a morning of joy; and, filled with the thought of His resurrection, their hearts glowing with the truth that He who was dead was alive again, and lived, to succour, to comfort and to be ever with them, they went forth to chant through the wide world their EASTER HYMN of gladness—"THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED!" "*Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.*"

Not less vital or joyous to us is the truth that Christ is *alive*. What to the first disciples was a gladsome object of *sense* is to us a yet more gladsome object of *faith*. They beheld their living Lord with a bodily, we with a spiritual eye. They believed because they saw, we believe though we see

not. Our mind rests upon a less material, but more spiritual and assuring evidence, since faith is a higher, more convincing and God-glorifying principle than sight. Hence our Lord said to Thomas, “ *Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*” Listen to the language of the apostle, “ *Whom having not seen you love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” In what sense, then, should the truth of a *living* Saviour be a cause of joy and gladness to the Christian ?

First, it is a soul-quicken ing truth. There is no spiritual life but that which flows from Christ. “ *I am come,*” says our Lord, “ *that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.*” The apostle confirms this truth when he says, “ *Christ, who is our life.*” The inference from this fact is a solemn one, viz., that he who has not Christ has not life ! That, whatever may be the vigour of his natural life, the splendour of his intellectual life, the purity of his moral life, the strictness of his religious life, if he

has no spiritual, vital, personal union with a risen Christ, he is dead while he lives, and when he dies, is the heir of the second death, whose worm never dieth, whose fire is never quenched. "*Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.*" But how replete with the material of true joy is the life of Christ to His people! Life, beautiful in any form, was transcendently so when "Christ who is our life" rose from the dead. So long as our Lord remained locked in the rigid chain of death, and in the cold embrace of the tomb, the life of the Church was in eclipse, veiled with the deep, dark shadows of the grave. But when He broke that chain, and emerged from that imprisonment, life and immortality appeared as in a new form and with more resplendent glory, and took its place in the universe as never seen before. Never before had death slain so illustrious a victim, or the grave held so great a prisoner, or had both been so signally defeated, as when the Son of God died and rose again. All this was representative. How much we overlook the substi-

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tutionary life of Jesus. How faintly we realise our personal identity with the Saviour in all that He did as the Head of the Church, as the Surety and Mediator of His people. The risen life of Christ is the resurrection life of our souls. As mystically we were *crucified* with Christ, so mystically we are *risen* with Christ. Figuratively, we are “*buried* with Him in baptism, and are *risen* with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead,” (Col. ii. 12.) Blessed union ! One with Christ in all that He did. One life in many forms—the risen life of Jesus pulsating in countless myriads of living souls ; the whole Body, the Church, quickened with new vitality from the new-born life of its Divine and Risen Head. Let the life you live, beloved, be a life of faith in the resurrection-life of Christ. And when you are conscious that your spiritual life is depressed, that its pulse beats faintly, and its actings are fitful ; that faith is weak and the spirit of prayer languishes, that grace is at a low ebb, and that your soul mounts, if it mount at all, towards God and heaven but

upon a feeble wing, then travel afresh to the resurrection-life of the Saviour, and give Him no rest until you feel afresh the *quickening power* of His resurrection in your soul. Be not satisfied with mere spiritual existence, a moral vegetation only in the Lord's garden ; aim after the higher life, and after the highest development of that life—even to *know* your individual and vital oneness with Christ in His resurrection. Oh, holy, happy life this ! Clouds may wreath your sky, thorns may strew your path, your faith may be assailed, your circumstances may be trying, your spirit sad and lonely, but yet, walking in sweet fellowship with a risen Christ, you will rise above it all, filled with the peace, joy, and gladness which the *believing* sight of a *living* Saviour ever inspires. Then will you be enabled in some blessed measure to enter into the apostle's exalted experience, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*"

A believing apprehension of a living Christ

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seals the conscience with peace. Peace is a precious, priceless jewel. None possess it but those who are sprinkled with the peace-speaking blood of Jesus. Peace springing from a sense of friendship with God, of pardoned sin, of acceptance in Christ, of life with a living Saviour, is theirs only who have felt in their souls the power of Christ's resurrection. The sense and enjoyment of peace may fluctuate because the spiritual life is a ceaseless conflict with the flesh, with corroding doubts and unbelieving fears, with outward assaults, temptations, and trials; so that the peace of the believer is often interrupted and ruffled by hostile and disturbing influences. But Christ is alive! Walking upon the broken waves of our doubts and fears, He comes to us in all the majesty of Divine power and the meekness of human compassion, and says, “*Peace, be still, and there is a great calm.*” Oh, how gladsome is the soul when thus it sees the Lord! In all this holy war between the old man and the new, with all the “mire and dirt” which indwelling sin, “like the troubled sea,” is ever casting up, with all

your battle with doubts and fears, only realise your oneness, not so much with the life of Christ, as with a *personal*, living Christ Himself, and you shall know the peace of God in your soul, passing all understanding. Because Christ lives, indwelling sin shall not slay you. It will struggle for the mastery, the flesh will contend for the pre-eminence, but the power of a living Saviour through the indwelling of the Spirit will prevail, and sin shall not have dominion over you.

Not less effectual is a sight of our living Lord *in the removal of spiritual doubts and in the quelling of unbelieving fear*. Until these disciples "saw the Lord," saw Him in His risen, resurrection-life, their minds were assailed by carnal reasoning and unbelieving despondency. "Is this the Christ that should come? Is His religion true? Was He a deceiver, and are we the victims of the deception? Will He really come back again from the grave? Will He fulfil His promise? Shall we once more behold the form that attracted us, hear the voice that charmed us, feel the presence that soothed us, and again lean our head upon His loving heart?"

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But all this carnal reasoning vanished, all these unbelieving doubts and fears gave way, when they saw the Lord, as the gray mists and spectral illusions of the morning vanish before the light and splendour of the ascending sun. By like spiritual doubts and fears are we, beloved, often assailed. Seeing more and more clearly the sin that dwelleth in us, knowing increasingly the spiritual war, the fight of faith, we are ready to doubt our saintship, to renounce our sonship, and to relinquish our humble hope of ever reaching heaven at last. But one simple, believing sight of Jesus alive, ever living to make intercession that our weak, assailed, and trembling faith fail not, disperses all our doubts, annihilates all our fears, silences our fleshly reasoning, and reassures our trembling souls with the blessed hope that, *because Christ lives we shall live also.* Thus, then, when assailed by doubts and fears touching your salvation, behold afresh your risen Lord. Realise His life in your soul. One sight of Jesus, one throb of His risen life, one moment's realisation of your present oneness with Him who came

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back from the grave to seal for ever the justification of all who believe in Him, will lift you from the region of uncertainty and cloud into the meridian of assurance and joy, awaking in your soul the exclamation, "*This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend?*" Now I believe and am sure that this is the very Christ of God, the Saviour of sinners, even of *me!*"

A sight of Christ alive *will make your afflicted and sorrowful heart joyful.* Never was sadness so real turned into joy so great as when the first disciples once more saw their risen and living Lord. Sorrow, beloved, is the heritage of all God's people. The disciples and followers of the "*Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,*" can we expect or even desire that it should be otherwise? Thus, for the members to be assimilated to the Head is a great privilege and honour. Deem not, then, that some strange thing has happened unto you if your Lord calls you to drink a cup of bitter woe, to tread a path of piercing sorrow, to bear a cross that chafes or a burden that crushes you, since it is the royal road to heaven. Little, oh, how little, would you

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know of the blessedness of possessing spiritual life in, of drawing fresh life from, Jesus—life-supporting, life-soothing, life-sanctifying—but for the very discipline of suffering and of trial through which you are, perhaps, now passing. The Lord is writing death upon some living blessing, is blighting some blooming mercy, is enshrouding in the grave some choice and precious treasure of your heart, and your cup of sorrow overflows. Is all dead? is all gone? Is He Himself, who has blasted health, who has broken the strong and beautiful staff, who has dried up earth's resources, who has emptied you from vessel to vessel, entirely and for ever withdrawn? Oh, no! *Jesus lives!* He lives to strengthen you in weakness, to make all your bed in sickness, to supply all your temporal need, to give you a much greater blessing than He has removed, and to stand fast by your side when days are dark, and riches take wing, and friends prove false, and health decays, and suffering and weakness incapacitate you for service and isolate you from God's sanctuary.

The season of bereavement is one in which

a believing apprehension of a risen, living Saviour brings to the mind especial comfort and repose. When *death* flings its deep, cold shade upon life's sunniest spots, then faith takes hold of a *living* Friend—a Friend and Brother who, though once dead, is alive again, and lives for evermore. Oh, how sweet is this life of Jesus in the moment of death ! If "in the midst of life," as the beautiful service for the burial of the dead expresses it, "we are in death," in a nobler sense he who has a living Christ in him can exclaim, "In the midst of death I am in life." The Lord, dear reader, may write the sentence of death on earth's fairest, dearest mercy, but He has erased that sentence from your *soul* and its solemn future. The sentence of death is repealed and cancelled in all those who believe in a risen and living Saviour, and not even shall they "*see* death" when he, the "last enemy," draws near to break the silver cord and let the ransomed spirit free. But death *has* entered your abode, and its ravages and its blank are unmistakable, sad, and painful. You *feel* his icy shadow is upon you. You behold the ravages of

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the spoiler in the faded leaf, in the broken stem, in the smitten flower, and your lone and darkened home is but the emblem of your more lonely and darkened heart ! But be still ! Jesus is alive and lives for you. All that you have lost in the counsel of that wise father, all that you miss in the love of that fond mother, all that you possessed in the strong arm of that kind-hearted brother, or in the sweet devotion of that affectionate wife, or in the faithful, filial attachment of that dear child, you have now in the love, the wisdom, the protection, the presence of a *living* Saviour. Death cannot rob you of *this* precious treasure. He will guide your future of perplexity with His counsel, He will light your future loneliness with His smile, He will strengthen your weak frame with His encircling arm, and will bid you repose your weary, aching head where the beloved disciple gently rested his—upon the bosom of your risen, living Lord. Oh, let your faith, then—though it be a weeping faith, a feeble faith, a lowly, trembling faith, a faith that bends in tears over the grave that seems to entomb all that made life so

sweet and now death less bitter—let it rise above the coffin, the shroud, the dust, and see Jesus only, still wearing your bereaved nature, and bending upon you from His throne in heaven an eye of unutterable tenderness, sympathy, and love. Nor this alone. The resurrection of Christ is the pledge that you shall meet again those loved ones from whom you have lately parted and who died in the Lord. The hope of the believer is a *living* hope, because it is a hope in a *living* Christ. “*God hath begotten us again unto a lively (a living, real) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*” Yes, we shall see them again! “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so those also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*” Let us then, fellow-bereaved, comfort one another with these soothing words and with this glorious hope!

In the *spiritual conflict* of the Christian, the power arising from faith dealing with the risen life of Christ, is appropriate and mighty. It is only as we enter into the *death of Christ* that we can have fellowship with Him in His *life*. We must be par-

takers of His death ere we become partakers of His resurrection. It is in the daily cross we are bearing of the *dying* of Jesus, that we learn the blessedness of the *life* of Jesus. Thus the apostle puts it—"Always bearing about in the body the DYING of the Lord Jesus, that the LIFE also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," (2 Cor. iv. 10.) Hence, as previously remarked, the thought and the feeling that Christ was alive, which strengthened the apostles for service, nerved them for trial, soothed them in sorrow, and sustained them in suffering and in death. It was only as they bore about the *dying* of the Lord Jesus, that the *life* of Jesus was made manifest in them. They *believed* that He was alive, and they *proved* that He was alive. It was to them not an empty fiction, but a confirmed fact; not an empty theory, but blessed and precious experience. And is it less so with us? We, too, exclaim,—"I am *crucified* with Christ, nevertheless I *live*. I go to a risen, living Christ weak, I come away strengthened; I go to Him sad, I return rejoicing; I go to Him carrying a heavy

burden, and am lightened. I take to Him my sins, my backslidings, my infirmities, my guilt, and He raises me out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and places my feet upon a Rock, even the Rock that is higher than I, and puts a new song into my mouth, even salvation unto my God,—and now, I need no trumpet-tongue of angel, or silver voice of man, to announce that Jesus is alive and lives in heaven for me. I have, in the grace which He gives, in the strength which He inspires, in the love, sympathy, and smile with which He soothes and cheers me, proof which no foe can gainsay that Jesus lives, and ever lives to make intercession for me within the vail.” This spiritual subject is eminently practical; and, indeed, the more *spiritual* any truth or ministry of the truth is, the more deeply sanctifying will the spiritually-minded Christian experience it to be.

The first use we should make of it is *earnestly to seek to know more of the power of Christ's resurrection in our souls.* It has a vitalising influence of which the believer, raised from a death of sin to a life of righteousness, is blessedly sensible. It is a

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mighty lever this to *raise* the soul above the world, sin, and death. If the corpse flung into the grave of the Prophet quickened into life by contact with the body of the buried seer, how much more shall we, who believe in Jesus, feel the quickening, life-increasing power of a daily faith in the resurrection of the Great Prophet of the Church—Jesus Christ ? Oh, deeply sanctifying truth ! Who feels not the solemnity and power of the apostle's magnificent reasoning on this subject ? *“ If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection (mind) on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”* This it is to feel the power of Christ's resurrection ; it is to *rise above* the things of sense, the attractions of earth, the pleasures of the world, the power of sin, to mortify our members, and to have our mind, and heart and hopes in heaven, where our precious Treasure, our living, loving Saviour, is.

Weeping mourner after Jesus, gaze not down into the empty grave, but up to the glorious throne where your Saviour is. He is not here, "He is risen." You are, perhaps, earnestly seeking Him. You long to see Him, to hear His sin-pardoning voice, to have a manifestation of His risen life to your soul. Let your faith *look up!* Come away from the emptiness, the silence, and the grave-clothes of the tomb, and gaze up into heaven, and see Him who was crucified for you, now alive to pray for you at the Father's right hand. Doubt not either His willingness or His power to save you. "*He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He EVER LIVETH to make intercession for them.*" Oh, the magic, the life-giving power of these words, "*save to the uttermost!*" Sin-distressed, guilt-burdened soul, will you, can you, now despair? Look at your darkest, vilest sins—look at your deepest, greatest unworthiness—look into the mouth of the bottomless pit, glowing, flashing with the fires of a hell you have so long and so richly deserved—then, let your

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weak and trembling faith uplift its eye and gaze upon Christ in heaven, *alive* to save your soul to the uttermost of all its crime, to the uttermost of all its guilt and hell-deserving, and you shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Who can doubt, from this truth, *the final blessedness, the eternal glory, of all the Lord's people?* The life of every believing soul is bound up in the life of Christ. Listen to His life-inspiring, life-sustaining declaration, “ BECAUSE I LIVE, YE SHALL LIVE ALSO.” The risen and glorified life of Jesus is the earnest and the security of the everlasting bliss of every humble believer. Not one shall perish. Not a poor sinner who has touched in faith the hem of His robe shall die—no, *not one*. As the excellent Abraham Booth somewhere observes, If any one may perish whom God the Father gave to His Son, two might perish; and if two, why not a hundred?—and if a hundred, why not a thousand?—and if a thousand, why not all? Hence our dear Lord says, “ All that the Father giveth me *shall come to me*;” and coming to Him in *grace*

now, they shall most assuredly come to Him in *glory* hereafter.

How certain and glorious is the first resurrection of the saints ! “*Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the FIRST FRUITS of them that slept.*” Christ the first fruits ! Oh, what a glorious harvest, then, will the angel reapers sickle, and heaven’s garners treasure up ! All, from the believing Adam to the last believing sinner on earth, will rise on that bright morning, and enter upon the thousand years of millennial bliss and glory, undimmed by a cloud, and undisturbed by a wail of the despair which will gather round ‘the rest of the dead,’ who shall ‘rise to shame and everlasting contempt.’ Oh, to have part in the first resurrection ; for on such the second death shall have no power ! Strive, brother, sister, strive against sin, against the world, and against Satan, “*if by any means you might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*”

What a fearful thing to have no prospect of a happy and glorious resurrection ! To be looking forward to a Christless death, and a hopeless burial, and a resurrection to all

the untold, inconceivable horrors of the second death ! Behold, I place before you life and death ! Count you your soul of so little worth, your endless future so unsubstantial a dream, as to imperil the precious salvation of the one and to forego the eternal blessedness of the other for the earthly riches, the sensual joys, the shadowy honours of a moment ! Fly to Christ—this moment fly. Escape for your life ! Fall in penitence at His feet, and ask Him that you might "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable to His death."

Another practical deduction from this subject is, *to live in the continuous realisation of our identity with the life of Christ.* It is the same spiritual life pulsating in the souls of all the regenerate, and that life is from Christ. He imparts it, He nourishes it, He preserves it. It follows, then, from this that we are as believers to live upon a living Christ, to prove to the world that He is alive by His life manifest in our mortal bodies. We go to Christ weak, and are made strong ; we go to Him sorrowful, and we rejoice ; we

go to Him burdened, and we are lightened ; and so, while we bear about with us the *dying* of the Lord Jesus—dying to sin and to the world and to self, and enduring persecution and loss for His name—we also bear about with us the *life* of the Lord Jesus in its daily succourings, consolation, and joy. And what a sanctifying truth is this ! Did we manfully realise the oneness of our life with Christ, how holy should we be as becometh those whose life is hid with Christ in God. Bearing about with us the consciousness of a life so divine and heavenly, life so pure and holy, how should we tremble to plunge into society and scenes, or embark in enterprises and engagements with which we know our Lord could have no sympathy or fellowship ! Oh, saint of God ! remember *whose* life and *what* a life dwells within you ! Can you willingly compromise such a life by a worldly course, or by indulged sin ? Thou art a living temple —for Christ dwells in thee by the Spirit.

Nor would I fail to remind you how ready Christ is to breathe His life into you *more abundantly*. When spiritual decays creep in, and converse with God languishes, and eter-

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nal realities lose their all-commanding control of your mind and heart and life, then fly to Christ for life more abundant. Go and draw a fresh inspiration from Him, “ the fountain of life.” Ask Jesus to quicken and revive you afresh. Tell Him that your life languishes, that grace decays, that love is cold, that faith is weak, and that you are in yourself powerless to resist the world, the flesh, and Satan. Oh, how blessedly will He, in response to your prayer, cause the fresh springs of life to flow through your soul, now to pulsate with stronger life, and bloom with richer beauty, and ripen into more golden fruit. *Is this your spiritual state?* Are you living upon the life of Christ? So living, you will die daily; and in daily dying, behold you live!

“ Dying, yet in Christ we live !
Living, yet in Christ we die !
We die to sin, we live to God,
Eternally, immortally.

“ Living, and behold we die !
Dying, yet from death we rise !
This is our resurrection-life—
The life beyond the skies.

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“ Saviour, give us now Thy grace,
Quicken us to faith and love ;
Be now our life, and through Thy death
May we have life above.” *

Once more I implore you to seek by earnest, persevering prayer, spiritual life from Christ. Oh that you may now hear the voice of the Son of God and live ! Rencunce your deadly doings, your lifeless ritual, and touch by faith the Saviour’s hem, and you shall live. Jesus was never known to spurn from Him a suppliant who humbly sought at His hands this life—nor will He spurn *you* ! Then, when you have received it in your soul, let it have full, unfettered scope, nothing of the old nature deadening its power or shading its light. Soon—oh, how soon!—it will ascend to the source from whence it came, and lose itself in the boundless ocean of LIFE ETERNAL !

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continually mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with

* W. P. W.

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Him ; and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection ; for His merits, who died and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“ I AM JESUS ;”

OR,

CHRIST'S CONVERSION OF PAUL A CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE.

**“ Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues,
that He is the Son of God.”—ACTS ix. 20.**

THE conversion of Saul of Tarsus has ever been considered one of the most conclusive evidences of the truth, and one of the most distinguished trophies of the power, of the Christian faith on record. So convincing and impressive indeed that a branch of the Christian Church has, in its devotional formula, appointed a distinct place for its special recognition and remembrance.

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In what point of light soever we view this triumph of the Saviour’s free and sovereign grace, it must afford instruction to the mind, comfort to the heart, and establishment to the faith of the Christian ; and to the latest period of time exist as a monument of God’s great love to sinners, holding out hope to the most despairing, and testifying that God, who had mercy upon Saul of Tarsus, will extend a like mercy to the vilest sinner seeking in penitence and faith a like interest in the Saviour’s pardoning grace. Such is His own testimony. “*For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.*” And then we read that, immediately after his conversion, “*straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.*” Did we, in our present exposition, strictly adhere to these words, we should speak, in their order, of the *preacher*—as confirming the truth of Christianity ; of the subject-matter of the *preaching*—as evidencing the nature of Christianity ; and of the *place of the preaching*.

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ing—as evidencing the triumph of Christianity. Without, however, pledging myself to a minute examination of each of these points in detail, we may yet keep them in view as landmarks guiding our present meditation upon the subject which we propose to illustrate by these words,—*The conversion of Saul of Tarsus, an evidence of the truth of the Christian religion.*

Christianity lacks no evidence. Occupying the central position of all truth, it attracts universal notice, challenges the closest scrutiny, and summons its testimony from every object and source. All modern attempts of infidelity to impugn the divinity, to sap and undermine the foundation of our holy faith, have been met, answered, and exploded a thousand times over: and the gospel of Christ has invariably come forth from the battle and the scrutiny, its evidence all the stronger, its glory all the brighter, wearing fresh laurels and girt with new strength. The discoveries of science and the march of intellect have but accumulated around the gospel increased proofs of its divinity, while the foes of our faith, retiring from the conflict

discomfited and dismayed, have but foamed forth their shame and revenge as the billow hurled from the rock against which it thundered but which it could not move.

Let us look for a moment at his conversion. What were the moral antecedents of Saul of Tarsus? In general terms, he was what we all are by nature—the children of wrath, even as others. There breathes not an individual of the race who is not involved in the fall and wreck of humanity—whose nature is not originally and totally alienated and depraved, tainted by sin and accursed of God; who, dying in that state, unrenewed, unconverted by the Holy Ghost, must pass into eternity but to endure its inconceivable, indescribable, and never-ending woe. "*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" "*There is none righteous, no, not one.*" Such is the testimony of Scripture. But in addition to that which we hold in common with him, there was a strong development of the carnal mind in Saul, which brought out his enmity against God in bold relief, and took the form of avowed and virulent hostility to Christ and

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His Church. Reviewing at a subsequent period this part of his history, he employs this language, "*Verily I thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.*" "*Being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.*" So sworn a foe of Christ, and so decided an enemy to the truth, he was the last man, we might have supposed, who would eventually become not only a convert to the faith, but one of its greatest and boldest preachers. One could scarcely have selected from the entire ranks of Christ's enemies, an individual less likely to become a disciple and apostle of the Saviour. As soon might we have expected Caiaphas would have torn the ephod from his breast and the tiara from his brow, and, trampling them in the dust at the Saviour's feet, avow himself henceforth Christ's follower. One would almost as soon have expected Pilate himself—the vacillating, temporising Pilate—would have descended from his judgment-seat and have bowed the knee in homage to Christ, as that the bloodthirsty Saul of Tarsus, the bitter and relentless persecutor of the saints,

should become a sincere believer in, and the chief apostle of, the Lord Jesus. And yet mark the great change through which he passed. Armed with authority from the Sanhedrim to arrest all whom he found professing Christ, he himself was arrested by a higher power and for a nobler end. A glory brighter than the noontide sun shone around him. What was that glory ? It was as though the Shekinah of the ancient temple had returned to earth with augmented and transcendent lustre—it was the glory of Jesus which now shone around him with blinding and overpowering effulgence, from which there came a voice saying, “*I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.*” In a moment the rebel was disarmed, the foe was conquered, and the proud pharisee was smitten to the ground, conquered, regenerated, saved !

By whom and by what was this remarkable and instantaneous revolution effected ? Was it natural or supernatural ? human or divine ? Let the disciple of a cold, sceptical philosophy reply. By no process of training was this wonderful change preceded. In a mo-

ment, as in the twinkling of an eye, the cry burst from his lips, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*" To what can we ascribe this extraordinary awakening, this remarkable revolution of thought and feeling, but the power of God? Behold the change! The hand that had just grasped the weapon that was to slay was now uplifted in supplication. The knees that stood firm as a rock when Stephen was writhing in death's agonies now smote each other in fear. The eye that gloated upon the fast-flowing blood of Christ's first martyr now overflowed with tears of penitence. The man who was mad against the saints a moment before was now at the feet of Jesus pleading for mercy and suing for service. Again, I ask, is not this instance of regenerating power, of converting grace, an evidence of the divine nature of the religion of Christ such as all its enemies cannot gainsay, carrying conviction to every ingenuous, honest mind in favour of the divinity of that religion which could transform such a nature as Saul of Tarsus into the nature of God?

And what was his subsequent career? From that hour he became one of the

greatest of saints and one of the foremost apostles of Christ. Follow him from the moment that he cried, "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?*" until he closed his career by a martyr's death, and every candid mind must acknowledge that neither the history or the martyrology of the Christian Church ever presented a character more illustrative of the sovereign grace of Christ, and more demonstrative of the divine truth of Christianity than Paul's. My reader, why have I dwelt thus long and earnestly upon the conversion of Paul? Why, but to carry conviction home to your heart, as by the power of the Holy Ghost, of the truth that such must *you* become if you share the grace that made Paul what he was, and partake of the glory into which he has entered. Conversion is essentially and unchangeably the same in every age, clime, and individual. The new birth is in all the regenerate alike the advent of a new nature in the soul, involving a new governing principle, new affections, a new mind, leading to a new and holy life, a life henceforth lived unto God. This new nature is

divine, and, therefore, sinless. It is essentially different from our old nature, which we derive from the first Adam, and which, in common with the race, is wholly fallen and totally corrupt—not only ‘very far gone,’ but gone to the farthest distance from original righteousness, and to the utmost limit of sin. The testimony of God’s word is explicit, “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none good, no, not one.*” But, as I have remarked, regeneration is the implanting of a new nature in the believer, not the old mended and repaired. Hence the apostle John employs this striking language, personating the new nature in the regenerate,—“*Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.*” (1 John iii. 9.) Corresponding with this is the language of the apostle Paul, “*Put on the NEW MAN, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,*” (Eph. iv. 24.) “*And have put on the NEW MAN, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him,*” (Col. iii. 10.) Could language, even inspired

by the Holy Ghost, be more explicit? Thus the regenerate man bears about with him two natures, essentially different, and yet ever in the closest union; deadly opposed, and yet inseparably united. Hence the apostle, referring to the Roman mode of punishment, speaks of his bearing about with him a body of death and corruption. "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" The interpretation which we thus present of the new nature in the believer will explain the spiritual conflict which the regenerate daily wage, and, not clearly understanding which, many of the Lord's people are led into much mental distress and spiritual bondage and fear. You have often thought, O Christian, that you cannot possibly be a true child of God because of the battle raging within you, the law in your members warring against the law of your mind, and bringing you into captivity to the law of sin which is in your members. Oh, how mournfully have you travailed because of this! How have you made your bed to swim with tears, and the solitude of the desert to echo with sighs!

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But take heart, dear child of God ! wert thou "dead in trespasses and in sins," thou wouldest be insensible to the spiritual conflict of the "two armies" within thee—the flesh and the spirit. Thy conscience would be asleep, thy heart motionless, thy mind blinded, and thy whole soul wrapt in the shroud of spiritual death. Satan and the world, too, would continue their efforts to renew the anodyne, and to rock the cradle of thy spiritual slumber, lest thou shouldst awake from thy sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ should give thee light, and thou shouldst be saved. Oh, what reason hast thou to thank God for the *least* evidence of moral feeling, for the faintest pulse of spiritual life, though it be but a sigh, a groan, a tear, a smiting on the breast, a breathing to heaven the prayer, "*God be merciful to me a sinner!*" Is the Spirit of God showing to thee more deeply thy sinfulness and poverty, thy weakness and need ? Dost thou seem in thine own eye to grow worse and not better, viler and not holier, to go backward and not forward ? Blessed teaching, beloved, is this ! The schools could not instruct you

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thus. Philosophy could teach you no lesson like this. "Flesh and blood" is impotent here. Have you cast from you the garment of your own righteousness, coming to Christ "*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,*" accepting Him as your only righteousness, believing in Him as your only salvation, reposing in Him as your only rest? Then be it known to you that these are divine drawings, these are holy leadings, this is God's work in your soul. I give you the words of Jesus for this assertion, "*No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. . . . Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me,*" (John vi. 44, 45.) Accept then, beloved, your spiritual awakening, your humbling discoveries, the deep insight into your own heart, the conflict within of which you are so acutely, so painfully sensible, the tears that moisten your pillow, the groans that wake the solitude of the desert, the sighs that float upon the air, as marks of grace, as symptoms of life, as evidences that you are born again, have, by God's grace, been translated out of darkness

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into light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Oh, blessed, unerring signs of your adoption, your high calling, your heirship to eternal glory!

In further consideration of the conversion of Paul, we are arrested by his PREACHING. "*And STRAIGHTWAY he preached Christ.*" "Straightway." This is a remarkable expression—a volume in a word; the moment he was converted he became a preacher of Christ. He waited for no preparation, sought no authority from the Church, asked for no orders from man, applied for no diploma from the schools; but the moment that the discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ was made to his mind, he became Christ's bold, earnest, and powerful preacher. This feature is too significant and suggestive to be lightly overlooked. Still we must guard ourselves here. We do not infer from this that an individual may devote himself ably and successfully to the work of the Christian ministry apart from a previous process of spiritual and mental training, qualifying him for the holy and solemn functions of his high office. Far from this. We can see no exact parallel

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between the case of the apostle Paul and that of an individual called by grace by ordinary means. It is generally admitted that the conversion of Paul was miraculous. Prior to this his mind had undergone a thorough intellectual training in one of the first schools of learning, and at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel, one of the most renowned doctors of the law. His mental culture was of no imperfect cast. It is evident, from his writings, that he was not only profoundly taught in Jewish lore, but that his mind was singularly familiar with the philosophers of Greece and with the poets of Rome. No advocate, therefore, of an *uneducated ministry* can properly cite the great apostle of the Gentiles as sustaining his idea or as illustrating his theory. And yet, at the same time, I am prepared to concede that I see no reason, when God converts an intelligent individual by His grace—his heart glowing with love to the Saviour and with yearning for the salvation of souls—why he should not go forth through the length and breadth of the land preaching Christ and evangelising as he goes. The authority to

preach with which we are invested is not from a church. Our ordination, as received from man, conveys no priestly power, and confers upon us no prescriptive right to expound the mysteries of God's Word. We are ministers, and not priests ; we do not *make*, we but *proclaim* a sacrifice offered once for all—the one sacrifice of Christ. We administer the sacraments not sacerdotally but ministerially. The administration of the rite of baptism and of the Lord's Supper possesses no more virtue or efficacy, coming from the hands of the highest ecclesiastical dignitary, than from those of the most humble evangelist in the land. It is well, however, that those who, like Saul of Tarsus, straightway preach Christ, should, like him, receive the recognition and be set apart by the prayers of the Church. Then may he with confidence and power go forth, seeking to bring others to a saving knowledge of that Saviour whom he has found so precious to his own soul.

This conducts us to the subject-matter of Paul's preaching. "*Straightway he PREACHED CHRIST.*" Dilating at some length upon this vital and important part of our subject,

I must crave the indulgence of my readers. The reply to the question, “What is it to preach Christ?” embraces a wide range of truth. There may be much preaching so denominated which yet presents no scriptural claim to the character. It is marvellous how much may pass current with men for the real in divinity, and for the true in religion, which yet passes not current with the Lord. An individual may preach theology without God, Christianity without Christ, the cross without the atonement, and the Bible without revelation! But Saul of Tarsus “*straight-way preached Christ.*” Before we attempt to show what this involves, let me remind my reader briefly of the position of the apostle. He had to cope with difficulties and opposition of every kind. In the first place, he was confronted by the hoary religion of Judaism. There was much the Jew could allege in favour of his religion. It was divine, it was ancient, it was taught in the writings of the prophets. His arguments were many, his reasoning strong, his prejudices unconquerable. And yet the apostle in the face of all this preached Christ Jesus

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and Him crucified. In addition to this, he had to cope with the philosophy of Greece and with the heathenism of Rome. And it was here, I imagine, the trained intellect and the well-stored mind of Paul came to his help. It was here he felt the advantage of his previous mental culture. But still he changed not his theme. Still he preached Christ and the resurrection. And whether he confronted the pharisaical Jew in the synagogue, or reasoned with the sceptical philosopher on Mars' Hill, Jesus Christ was his one, his only, his grand, his invariable theme. Much may be learnt from this. There is a strong tendency in the minds of some to meet the errors of the day by other and less authorised and potent means than the preaching in stern simplicity the Gospel of the grace of God. But it is a great and a fatal mistake. The experiment has been tried again and again, and has failed. The preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ in the demonstration and power of the Holy Ghost, is the only divinely-appointed instrument of destroying false religion, overthrowing error, and converting the soul, and the only one God Himself will

acknowledge and the Holy Spirit bless. But the question still recurs, What is implied in preaching Christ?

Paul preached Christ *in the divine dignity of His person.* He had so overwhelming a demonstration of this truth in his remarkable conversion, that ever after, in all the discourses he delivered, and epistles he penned, he testified to the Godhead of the Saviour with an apostle’s zeal and with a martyr’s firmness. The true preaching of Christ remains unalterably the same. We cannot, my reader, properly preach Christ without in the very foreground placing this grand article of our creed—this fundamental doctrine of our faith—that Christ and God are one, that Jesus Christ is as truly God, as essentially Divine, as the Father. The whole fabric of Christianity rests upon this great doctrine as its basis. Cut from beneath us the doctrine of the essential Deity of Christ—sweep away the Divinity of the Son of God, and on what do we stand? in what is our hope for eternity? I marvel not that men who deny the Godhead of Christ deny also the *sacrifice* of Christ; the one

stands or falls with the other. If my Saviour be but a mere creature ; if He be but a man like myself ; if He be not everlasting and essentially God ; then I can have no confidence in His death. The saving efficacy of the death of Christ—the obedience of Christ—the sacrifice of Christ—the blood of Christ—the power of Christ to save—all springs from the Godhead of Christ. If Christ is Divine—if my Saviour is God—then my hope is resting on Divinity—my salvation is based on Deity, and I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I commit unto Him until the last great day. Hold fast this great, cardinal, precious doctrine of our faith—the essential Deity of Christ. Entertain no doubts, indulge in no cavillings, give heed to no reasonings and debatings tending to shake your faith in this doctrine ; cast not away your confidence in this truth ; it is your life ! The more firmly your faith is built on the essential Deity of Christ, the more will you realise the Atonement to be what it is, the more will you realise the joy and comfort that

springs from the one sacrifice He has offered for poor sinners. Why is it that the blood of Jesus Christ can wash the soul, all guilty as it is, whiter than snow? Why is it that the righteousness of Christ, imputed by the Spirit and received by faith, will present you before God justified from all things? It is because your Saviour is Divine, your Redeemer is God, and has imparted the virtue of His Godhead, the dignity of His higher nature, to His atoning sacrifice.

I have anticipated my second observation, that, to preach Christ *we must preach the Sacrifice and Atonement of Christ* without qualification or reserve. This is a day of much criminal *reserve*, of holding back bold, uncompromising statements of these great and essential verities of our faith. Men styled evangelical seem afraid to place in the front rank of their preaching these great doctrines of the Gospel; whereas, the Gospel of Christ is what it ever has been, and the work of Christ is what it ever has been—of vital, essential moment to souls speeding to the judgment. No change in modern modes of thought, or of opinion, or of edu-

cation, or of philosophy, has altered, in the slightest degree, the essential nature and the vital importance of the great doctrines of Christianity. We are not to adapt our preaching to the education, the philosophy, or the politics of the times. We are to preach the same old glorious Gospel which the apostle Paul preached when he uplifted the cross of Christ as the only hope of a lost and a ruined world, and declared that by this Name—this one Name, given under heaven—alone could men be saved. We teach without the slightest modification or reserve, that Christ's obedience and death, sealed and confirmed by His resurrection, constitute the one and only ground of the sinner's salvation. That there is salvation in no other. That no man is justified by the deeds of the law, but by faith in Christ. Christ represented His Church in His legal obedience and expiatory sacrifice. He kept the precept and endured the penalty of the law *in our stead*; was tried, condemned, and crucified *for us*. "*He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification.*" Believe this truth,—or rather,

believe not so much in a truth as in Him who is the Truth ; not so much in the official work as in the *personal* dignity, grace, and love of Christ,—and you are saved. Patrick Hamilton, one of the first Protestant martyrs of Scotland, thus clearly and forcibly puts this great doctrine :—“No man is justified by the deeds of the law, but by the faith of Christ. He was punished for thee, and therefore thou shalt not be punished. I do not say we ought to do no good deeds, but I say we should do no good works to the intent to obtain remission of sins and the inheritance of heaven ; for God saith, ‘Thy sins are forgiven for my Son’s sake, and thou shalt have the inheritance of heaven for my Son’s sake.’ I condemn not good deeds, but I condemn trust in our works ; for all the works wherein a man putteth any confidence are by his confidence poisoned and become evil ; wherefore, thou must do good works, and beware of doing them with the view to deserve any good for them. In a Christian man’s life, and in order of doctrine, there is the law, repentance, hope, charity, and the deeds of charity ; yet in the act of justifica-

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tion there is nothing else in man that hath part or place but faith alone, apprehending the object, which is Christ crucified, in whom is all the worthiness and fulness of our salvation."

Paul preached Christ, too, as *the Saviour of poor, lost sinners*. Oh, what a grand feature was this in His ministry—Christ the Saviour of sinners! God forbid that our preaching should be contradictory and dissonant in its utterance and in its melody to that glorious key-note of the apostle—*"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* When we preach Christ truly, we preach Him as the Saviour who died for the ungodly—as the Saviour, not of saints, not of the worthy, not of those who imagine themselves fit to be saved—but as the Saviour of *sinners*—lost, heart-broken, self-condemned, sin-loathing, self-abhorring sinners—sinners who have become acquainted with the plague of their own hearts, who place their mouths in the dust, and cry, "*God be merciful to me, a sinner*"—sinners who have not a hope but that

which springs from the finished work of Christ. Oh, if I did not believe that Jesus Christ came to save the worst of sinners, will never cast out the very chief who comes in penitence at His feet, and takes hold of His blessed cross, resting on his finished work, I would never more preach.

There may be not a few who scan this page who have deemed themselves beyond the pale of salvation. You have thought yourself a great sinner. Your transgressions of a deep and dark dye. You have so sinned against conviction, have so stifled emotion, have so endeavoured to conquer spiritual feelings. You have so sinned against light, knowledge, and feeling—against a father's pleadings—a mother's prayers—a minister's warnings—the providential dealings of God in your history. You seem as if you had placed yourself beyond the reach of Christ's arm, and that for you there was no salvation. But listen to our wondrous story. Christ, the Saviour of the lost, whose glory, delight, love it is to exercise His divine power and the freeness and the fulness of His grace in saving sinners to

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the uttermost, I present to you. Yes ! that same Jesus who found Saul of Tarsus, who transferred the dying malefactor from the cross on earth to His bosom in glory, washed from every crime in His most precious blood, is willing, is able to save *you*. You may have been a persecutor of the saints ; you may have been a bold blasphemer, a scorning sceptic ; you may have herded with the unclean, may have sold yourself to Satan ; nevertheless, dost thou feel a wish to be saved ? Is there stirring within your heart a desire to be saved ? Do you long to be a child of God, a disciple of Jesus ? Then, my brother—for such thou art—if thou comest to this precious Christ, this glorious Saviour, He will not reject thee nor cast thee out. Oh, if the angels in heaven were now to speak, they could not make to you an announcement truer, sweeter, more precious than this that, if thou wilt throw thyself at the foot of the cross, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—if thou wilt now wash in the fountain of His blood, the Lord Jesus Christ will graciously accept thee, freely pardon thee, and for ever glorify thee in heaven.

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Paul preached Christ *in His fulness*. It is impossible to present the Lord Jesus in His proper light apart from this. The feeblest, gentlest unfolding of the Divine character expresses in some degree the grace, the love, the blessing it contains. This is a great encouragement to those preachers who are conscious of the much infirmity with which they attempt to uplift the Saviour. Let them remember that however humble their gifts, narrow their acquirements, and limited the range of their influence, it is impossible that they can exhibit the Lord Jesus without some fragrance breathing from His name, and some blessing distilling from His grace, for which some sin-distressed soul, or some tried and tempted believer shall thank them in heaven. But what a blessed preaching this of Christ ! All fulness of guilt-pardoning and of sin-subduing grace ; all fulness of wisdom and strength ; all fulness of tenderness and love ; all fulness of salvation and glory, free, redundant, inexhaustible fulness. To bring you in some measure into the experience of this truth, the Lord has, perhaps, been instructing you more

deeply in the experience of your own emptiness. The two lessons are taught in the same school, and by the same Teacher; the two blessings flow through the same channel, and to the same recipient. He who sees his own poverty sees something of Christ's wealth; who feels his own emptiness realises in some measure Christ's fulness. Thus the Lord impoverishes, that He might enrich us; weakens, that He might strengthen us; casts us down, that faith may look for uplifting. "*When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up,*" (Job xxii. 29.) Repair, then, to the Saviour's fulness with frequent, unhesitating, and unlimited application. That fulness is not for Himself, nor for angels, but for us, empty, needy, sinners. "*It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell*" for the Church, whose salvation was confided to His hands. And you cannot chant His praise more sweetly, nor weave a garland more worthy of His brow, than when in faith you bring your guilt to the cleansing virtue of His blood, your corruption to the conquering power of His grace, and your exhausted resources to

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the fulness from which the saints on earth and the saints in heaven have for ages drawn, and which yet has not sunk one hair's-breadth. Open thine eyes, thou weeping Rachel, and behold the fountain of all blessing in Jesus flowing at thy side. "*All my springs are in Thee.*"

To preach Christ is to present Him *in the tender compassion of His heart*. To keep back or to dilute this truth is to divide Christ, to veil one-half His nature. We want the two natures of our Lord, and cannot dispense with either—the one, His divine nature, to impart efficacy to His atonement; the other, the human nature, to make the atonement His deity thus stamps with infinite worth. But it is of His sympathising nature as man I now speak. How precious is this to the heart in seasons of suffering of mind, body, or estate! Adversity proves a costly pearl when it brings us into the experience, compassion, and sympathy of the Saviour. Sorrow makes us better acquainted with our common humanity. We know more of man, feel more for man, and do more for man when God brings us into affliction. If

this is true of our fellow-men, how much more so of Christ ! There are perfections of His being we cannot properly see, excellences in His character we do not distinctly discern, cloisters in His heart we do not fully penetrate, truths in His gospel we cannot clearly understand, until *trial* in some shape or other impels us to more individual and actual fellowship with Him. Accept, then, the discipline of your Heavenly Father, as designed to make you better acquainted with His blessed Son. Blend the brightest thoughts of Jesus with the gloomiest thoughts of your present grief. He knows it, has sent it, comes with it, will sustain you beneath it, and will bring you through it, as He has promised. "*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.*" Oh, to know more of Christ, to hold with Him more confidential communion, to insinuate ourselves, as it were, more closely within His heart, it were worth all the discipline of trial we ever

experienced. The measure of our true knowledge of God's truth is the measure of our personal experience; and the measure of our experience is the sanctified result of God's discipline. "*Blessed is the man whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teacheth him out of thy law.*"

We preach Christ *in the glory of His second coming*. As this great and august event approaches—and the time of the end speedeth on—it is of solemn moment that the trumpet of the Lord's ministers give no hesitating and uncertain sound touching this great and glorious truth. Paul, though living so remote from the time of the second advent of Christ, constantly made it the theme of his ministry and the burden of his epistles. "*I beseech you by the coming of the Lord,*" was his frequent and impressive argument when enforcing holiness, or urging us to entire surrender to God. Yes, the Lord is at hand! He is coming to gather in His ancient people Israel, to confront the Antichrist yet to be revealed and then to be overthrown, to punish with judgments the idolatrous nations of the earth, and finally to judge the ungodly, and

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to reign over and among His people gloriously. He will come as a thief in the night; blessed are they who shall then be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man !

My reader, let me devote the brief space yet left me in pressing home upon your attention the personal question—Have you been arrested by Christ? Has He “apprehended” you by His Spirit in the midst of your hatred and rebellion, your pleasure and worldliness? In other words, are you truly converted by His grace? Has Jesus called you, not with the audible voice that arrested Saul, but by the still, small voice of His Spirit in your heart? Oh to hear Him say, “*I am Jesns!* whom you have long disbelieved and despised; *I am Jesus*, whose grace you have scorned, whose salvation you have neglected, with whose blood you have trifled. *I am Jesus* who, notwithstanding all, is able and willing to save you to the uttermost.” The Lord of His grace grant that you may hear that voice speaking mercy, and saying, “COME unto me,” ere you hear it speaking to you in judgment, and saying, “DEPART from me!”

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Let me close these pages as I commenced them. If, my reader, you are a disbeliever in the divine authority of the Bible, a rejecter of the truth of Christianity, let me implore you candidly and prayerfully to weigh the evidence of the Christian faith afforded by the remarkable conversion of Saul of Tarsus. And the Lord grant that by the Spirit, it may convince you, as it carried conviction to the sceptical mind of Lord Lyttleton, that GOD'S WORD IS TRUE! and thus may you henceforth become a disciple and follower of the Saviour now, and a jewel in His crown hereafter. For this let us pray.

O GOD, who through the preaching of the blessed apostle Paul, hast caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world ; grant, we beseech Thee, that we, having his WONDERFUL CONVERSION in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto Thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“BRING HIM UNTO ME ;”

OR,

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“ Then Jesus answered, and said, Bring him hither unto me.”—MATT. xvii. 17.

THE narrative to which these words refer is replete with touches of the deepest interest. Our Lord had just been transfigured. Descending from the mount, His robes streaming with the brightness, and His countenance radiant with the glory of that wonderful scene, He finds Himself in the midst of an anxious and excited group. The occasion quickly transpired. The central object

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of that multitude, upon whom its chief and most touching interest gathered, was a distressed and suppliant parent, accompanied by an afflicted, demoniacally-possessed child, whom he had brought to the disciples of Christ for their healing. But the case had baffled their skill for, “they could not cure him.” Seeing the Saviour approach, the father of the child directed his appeal to Him. *“Lord, have mercy upon my son : for he is lunatic, and sore vexed ; for oftentimes he falleth into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him.”* And then followed Christ’s gracious response, *“Bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him : and the child was cured from that very hour.”* The whole narrative, viewed in its gospel significance, is richly instructive. The miracles of our Lord were a marvellous blending of human compassion and divine instruction. They were never intended to terminate in mere bodily or mental relief; but were designed also to shadow forth His higher mission to man and His nobler work for man—physical illus-

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trations of spiritual life. In this light let us view the present one, and glean the precious truths it conveys. What are some of the chief spiritual points it illustrates?

The disease of this child reminds us of a peculiar and affecting feature of our moral condition—we are by nature *demoniacally possessed*. Will any deem this view of our spiritual condition harsh and overdrawn? Are they, with all their reasoning faculties in full health and play, disposed sceptically to question its truth, and indignantly to repel the charge? Pause a moment, my reader, and ponder these striking and solemn words of Scripture—“*The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and MADNESS is in their heart while they live.*” This awful picture is not that of a class, or of a nation merely, but of every son and daughter of Adam on the face of the globe: and, if still unconverted by the grace of God, it finds its counterpart, my reader, in *you*: were you not the subject of this moral insanity, could you, an heir of eternity, live as you do but as an heir of time? Look at your life. A rational being, yet living irrationally. A responsible being, yet

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ignoring your obligation to God. An accountable being, yet with not one serious thought of your individual accountability. A sinful being, yet with no knowledge of the Saviour of sinners. A mortal being, yet living as though you were never to die. An immortal being, yet never pausing to inquire, “ Where shall I spend my eternity ? ” Living amid dreams, fancies, and hallucinations ; playing with straws, blowing bubbles, pursuing shadows, and so sporting each moment upon the precipice of endless woe ! Is *this* an evidence of sanity ? — *this* a mark of a life of a spiritually renewed and sound intellect ? Alas ! what does it prove but that the demon of moral insanity, the most terrific and fatal, sits gloomily and supremely enthroned upon your unregenerate heart, and will continue so enthroned until the Saviour graciously ejects him thence, and brings you to His feet clothed and in your right mind. By what avenue can we approach you with words of warning and entreaty ? How awaken you to a conviction and sense of your present danger and future condition ? Alas, as we cannot by our own efforts reason with the in-

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sane, neither can we by our own unaided powers convince you of the depravity of your heart, of the recklessness of your life, and of the terribleness of the doom that awaits you when the shadows and dreams of your present existence give way to the stern, dread realities of the life that is to come. And yet, morally insane and infatuated though you are, God deals with you as an intelligent, sinful, responsible being, and holds you firm within the grasp of His almighty power. Listen to His gracious overture. "*Come now and let us REASON together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" God in these words recognises your intelligence, sinfulness, moral responsibility and obligation. Never will He admit your utter impotence to help and save yourself, for a moment release you from the solemn obligation you are under to love, serve, and obey Him. You tell me that you *cannot* repent—I answer, it is because you *will not* repent. You say you *cannot* believe in Jesus—it is because you *will not* believe in Jesus. You complain that you *cannot* come to Christ—it

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is because you *will not* come to Christ. Your sin is, not that you *cannot*, but that you *will not* be saved. Our blessed Lord clearly puts it in this light. “*Ye WILL NOT come unto me, that ye might have life.*” Most true is it that you *cannot*, that you have no moral power, but it is *the rebellion of your will* that constitutes your highest crime before God. Oh that sinful, stubborn will ! It is the depraved, perverse rudder of the soul, guiding all its movements, controlling all its actions, and often steering it amid the rocks, the quick-sands and breakers of present destruction and eternal woe. But when Jesus comes with His converting Spirit, He first conquers the will. He grasps this rudder, brings under the power of His grace this all-governing principle of man’s soul ; subdues it, renews it, gives it a new bend and holy bias, and thus, having made the soul “*willing in the day of His power,*” gently and persuasively draws it to Himself. Lord, subdue *my* sinful will ! Bend and break the iron sinews of its rebellion, bow it to Thy control, lay it low beneath the Cross, and make it willing to love and serve and follow Thee !

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This done, the demon of our moral madness quits the soul and leaves the throne for Jesus!

We reach another feature of this narrative—the means of cure sought by the distressed parent. “*I brought him to Thy disciples.*” Supposing them to be Christ’s representatives, his first resort was to man. There is not a more solemnly instructive feature of the narrative than this. What a rebuke it administers, what a truth it teaches! There is not a stronger feeling of our nature than that which this parent’s conduct illustrates—the tendency of our hearts in times of trouble and need to repair first to human help. “*I brought him to Thy disciples.*” What significant words! They meet one of the most popular and prevalent errors of the present day—the *priestly* element, supposed by many to be lodged in human hands. Underlying the whole system of Ritualism and Sacramentarianism is this principle—the supposed existence of priestly authority and power. Divest the system of this principle, destroy this its central element, and the whole thing crumbles to ruin. Sad, oh how sad, to see men calling themselves Christ’s min-

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isters and representatives, vaulting into His throne and usurping His authority and power. The only *priest* over the Church of God is Christ ; and the only *priesthood* in the Church is the Church of God itself. “*Ye are a royal PRIESTHOOD.*” “Ye”—that is, *all* believers in Christ Jesus ; all who are washed in His blood and clothed with His righteousness, who join the one song of His one priesthood —“*Who hath made us kings and PRIESTS unto God.*” That the great Head of the Church has appointed and ordained an order of men to preach His word, and to administer His institutions, we recognise with profound gratitude. The Christian ministry is of Christ, and we gratefully recognise, reverently esteem, and thankfully accept it ; giving to Him all the glory and praise of the power and blessing of which it is the channel to His Church. Beyond this we dare not go ! Christ is the one and only sacrificing Priest in the Church. He alone has merit to atone for sin, and He alone has authority and power to pardon it. He has delegated this priestly power to no creature, man or angel. All who claim it

are profane usurpers, and shall be found deceivers and liars in the great day when every one of us shall give account of himself unto God.

This conducts us to another equally striking feature of the narrative, the inability of the disciples to meet the case. "*I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not cure him.*" What a fatal blow do these words hurl at all the vain pretensions of man to priestly authority and power! What! were these the first and inspired disciples and apostles of Christ, the earliest preachers of His gospel, and administrators of His ordinances, and builders of His Church, powerless to help? Then who shall dare claim in this day a priestly prerogative and power which even the earliest, inspired and holy apostles of the Church never claimed. But what a lesson is here taught us, my reader, even us who regard the figment of priestly power in man but a base delusion and a lie! Are we not often betrayed into a like fatal error of going *first* to human power for help and salvation? We go to Christ's ministers, thinking they can relieve us of the burden of sin; we repair to

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the Lord’s servants supposing they can administer comfort in grief, counsel in perplexity, and sympathy in trial ; but, alas ! we find them often powerless to help. “Lord, I brought my sin, my grief, my wound, my perplexity, my burden, to Thy ministers, and they *could not help me.*” Thus the Lord empties us of our heart’s idolatry, teaches us the weakness of human power, withers the arm and dries up the spring of creature help—that He might but draw us to Himself. We trust either in our own selves or in others, until God writes upon our human dependence the sentence of death. He has written that solemn sentence already within ourselves, that we might not trust in our own righteousness for salvation, and He writes it daily upon all our human props and creature resources, that we might learn to put our trust alone in Jesus. How instructive and solemn the teaching of God’s word on this subject of human trust. “*Thus saith the Lord, Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see*

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when good cometh ; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited," (Jer. xvii. 5, 6.) Equally pointed is the language of the apostle—" *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead.*" Accept, as sent in love to you, child of God, the painful and humiliating discipline of thy heavenly Father, which has destroyed all thy creature confidences, broken thy beautiful vessels and blasted thy pleasant gourds of created good. Oh, never did Jesus evince His love to thee as now ! Were not His desire towards thee, were He not jealous of thy love, and did He not wish to make thee supremely happy by bringing thee to seek and find that happiness supremely in Himself, then would He have suffered thee to follow after thy lovers, giving thee up to the creature idolatry of thy too fond and clinging heart.

But we reach the most interesting and instructive part of the narrative—that portion which will supply the subject of our remaining thoughts. " *Then Jesus answered and said, . . . BRING HIM HITHER TO ME.*" It

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was at this critical juncture, when human power failed, that our Lord steps in and concentrates the entire interest of the scene upon Himself. And what is the spirit He manifests and the language which He employs ? Is He offended with the distressed parent, and does He express that offence in words of rebuke ? Are His feelings wounded, and is His language harsh, because His disciples had received precedence of Himself, and that He had only been applied to as a last resource because all other means had failed ? Ah, no ! there was no sin in Jesus, and consequently no pride. How differently we would have felt, and how opposite to this we should have acted ! Standing upon our self-respect, which is often nothing less than self-idolatry, and resenting the wound which the slight had inflicted, we should in all probability have looked coldly upon the case, and either have accepted it with reluctance, or have dismissed it with disdain. How often has this infirmity of our nature exhibited itself under real or supposed slight. We could ill brook to be supplanted by another, or to be dismissed to the cold shade

of neglect. That we were not given precedence, our judgment first consulted, and our aid first sought, has stung our pride and wounded our sensibilities, and has rendered us peevish, haughty, and morose. But not thus was it with our adorable Lord. In Him was no sin, and consequently no infirmity. His transcendent trait was *humility*. He made Himself of no reputation. He condescended to become a servant; yea, the servant of servants. Self-negation, like a thread of gold, was interwoven with the web of His whole life, from the moment that He stooped to take our nature in the stable until that in which he bore it with Him to glory. Oh, to be assimilated to Him in this grace of humility ! In nothing will our resemblance be more perfect. Our Lord, when He clustered His disciples at His feet on the mount, did not in those memorable instructions say, "Learn of me, for I am *wise*," or, "Learn of me, for I am *powerful*"—no ! but, "Learn of me, for *I am meek and lowly in heart*." His grace of humility was made to eclipse His gift of intellect; the mind was to crown the heart; and passing by the "spirit

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of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might” which He possessed was without measure, He turned their eye upon His humility of heart, and bade them learn, admire, and imitate.

Never, perhaps, in the life of our Lord did this lowly trait appear in a lovelier light than now. Not a look of anger darted from his eye, not a word of rebuke breathed from His lips. And thus Jesus demeans Himself towards us. How seldom do we repair to Him with our burdens, perplexities, and wants until we have tried any and every other resource. Such finite beings are we, so earthly and carnal, that if we can but attach ourselves in seasons of conscious sorrow and want and weakness to that which is sensible, however frail the object and feeble the hold, we would rather do so than trust in the invisible God ; we bear our burden first to the disciple of Jesus rather than directly and immediately to Jesus Himself. But, finding no help here, we then gladly turn to Christ. And what do we find Him to be ? What has our experience of Him been when all human power failed, and all creature resources dried, and

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men or angels could not help us? Just what this poor, distressed parent found Him to be—a present and willing and all-powerful help. Now the words which Jesus addressed to this afflicted suppliant in the hour of his need and extremity He equally addresses to us—“BRING HIM HITHER² UNTO ME.” It is Christ’s invitation to all needy souls, whatever that need may be—it is His invitation, my reader, to *you*. What a great and precious privilege is this? It would be impossible to over-estimate its worth, or to give full expression to its blessedness. Indeed it is the highest as the sweetest privilege of the believer to bring all to Jesus—to come, though He be a last resource—to come, though filled with shame and penitence at not having come to Him before, at not having come to Him at first, yet to come bearing the burden, unvailing the grief, disclosing the want to Jesus. Let us endeavour to strengthen and encourage you, my reader, in this holy and helpful privilege of bringing to Jesus what, in all probability, you have brought in vain to man. Imagine the Lord addressing these words to

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you, “*Bring it hither unto me.*” The invitation, perhaps, finds you in deep need, in overwhelming distress, at a critical crisis of your history. Human power has proved helpless, friends faithless, plans futile, and you are at your wits’ end. In your moment of disappointment and despair, Jesus meets you with the gracious words, “*Bring it hither unto me.*” And now your spirit revives, your heart bounds, at the words, and you exclaim, “Behold, Lord, I come.” Let us in two or three particulars amplify these words.

In the first place, Jesus in effect says, “*Bring your sins* hither unto me.” He begins with sin, because it is the cause of all burdens, and the heaviest burden of all. Your general experience testifies to this. Your sins are to you a grievous burden, and you sigh and cry for deliverance. You have, perhaps, taken your sins to the minister, or you have disclosed them to a Christian friend. It may be you have sought relief for their oppressiveness in the gaieties of the world, in the excitement of business, or in the rigid but vain observance of religious

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duties. But, after all, you find yourself in the same dilemma with the afflicted parent, "I brought him to thy disciples, and *they could not heal him.*" Listen to the Saviour's gentle, unreproving words, "Bring your sins and guilt hither unto me." To whom more fitly, more hopefully, can you bring that heavy, crushing burden, but to Jesus? He is the only being in the universe who has to do judicially, or who can do remedially, with sin. Sin is a moral disease for which there is but one remedy, and but one physician. That remedy abjured, and that physician rejected, the sinner must accept, as the appalling, the inevitable result, the pangs and horrors of the second and eternal death. But Jesus has to do personally and officially with sin. His mission to our fallen world was for its overthrow and annihilation. He made His advent to the empire of sin—entered the lazarus-house of sin—and took upon Himself, by imputation, the guilt, the curse, and the condemnation of sin. His sufferings on the cross were sin-vicarious, His death was sin-atoning, His blood is sin-cleansing, His last and latest breath was a supplica-

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tion for the forgiveness of sin—even the sin of His slayers. In the language of the prophet, “*He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.*” In the language of the evangelist, “*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*” In the language of the apostles, “*Christ died for our sins.*” All these witnesses unite in testifying to the great truth of the Bible that, “*Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.*” Poor sin-distressed soul, will not this suffice? Take not your sin-burdened heart to minister, nor to saints, nor to sacraments, nor to religious duties, nor to pious services,—all, *all* these, are vain helpers, having no power to lighten thee of the burden, or to efface the blot of one single sin. In this infinitely momentous matter, happily for you, you must look up solely and exclusively to Jesus. God’s plan of saving you cuts you off from all other resources, dissevers you from all other saviours, and throws you upon Jesus alone. Bring your sins, then, straight and at once to Him. Let there be not a moment’s hesitation. Bring them, though they be as high as the

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pyramids, and red like crimson, and countless as the sands of the sea-shore. Bring then thy sins before conversion, thy sins after conversion, thy sins contravening conversion; be they sins of youth, or sins of manhood, or sins of age, sins against knowledge, and sins against conviction, bring them all to Jesus. Yea, from whatever standpoint you view, and in whatever light you contemplate your sin and guilt, only bring it in confession, penitence, and faith to Jesus, and you shall learn from blessed experience that His blood cleanseth from *all* sin.

Jesus says, “Bring your *convictions* to Me.” There is no state of mind which keeps the inquiring soul, to use the expressive language of the prophet, so “*long in the place of the breaking forth of children,*”* as a conviction of sin. How many there are who stop here for months, and even for years, knowing nothing of the peace, and joy, and hope of the new birth! They seem to make no real spiritual progress. There is the infant’s feeble and faint sob of life—and that is all. There is nothing of the

* Hosea xiii. 13.

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vigour of youth, still less of the strength of the father, in their religion. They are not fully born again. And why this? Because they are resting in their convictions, living on their convictions, content to remain in this gloomy and doubtful position, rather than, by a simple, single act of faith, plunge into the fathomless, boundless sea of the Saviour's grace, and there for ever lose them. But listen to the overture of Jesus. When He commands, “ Bring it unto Me,” and when He invites the weary and heavy laden to come to Him for rest, He includes you in the number. Leanness of soul must be the result of every attempt to subsist upon the starving aliment of conviction, while the gospel unvails to you the finest wheat of God's granary, and honey flowing from the rock. What, then, is your remedy? Simply this: instead of taking your convictions to duties, and to ordinances, and to ministers, to take them to Christ. There is no healing of sin's wound, no lighting of sin's burden, no removal of sin's guilt, no weakening of sin's power, but as Christ deals with it. And since “ *His name is called Jesus, because*

He shall save His people from their sins," no turpitude of guilt, however great—no number of sins, however countless—no depth of conviction, however profound—can bar the soul from His redeeming love and pardoning grace.

Jesus says, "*Bring your desire for conversion to Me.*" With how many individuals conversion, in its incipient stage, amounts to a *desire* only. And yet this day of small things in grace is not to be despised. The writer well remembers when it was his experience. Solemnly conscious of living in an unconverted state, and well instructed in the truth that conversion was essential to the enjoyment of heaven, his heart ardently longed and earnestly prayed for the priceless blessing. Remembering this, the earliest stage of his Christianity, he is prepared to offer sympathy and aid to all whom the experience of this work of grace is but a sincere *desire*. And yet that desire is the work of God's Spirit, is the germ, the dawn, the first pulse of spiritual life. Welcome it, cherish it, bring it to Jesus, "*from whom all holy desires,*" as "*all good counsels, and just*

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works, do proceed.” And He who “ quencheth not the smoking flax, nor breaketh the bruised reed,” will so strengthen and increase that holy desire that it shall ripen into a full state of grace here, and into a perfect state of glory hereafter.

Jesus says, “ *Bring your sorrows to Me.*” Never did the soul find so powerful a magnet, attracting to itself affliction in every form, and sorrow in every shade, as Jesus. If sympathy is the expression of compassion nurtured and trained in a like school, then there is to be found in the wide universe of being no sympathy like Christ’s. Standing as in the centre of a world of woe, He invites every daughter of sorrow, of sin, of grief to repair to Him for succour, sympathy, and healing. As the High Priest of His Church—for whom alone He suffered, and wept, and sobbed—He unvails a bosom capacious enough and loving enough, and sympathising enough, to embrace every sufferer, and to pillow every grief. Accept, then, His compassionate invitation, and bring your grief to the soothing, sustaining, sanctifying grace of His heart.

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Jesus says, "*Bring your wants to Me.*" We are necessitous beings. Sin has created countless wants; the absence of God from the soul, fathomless yearnings. Nor is there a being or a thing in the wide universe of life and wealth that can meet a solitary one. Jesus only can. With all the affluence of the universe which He made at His disposal, is there a single need you have which He is not able to supply? Bring, then, your wants to Him. Are they *temporal*? "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Are they *spiritual*? He is "full of grace and truth." Thus, possessing all earthly good, and furnished with all that is heavenly—

"What want shall not our God supply,
From His redundant stores?
What streams of mercy from on high,
An Arm Almighty pours?

"From Christ, the ever-living spring,
These ample blessings flow;
Prepare my lips His name to sing,
Whose heart has loved us so."

Jesus says—"Bring your temptations to me." To whom more appropriate can

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the tempted children of God repair with their varied assaults—the temptations of Satan, of the world, of their own hearts—as to Christ the tempted One? “*For in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.*” Truly, our spiritual Joseph, of whom it may truly be said, “*The archer sorely grieved Him, and shot at Him, and hated Him,*” is prepared to quench each flaming arrow hurled at His dear people, to extract the dart, and heal, with balsam flowing from His own pierced side, the wounds those darts have inflicted.

Jesus says—“*Bring your sick and suffering ones to me.*” When He dwelt upon earth He was earth’s Great Physician. From all the cities and provinces, the towns and villages, they brought to Him their sick folk, and He healed them all. Not less humane or skilful is He now. To whom can we bring the sick ones we love, but are powerless to help, with such prospect of cure as to Jesus? Man’s incurables are Christ’s curables. He has power to control mental aberration, saying to the surging billows of the mind,

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"*Peace, be still.*" He can arrest bodily sickness, quiet the trembling nerve, cool the feverish pulse, assuage the torturing pang, and cause the severest disease to fly at His all-controlling command. Bring, then, your afflicted, drooping one to Christ, and the prayer of faith offered to, and exercised in, Him shall save the sick.

To whom more appropriately can we take the *sceptical religious doubts* which distress us than to Jesus ? Your faith in the truth of the Bible, in part or as a whole, has, perhaps, been disturbed by popular writers. You have come to question the veracity of the Mosaic history, or you have been led to doubt the integrity of this prophecy, or the accuracy of that gospel, or the inspiration of the other epistle, until your mind, having lost its anchorage, is driven out amid the broken seas and bleak rocks of doubt, uncertainty, and despair. And yet you are not satisfied. You have not entirely lost your faith in the integrity of the Bible, nor your filial hold upon God. You have, probably, confided your state of mind to man. You have read this book, and have consulted that authority,

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and have made known your case to that minister, yearning to find a proper solution to your distressing doubts, and a firm anchorage ground for your tossed and bewildered spirit. But all has proved in vain. You have borne your doubts and difficulties and distress to Christ's disciples, and they have proved powerless to help you. This little book comes to echo the loving, gracious invitation of Jesus to you, “*Bring it unto me.*” To you as truly and as personally He addresses these words as originally He did to the afflicted parent. The explanations of men have failed you, human teaching has proved powerless. Now try the experiment, as a last resource, and take your sceptical doubts to Jesus, and beseech Him to solve them, to neutralise them, to dislodge them, supplanting them by a simple, child-like, unquestioning faith in Himself as “THE TRUTH.” The moment your believing heart receives into it the Lord Jesus Christ, that moment all your doubts are gone. Your long-existing and agonising inquiry, “*What is truth?*” is now met, fully, instantly answered, as that question only can be answered, by Him who

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has sublimely declared, "I AM THE TRUTH." In bringing your doubts touching the truth of revelation to Jesus, you have complied with His command, you have yielded assent to His invitation. And in doing this you have obeyed God's command, who, respecting His beloved Son, uttered those significant words, "*Hear ye Him.*" And in thus doing God's will, you have placed yourself in the only true position to know the truth of His word, "*If any man,*" says our Lord, "*will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*" Oh bring, then, your agitated mind to Christ! Discover to Him your mental difficulties, your religious doubts, your tortured feelings. With one word He can dislodge the demon of doubt from your mind, and all will be firm faith, full assurance, and heavenly peace.

Equally does He ask you to bring to Him your *spiritual fears*. "*Fearful heart,*" is one of the most common and expressive titles of the Lord's people: "*Say unto them that are of a fearful heart.*" This will account for the fact, that no words oftener fell

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from the lips of Jesus when on earth, than those soothing, precious ones, “*Fear not.*” To whom, then, can you better repair with those distressing fears touching your conversion, your adoption, your salvation, your growth in grace, than to Jesus? Oh, why these fears, we may ask, when He is so near to soothe and allay them? See the troubled waves receiving upon their foaming crests the footsteps of their Creator!—“God manifest in the flesh”—bearing Him to His fearful, foundering disciples, with the words rising higher than the storm, “*Be not afraid, it is I.*” Essentially immutable, He is just the same, high upon His throne in glory, that He was when thus He stepped from billow to billow to the comfort and the rescue of His affrighted disciples on the sea. You have unveiled your fears to His ministers and to His saints, and still they torment, and still they distress you. He says, “*Bring them hither to me.*” He will not repel your doubts nor chide your fears, but, as of old, He will tenderly meet them, gently deal with them, entirely remove them, and calm your perturbed and trembling

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heart upon the love and repose of His own.

This simple living upon Christ will be found to be a very sanctifying life. Every errand that takes you to Him brings you in personal contact with perfect holiness ; and you cannot return from the interview, though it were but of five minutes' duration, without the perfumed garment and the reflected glory. Men will take *knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus.*

Equally will this habit of bringing all our circumstances to Jesus tend to increase His endearment to your soul. He will grow upon our love. It is an instinct of our nature that the more we are with an object that we admire and love, the more that object entwines with our being. A growing acquaintance with its mental and moral excellence increases and deepens the affections, until we come to feel that intercourse seems essential to our existence, and that separation is almost its extinction. Thus the more we are with Christ the more we know Him, and the more we know the more we admire Him ; and the more we admire, the more we love

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Him ; and to love Him is to walk obediently to His sweet and holy commands. Oh, to love Him more !

Do not be ashamed to take your case to Jesus, even though you have gone first to human help. He won't be ashamed of you, if you are not ashamed of Him. It is His glory to step in and achieve a work and bestow a blessing when all human power and resources have failed. He loves to unlock His treasury when man's is utterly exhausted. Go, then, fall at His feet, and tell Him you have tried all other help, and all has failed you, and at last you come to Him.

In a word, Jesus bids you bring *all* to Him—your depression and despondency, the sadness of your heart, and the anxieties of your mind, the wounds of friends and the calumnies of foes, the chidings of God and the assaults of man ; your fear of death and your dread of judgment, all, *all* He invites to the asylum of His love, to the arm of His power, and to the fulness of His sufficiency. No word of upbraiding will fall from His lip, no look of anger dart from His eye. Well will He

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remember how you leant upon the arm of human power and it failed you, how you reposed upon the heart of human love and it disappointed you, how you resorted to human skill and it could not cure. And now, in the deepest, tenderest sympathy with your blighted hopes, your wounded affections, your disappointed plans, He would fain uplift the flower crushed and trampled in the dust, and, bathing it in the dew of His grace, place it in His sheltering bosom, to freshen and to bloom for ever beneath the warm sunshine of His smile.

Toiling in the midnight storm,
Toss'd on sorrow's surging sea,
Weary, terrified, forlorn,
Jesus bids you, "Come to Me!"

Drifting on the soundless deep,
Wave on wave rolls over thee ;
Shadows coldly round you creep ;
Jesus bids you, "Come to Me."

Clustering griefs becloud thy way,
Earthly joys and comforts flee.
Oh, to be thy light, thy stay,
Jesus bids you, "Come to Me."

Jesus, take the vacant helm ;
Guide me o'er this troubled sea ;

“BRING HIM UNTO ME.”

Ere the tide my soul o'erwhelm,
Jesus, Saviour, come to me.

Let me hear Thy cheering voice,
E'en though it in chiding be ;
Bid my fearful heart rejoice,
Jesus, Saviour, come to me !

Thou canst make the tempest cease ,
At Thy word the shadows flee ;
Thou alone canst give me peace ;
Jesus, Saviour, come to me !

E'en upon the billow's crest,
Sweetly tranquil I can be,
If near Thy dear heart I rest,
Jesus, Saviour, come to me !

MAY 22 '41

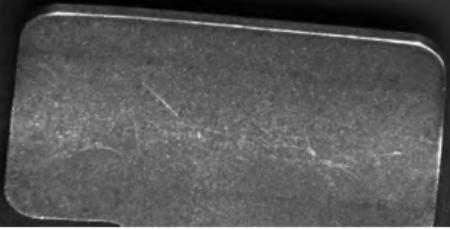
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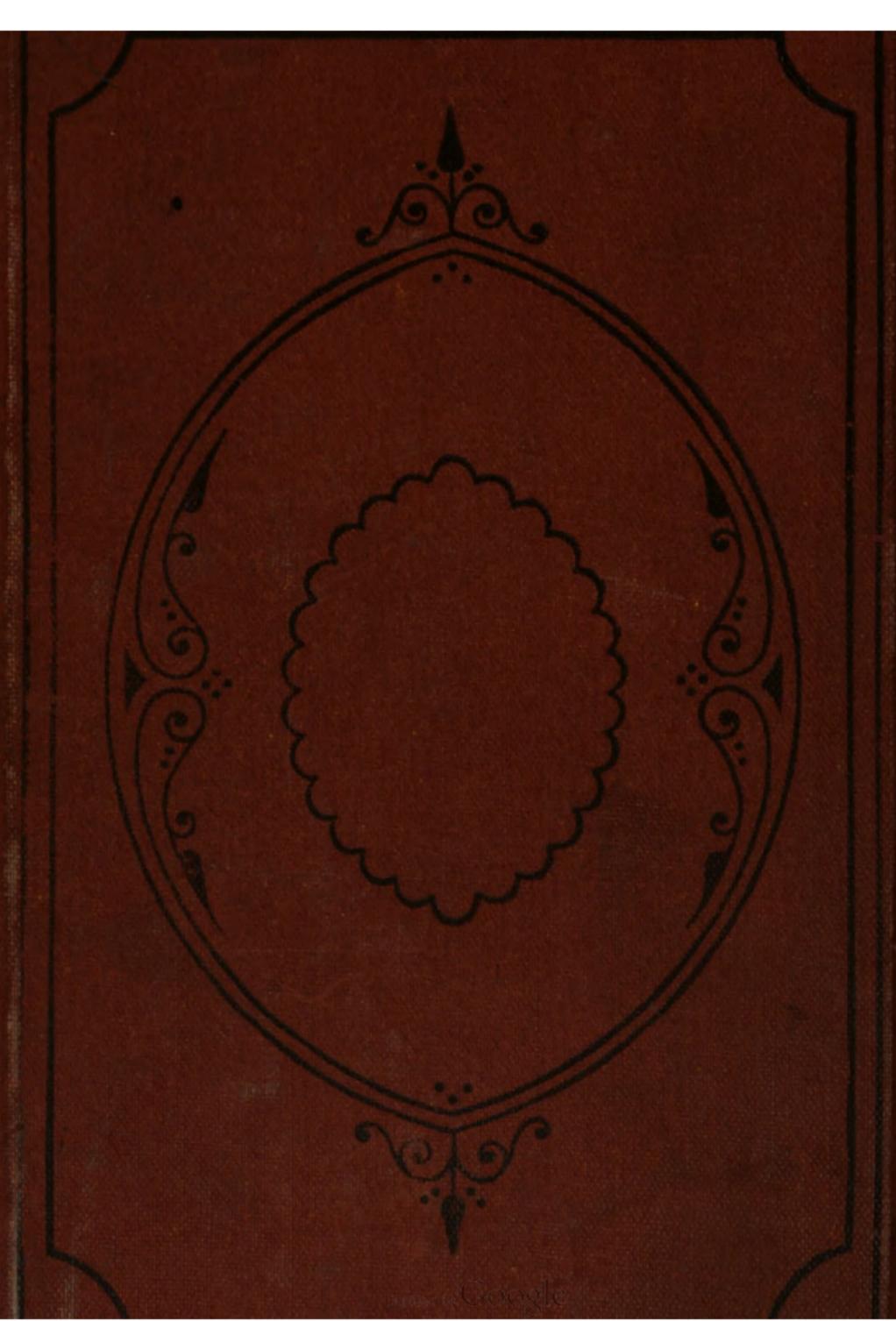
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