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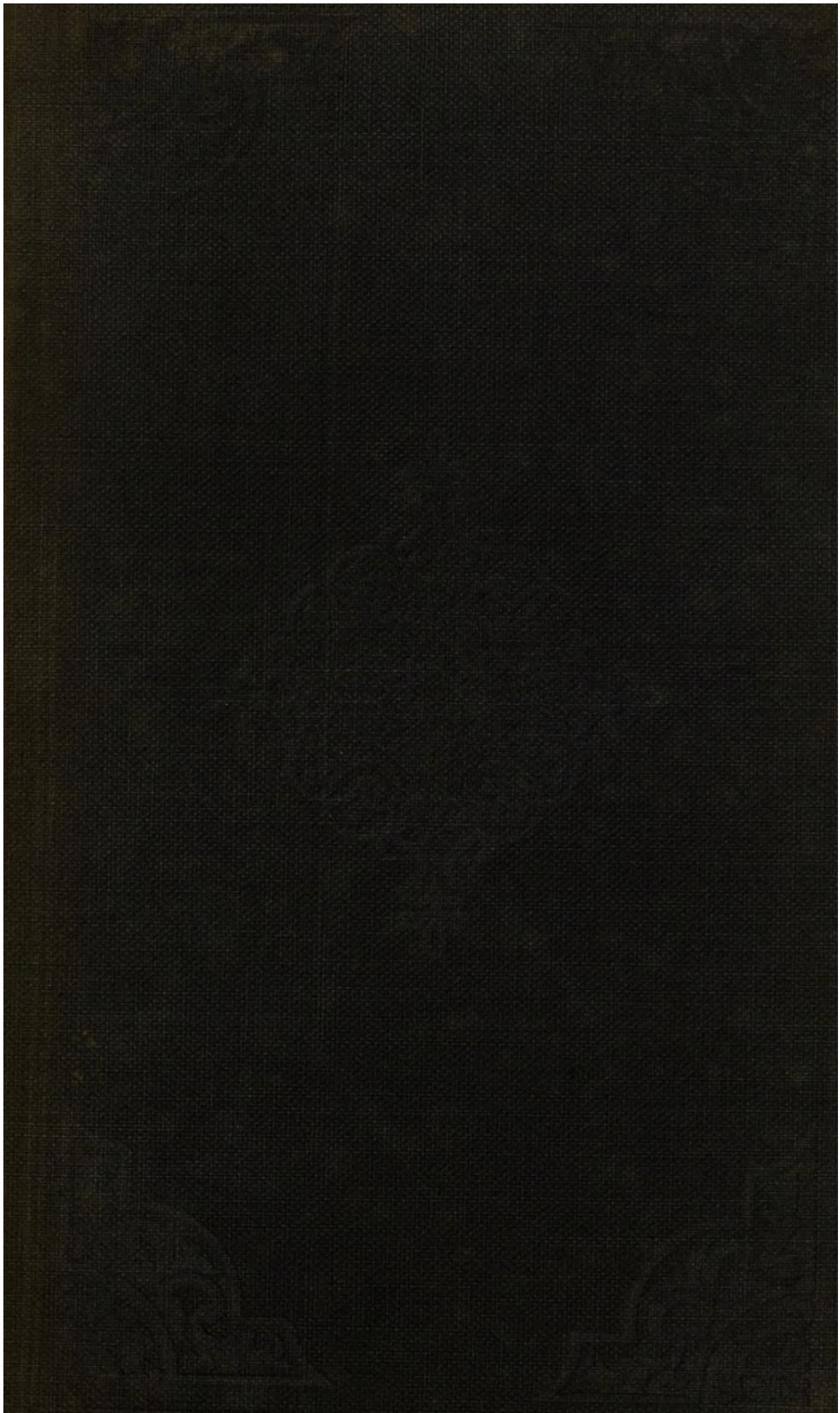
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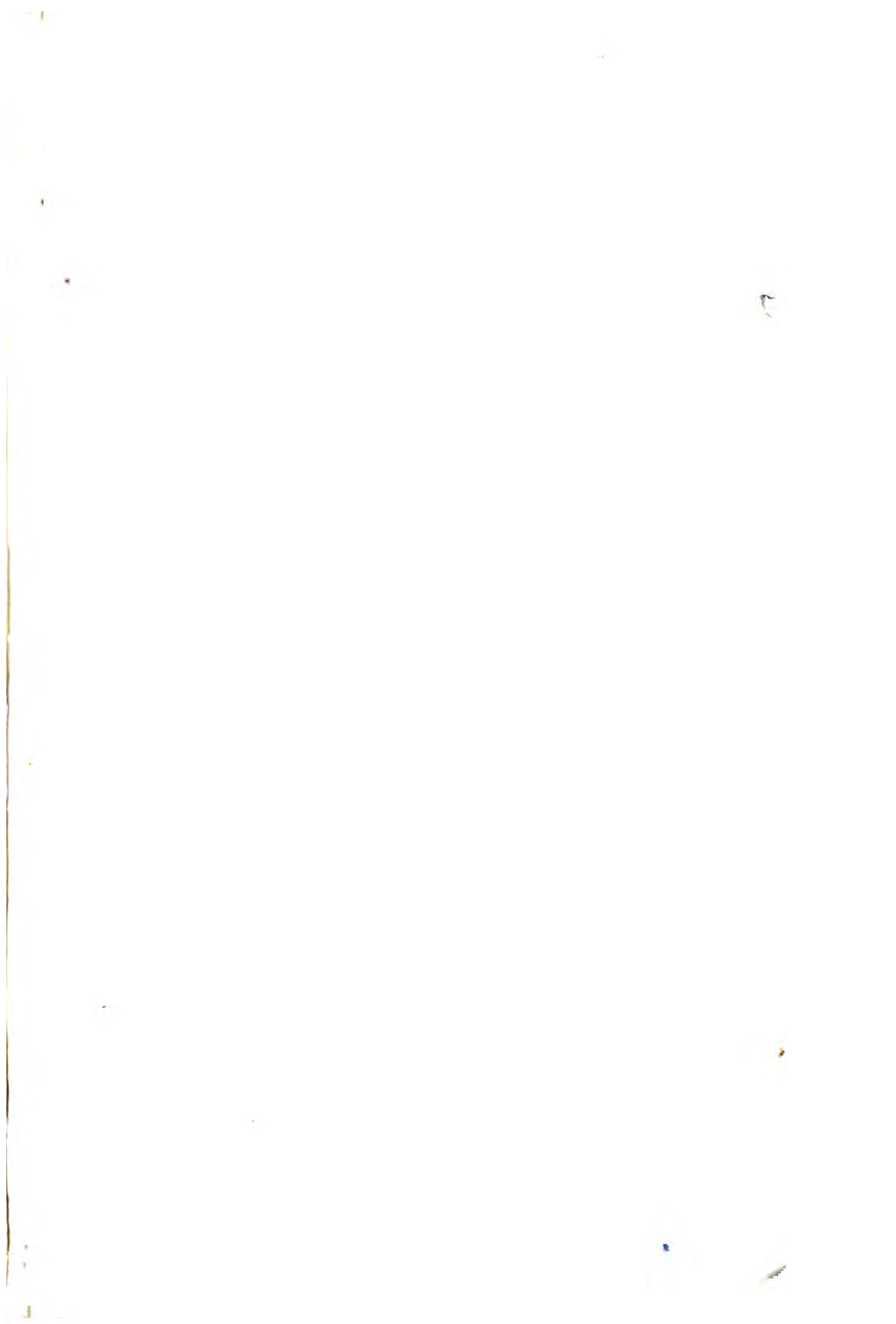
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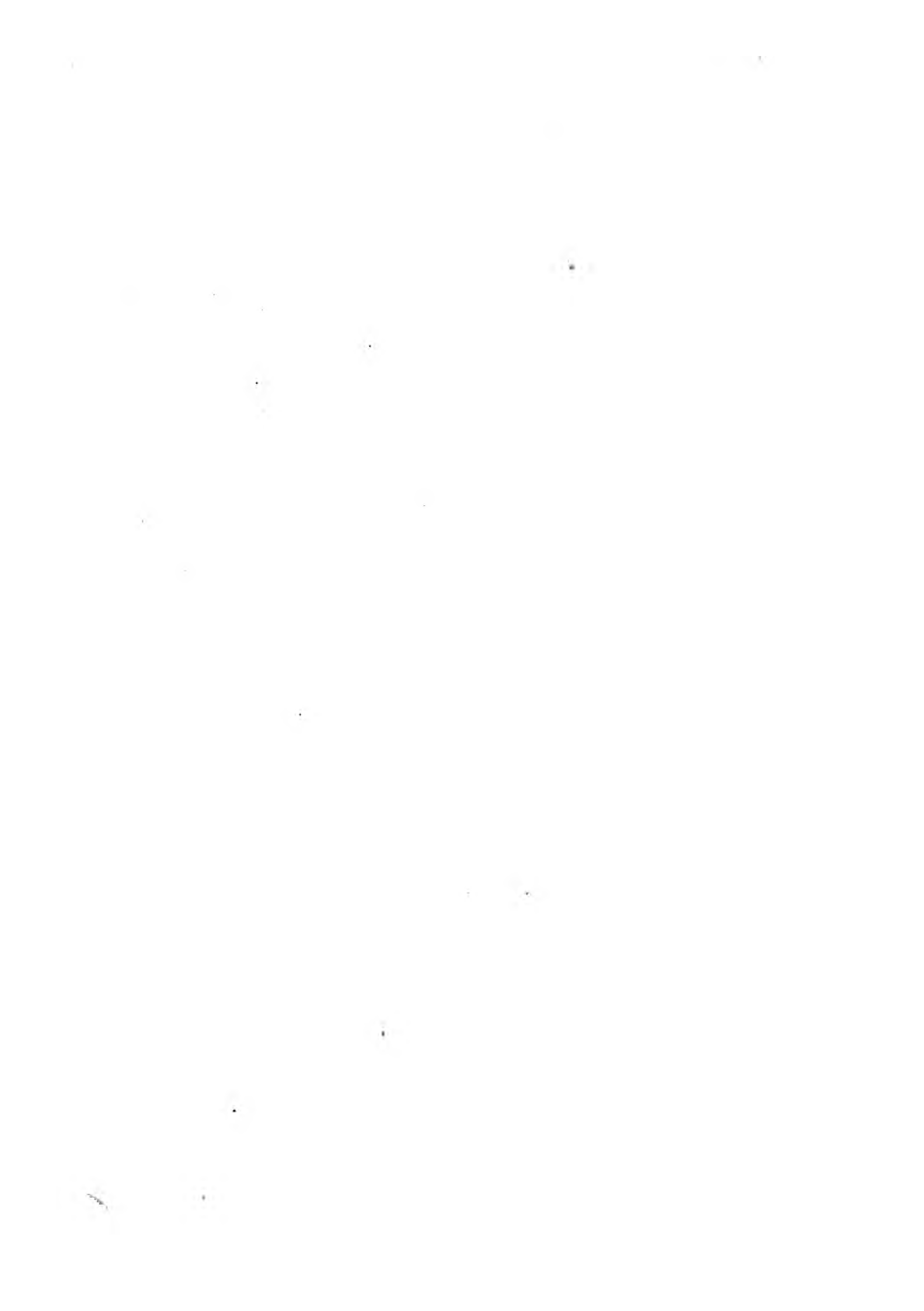


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THE  
**Scripture Expositor ;**

OR,  
DISTRICT VISITOR'S SCRIPTURE  
ASSISTANT.

By the Rev. Charles Hullah, M. A.,  
*Incumbent of Shipley, Sussex.*

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VOL. III.

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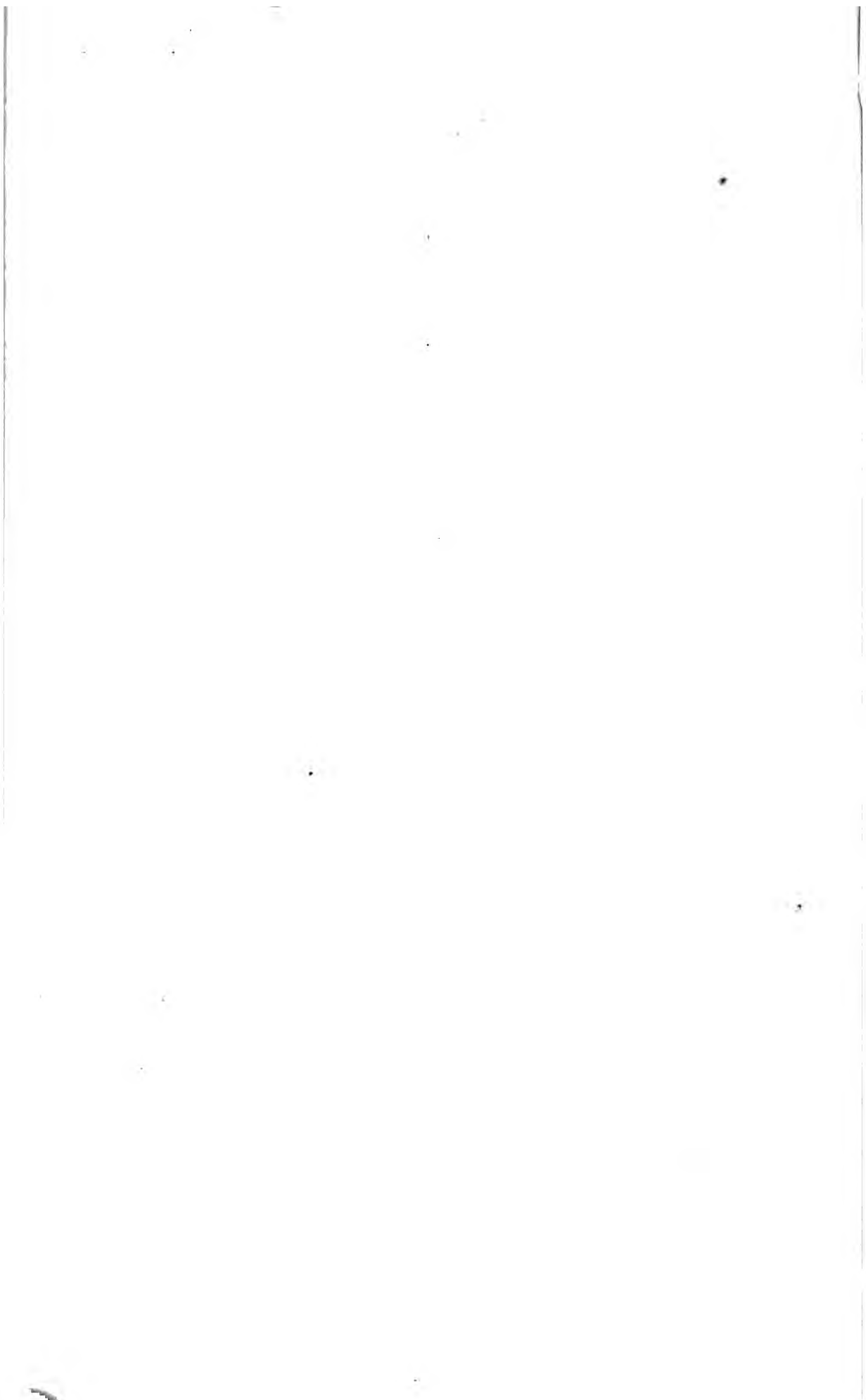


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## THE UPLIFTED HANDS.

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- “ Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.*
- “ And Moses said unto Joshua, choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek ; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.*
- “ So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek : and Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill.*
- “ And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.*
- “ But Moses’ hands were heavy ; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon ; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side ; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”* EXODUS xvii. 8—12.

THIS war with Amalek, and the way in which victory was obtained, were such notable events in the history of Israel, that God commanded Moses to write them in a book, and so to keep up the remembrance of them to future generations. “ And the Lord said unto Moses,

write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua, for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." v. 14.

The sin of the Amalekites is mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy. Here it is only said, "Then came Amalek and fought against Israel;" but in Deuteronomy xxv. 17, 18, we read, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindermost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary, he feared not God."

The Amalekites had heard that Israel were God's people, and what God had done for them; they should have feared to touch God's people, and to hurt His "little ones." Because they did not, the Lord swore "He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation." We read in after years, both of Saul and David carrying on this war.

But there was another reason why these things were to be had in everlasting remembrance. The way the Israelites obtained victory at this time, is striking and most instructive. Moses sent Joshua and the men of war to fight in the plain, while he himself went up into a mountain. What did he go for? He

said, "I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand." Now taking this rod in his hand showed on what grounds he expected in this way to help in this war. He calls it the rod of God. It was the rod God told him to use on all occasions when he worked wonders before Pharaoh. It was the rod which cast before Pharaoh had become a serpent. It was the rod which held out over the rivers, and streams, and ponds of Egypt, had turned their waters into blood, and their fish to corruption. It was the rod too which Moses had held over the waters of the sea which had dried up for the children of Israel, and which had rolled back for the destruction of their enemies. No power was in the rod, but it pleased God to appoint its use by the hand of Moses when calling for an exercise of His mighty power. Thus it was he now expected to help Joshua and his followers against Amalek. He went up the hill to pray to Him who had power to destroy these mighty enemies, he held up the rod to show that he trusted only in that power which hitherto had been exercised in his favour. And so it came to pass. If Moses dropped his hand with the rod in it, then Amalek got the battle; if he held up his hand, Israel prevailed. Therefore Aaron and Hur took it in turns to hold up

the weary arms of Moses, first one and then the other, even until the victory was completed.

Now here we learn a useful lesson on how we are to prevail over our enemies. We have enemies, and of a worse kind than Amalek. They are more in number. They are mightier in power. They are wiser and more subtle to take advantage of our weakness. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. vi. 12.) These enemies are always seeking to destroy us, and to hinder our progress to the land of rest. Great is the power of the wicked one, and great therefore is the danger of God's people in this wilderness world. Satan it was first spoiled God's work in the happy Eden. Satan it is holds the rule of the heathen world in darkness and the shadow of death. Satan it was tempted and afflicted Job so sorely, drew David into the mire of sin, and soiled his garments, and thereby caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and gave David great bitterness of spirit and sorrow of heart.

It was Satan desired to have Christ's disciples, to sift them as wheat, and who thrust sorely at Peter that he might fall. It is this

enemy we have as a roaring lion hungry after his prey, seeking whom he may devour.

Now Amalek was far stronger than Israel. If only Joshua and the fighting men of Israel had gone against them, victory had never been their's, for directly Moses' hand drooped those who had the greatest human strength prevailed.

Just so it is with us. Our's is a most unequal contest with the Wicked One. Thousands are daily falling before him, because they depend on no other strength than their own to use against him.

What we want then is, some greater strength than flesh and blood; yea, greater than the spiritual wickedness opposed to us. While then we are not to neglect the use of means, and our own strength, watchfulness and diligence, we are not to depend on these, but on the power of God put forth in our behalf. Joshua and the men of Israel were not to sit still while Moses asked for God's strength,—they were to be up and fighting. But they might be fighting all day, and with the utmost skill and boldness, yet would it have been in vain unless Moses had been in the mount with God asking for victory.

But the next great doctrine taught us here, is the blessedness and safety of those who

while they fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, have Christ, the great Interceder between God and man, praying for them above. A greater than Moses is with us here. The Captain of our salvation is the God-man Christ Jesus the Lord. It is in His strength we can prevail. It is through His merits we obtain help. It is by His prayers and intercession we gain victory.

He is gone up higher than Moses went, for Christ is gone "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

And again it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. viii. 25.) The rod in His hands is the cross, the token of those merits by which we prevail. We are not worthy to obtain help against Satan. We are Satan's "lawful captives." But not so when set free by the blood of the Lamb. This gives the value to the intercession of Jesus. He is the "righteous One,"—"The Holy One of God." He pleads His own merits in behalf of His people. He says, Father, these are unworthy in themselves, but thou lovest them for my sake,—they have believed in me—I have taken their sins,—they take my righteousness; therefore behold them as thy people, "accepted in the beloved."

There is no flaw in His righteousness. It is perfect. Those then whom He presents to His Father in heaven are regarded as perfectly righteous, wholly justified. They are made "the righteousness of God in Him."

Herein lies the source of victory in our battles here. These are they that overcome. They that fighting in strength not their own, say, "thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And those who believing that for them "Christ died, yea, rather is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," can add triumphantly, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and again, "We are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." (Rom. viii.)

Now think what it is to have such a Friend in the presence of God for you! And ask, are you fighting in His strength, hoping to prevail through His merits, obtaining victory by His prayers? It was a great matter to have the prayers of Moses. It is a great thing to have a good man, a minister of Christ, or any Christian friend lifting up his voice and holding up his hands in our behalf. But what is this to having Christ, the Son of God, interested in our behalf? The best friend's prayers are mixed with error, ignorance, and



unbelief. Christ's prayers only are all-righteous, exactly suitable, perfect. The best friend may perhaps forget us at a throne of grace; but Christ, like Aaron of old in the high priest's dress, has the names of His people engraven on His heart, as He stands in the presence of the Father. The best friend that prays for us may die, and we cannot think that he is able any more to pray for us, and we are quite certain he cannot now hear us, if we ask him to pray for us; but this is the glory of the heavenly Intercessor, "HE EVER LIVETH to make intercession for us."

The best friend who is interested in us, may at times be wanting in sympathy and fellow-feeling for us. He cannot always know our wants. We cannot tell him all, and if we could, perhaps he could not feel for us in some particular instance. But with Christ this can never be the case. "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities." He is very man to feel for us and with us in all our smallest wants. He is also very God, to help us to the utmost. Here is the error, the danger, the sin, and the blasphemy of the Roman Catholic doctrine of asking the Virgin Mary to pray for us, or calling upon any of the saints that are fallen asleep in Christ to pray for us. It is a false

doctrine, for there is no ground for it in Scripture. We never read of one single instance of any person being told to pray to one that is dead and gone from here to help them. When John fell down to worship the angel, he was told he must not do it, but "worship God." (Rev. xxii. 8, 9.)

It is dangerous, for it leads men to go more to the Virgin Mary, and to depend more on her and saints than on Christ, and so their souls gain no help at all. It is written, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man." Then it is sinful and blasphemous, it robs Christ of His glory, as the sole Mediator and Intercessor between God and fallen man. "There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. ii. 5.)

"By Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." It is placing something between the sinner and Christ which must shut out the sinner from all share in His mercy. Oh! fearful and dangerous deceit! that any poor ignorant people should be taught to expect more kindness in the Virgin Mary, a sinner herself saved by grace, than in the God-man Christ Jesus!—that her heart should be more tender, her ears more ready, her kindness more approachable, than the heart, ears, and love of the Lord Jesus, of

whom even His enemies bore witness, "this man receiveth sinners."

Nothing but ignorance of God's word, or "strong delusion that believes a lie," can make any thus trust to the prayers of the Virgin Mary, or the invocation—the calling upon saints. It is the devil's trap to catch poor souls in, and keep them from Christ. It is the Wicked One's device to rob Christ of His glory. This is the glorious and comforting doctrine of the Gospel, that while in this wilderness world below we are waging war against our enemy, Christ is gone up on high to make intercession for us. To Him therefore we may go straight and direct, without going to any earthly so called priest, or calling first upon any saint.

When we fail of help against our enemies, or when temptation gets the better of us, let us ever remember it is not that Christ's hands are weary of the work of intercession, but we are weary in our applications to Him. We are thinking we can do without His help, we are forgetting to ask for His help, we are depending too much on man, or on ourselves, and too little on Christ. Remember how Christ prayed for Peter, or the devil would have had him for destruction. Christ said, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not,"

or else it would have entirely failed. It will be so with us. When therefore we go forth to battle against sin in the world, and as we strive against it in our own flesh, let us be sure we have Christ holding up the rod on the mount in our behalf; let us look unto the hills from whence cometh our help; let us enter first by prayer with boldness into that holy of holies where Christ "ever liveth to make intercession for us," and so shall we gain victory over all who oppose our progress to the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Let us also learn the duty of praying for one another, especially those who are engaged more actively than ourselves in fighting the Lord's battles. If our calling be not that of the ministry, if we be not appointed to go into the field with the missionary, yet ought we to be "fellow-helpers of the truth," by remembering in our prayers those who bear "the burden and heat of the day."

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## PRAYER.

O Almighty God and Everlasting Father, whose eyes behold and whose eyelids try the children of men; thou knowest that I am surrounded by many and great enemies! Thou knowest how weak and helpless I am to resist them! But, Lord, thou art my hiding place! I desire to fight only in thy strength. I come to thee in the name of the Great High Priest, in whose merits and intercession thou hast taught me to trust.

Blessed Jesus! pray for me. Thou art Almighty and all-knowing, thou canst receive every poor sinner's prayer. Thou art all pitiful and tender, thou feelest for the weakest members of thy body. Thou art all-righteous, and thy prayers must prevail. Thou canst not be denied. Pray for me, that my faith fail not. Put upon me the whole armour of God. In thy strength let me prevail, and by thy blood let me overcome, and by thy word, even the sword of the Spirit. AMEN.

## JETHRO, PRIEST OF MIDIAN.

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*“And Jethro, Moses’ father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses in the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God:*

*“And he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.*

*“And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.*

*“And Moses told his father in law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and unto the Egyptians for Israel’s sake, and all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them.*

*“And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.*

*“And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.*

*“Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.” (Ex.xviii. 5—11.)*

THE true servant of God is often called upon to forego earthly blessings for his Master’s

sake. When Moses went to do the work of the Lord in Egypt, he had been obliged to part with his wife and children for the time. The last we read about Zipporah was, when she had cause to call Moses "a bloody husband unto her," because either her husband must have been killed by the Lord for neglecting a law, or her son must be circumcised. (Exodus iv. 25.) She then probably went home again to her father's house.

But he who gives up earthly comforts for the Lord's sake, will always have them, or others as great, returned to him by the Lord. So the promise of the Gospel runs, "there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time," etc. (Mark x. 29.) So Abraham had found it, when he left his father, and relations, and land in Ur of the Chaldees, and "went out not knowing whither he went." And so Moses found when he gave up many things, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." (Heb. xi. 26.) He now to his joy and comfort meets his wife, and children, and father in law.

The names of his children are given us, as

notices of some points in the character of Moses. "The name of one was Gershom, (a stranger there) for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land." This testified of Moses' choice, in choosing to live a "stranger and pilgrim" in the world, instead of being at home in Pharaoh's family. It might also serve to remind his son that this was his condition also. We need often being reminded of this, since it is the temptation and inclination of us all to be at home here, and to be a stranger to spiritual things, instead of living and walking by faith in the promises of God, and "desiring a better country, that is an heavenly."

"The name of the other was Eliezer," which being interpreted is "my God is an help." For Moses said, "the God of my father was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." This told of Moses' faith in God's power and mercy to help him, and of his gratitude for the help.

Jethro, the father in law of Moses, is called here a "Priest of Midian." Now we must remember that he was not a priest after the order of Aaron, for indeed he was priest before Aaron was made one, and before the law concerning priesthood was given. Beside which he was not an Israelite. But this is not the



first mention of priests. We have read of Melchisedek, an eminent type of Christ, "He was the priest of the Most High God." As a priest Jethro offered up sacrifices to God. So here, you read, (ver. 12) "and Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering, and a sacrifice for God, and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God."

This at once reminds us of the great truth stated in God's word, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." All the world is guilty, and every human being in it has need of what is called expiation or atonement for sin. Satisfaction is required by a just God for the breach of His just and holy laws. All over the world, even in heathen lands, where is no knowledge of the true God, and the one sacrifice which alone can really take away sin, we find persons have some kind of sense of sin, and the need of having their sins atoned for in some way. The heathens in India, and other parts of the world, have their sacrifices and their priests, though of course they are not priests of the Most High, nor sacrifices acceptable to God. But they all show that man is a guilty being, and even in his worst condition cannot get rid of a sense of guiltiness. We know from the light of

God's word, there is really only one great sacrifice which does take away sin, and now only one Priest of the Most High, even Jesus. He is both the Lamb for a sacrifice, and the Priest who has offered it to God. All sacrifices before the law was given from Sinai, were types or shadows of this One great sacrifice. Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Melchisedek, and Jethro, all acknowledged this in their sacrifices which were before the law. Those which took place under the settled priesthood of Aaron likewise foretold of this sacrifice. We live in days when we can look back to the time when it was really offered up once for all, and if we are real and heart-believers in Jesus, we are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who by Him do believe in God." (1 Peter i. 19, 20.) Those who lived before this Lamb was manifest, shewed their faith in it by bringing their offerings according to God's rules concerning them, and so they were accepted. We who live after it has been offered, must take heed that we prove our interest in its merits, through the same faith, by such devotion to God as He asks for at our hands. If the blood of Jesus be

sprinkled on us to the cleansing of our conscience, then by the mercies of God we should be constrained to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." That is, if we believe Christ gave Himself unto death for us, we should be as redeemed souls, giving our bodies and souls up to His service, a living sacrifice. We should be every day asking what will Christ my Redeemer have me to do. We must be praying daily, Lord teach me thy will. We must be searching Scriptures for the answer. It is but a small return for what Christ hath done to redeem us from so great destruction.

But let us now turn to the account of the meeting between Moses and Jethro. We read that "Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel." He seems to have praised God for that goodness. He showed also how much he had learned from the Lord's wonderful doings, and how his own faith had been increased. "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them." We have seen the truth of this assertion in the history of the plagues, and the destruction of the Egyptians. They were proud of their magicians, and of the wonders they could perform. But the ser-

vants of the Lord outstripped their cleverest acts, and Aaron's rod swallowed up their's. They were proud of their gods, and Pharaoh dealt proudly when he said he would not know nor obey the God of the Israelites. But God was above them, and brought them low, when He showed their helplessness to deliver any, and when He dishonoured some of them, as the river Nile they adored, by turning it into blood, and causing the fish to stink. They dealt proudly when they said the Israelites should serve them, and not go out from them: but God was above them, when He forced them to send them out laden with presents. They had dealt proudly when Pharaoh as king, with all his chariots and horsemen, pursued after them, expecting certainly to overcome them; but God, the King of the earth was above them when He overthrew them in the Red Sea.

No doubt when Jethro left Moses to return to his own land and people, he proclaimed the goodness of the Lord, and told all the people what things He had done.

The way in which Moses received his father in law, and helped him to these good and holy impressions should also be marked by us. It may well remind us of the way in which we should receive our friends. They seem to

have joined together in worshipping God. As we have seen, they sacrificed together. They united in meeting round the family altar. They mingled their prayers and praises. It is thus Christian friends should meet together. If they are members of the same family, heirs of the same glory, having "one Father of all," are of one Spirit, and have one hope, they should thus meet around the common altar, even the cross of Christ, mingle their prayers and praises together, and join when they can in celebrating the feast of the Lord's Supper and eating bread together, and so help to strengthen one another's faith, and confirm each other's love. How often, instead of this, is it made an occasion of revelling and feasting, and worldly enjoyments, without any thoughts of God or of the things of eternity!

We must next observe an important circumstance attending Jethro's visit to Moses. (See ver. 13 to end.) He was, we find, the occasion of Moses making a change in his mode of conducting the government of the people of Israel. When he saw Moses sitting from morning to evening to judge the people, he enquired what it was, and being told that all the people brought their cases to Moses, he said, "The thing that thou doest is not good, thou wilt surely wear away, both thou and

this people that is with thee, for this thing is too heavy for thee." He then advised his making rulers from among the people to assist in this work, so that only the hard cases, and those which required counsel from the Lord, should come before Moses. There were to be "rulers of thousands and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens." Moses acted on this advice. And thus it was a providential arrangement which led him to meet his father in law at this time, as it had been in his earlier life, when he first fell in with Jethro, and became his son in law. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

But mark especially the character of the men to be chosen. "Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." Now this same rule ought of course to be followed by all Christians who appoint any persons to such important offices. This ought to be the character of all who have anything to do with the administration of justice, or the defence of the poor, or other responsible duties. Alas! it is too often the case that it is thought sufficient to find men who have only the first of these qualities, that is, ability, "able men." But evidently those who hold office in a Christian government, and judges, and lawyers, and magistrates, ought to have

each one of the points in the character described here, "Able men, fearing God, men of truth, hating covetousness." Much is said in Scripture concerning the great sin of unrighteous judges. And the unrighteous judgments of men are often placed in contrast with the righteous judgments of God. So it is in the lxxxii. Psalm, where it is said, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth among gods (or princes, or rulers). How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy." The Psalm ends thus, "Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations." Two chief reasons there are why much stress should be laid on these evils. One is, that rulers and judges have great power and great opportunity for evil or good. They are, as it were, in the place of God. They should be dealers of justice, rendering justice to all without respect of persons. Then again, such warning against injustice shows how God careth for the poor. He would have them receive as much justice as those who are rich, and may be able to pay for it. Hence in the description of the reign of Christ, when "the saints shall reign with Him," when the "twelve apostles shall judge the twelve tribes," when

“the saints shall judge the earth;” and the Lord “shall make princes in all the earth,” great stress is laid on the righteousness of the government of those days. So among other places the eleventh chapter of Isaiah foretells, “He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” We find the same description in the seventy-second Psalm, a prophecy of the reign of Christ. It is also said in another place of Christ, “When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.” (Psalm lxxv. 2.)

That will be a glorious time indeed, when a redeemed earth shall no longer groan under the weight of iniquity and injustice, but “the Lord shall be King over all the earth.” But meantime let us remember, those who shall live and reign in glory with the Redeemer then, must now be partakers of that grace which makes them “fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.”

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## PRAYER.

O Almighty God, who didst order all the events in the life of thy servant Moses, and gavest him grace to be the leader of thy people! Look upon me with the same love, and order my path. Thou hast given me a work to do. I would follow after holiness, I would occupy the talent thou hast given me. I would serve the Lord Jesus, and do good to His people. For these things give me grace. Give me heavenly wisdom and guidance. Put thy fear and love in my heart. Strengthen me to the right performance of every duty. Grant that, like thy servant of old, I may be found faithful in all thy house.

Lord, let me know more of Christ as my High Priest. May I rejoice in His complete sacrifice for sin. Blessed and exalted Jesus! purge my conscience from dead works by thy blood, to serve the living God. Let thy intercession be made in my behalf! Pray for me, that my faith fail not. Oh! remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. AMEN.

## THE COVENANT OF SINAI.

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*“And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.*

*“And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,*

*“And be ready against the third day ; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.”*

EXODUS XIX. 9—11.

THE giving of the law from mount Sinai is a most important period in the Jewish history. From this time their condition as the peculiar people of God was altered ; they stood in a different relation to God, being under a solemn engagement and agreement or covenant ; and from this time they were bound to the observance of a great number of religious rites and

ceremonies, besides their obligation to obey the ten commandments, written upon stone, by the finger of God, at this time.

There was indeed, before this time, certain moral and certain ceremonial laws to which, as the people of God, they were bound. God had instituted the law of the Sabbath day. This was given from the beginning, and was a sign between God and His people. We saw how they observed it in gathering manna. Therefore it was a command repeated with further motives for obedience, when it was placed among the ten commandments, and it was said, "Remember the Sabbath day."

Then again, there had been given a law concerning murder, and it had been said to Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

There was also the law of sacrifice, by which victims were slain upon altars, and other offerings made unto God, as we find by the sacrifices of Abel, Noah, Abraham, and others. There was also the rite of circumcision, the seal of the covenant God made with Abraham, and the mark by which God's own people were distinguished.

But at mount Sinai God entered into fresh and special covenant with His people, and gave them certain laws, and instituted rites

and ceremonies, by observing which they were kept distinct as His people. They were to receive blessings, and to be prepared for the coming of that Saviour, to whom the law in so many ways directed them to look.

Before we enter upon a consideration of any of these laws in particular, it will be well for us to notice the time when this covenant was given from mount Sinai, also the wonderful manner in which it was delivered, and lastly what we learn from all this respecting our own obligation to God's laws.

What we have to observe as to the time of its delivery is this : it was given just after they had received the great mercy of deliverance out of Egyptian bondage, and just before they went into the land of promise they were to enjoy. The time when the law was given, and the covenant made, was therefore very appropriate, for it was when God by his great power had rescued them from cruel bondage and death. They had just therefore become God's people by purchase, as was afterwards said, "I gave Egypt for thee." They were therefore open to an appeal to their best feelings, and a demand on their best services. They had been the slaves of Pharaoh, they were now the liberated servants of God. Pharaoh had made them serve with rigour,

and bear a yoke which oppressed them even unto death. It was a time therefore when God who delivered them might well put a yoke upon them bearing which they might live, and that happily.

Therefore when Moses went up into the mount, God said to him, "tell the children of Israel, ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself, now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people : for all the earth is mine." So also when the first command was given, it has this preface to it, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, thou shalt have no other gods before me." But the time also was seasonable, not only on account of what had taken place, but because they were on the borders of their future inheritance. They were about to live in a land which God would purchase for them. They must therefore dwell in it according to His rules. So would they be kept distinct as His people, "a peculiar treasure, above all people." So would they be kept holy, answering one great end for which God had a people, that they might

dispense blessings around them, as it is said here, (ver. 6,) "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." And so, we may add lastly, would they live long in the enjoyment of the land God had given them.

We ought to remark how this is the order God observes in giving commandments to His people, even the commandments enjoined in the Gospel. He appeals to the motive of love. He appeals to our affections. He says, "If ye love me keep my commandments." He says, I am the Lord who hath bought thee with so great a price, for I gave my Son for thee, I have redeemed thee from the bondage of Satan, and the curse of the broken law,—love me and keep my commandments. The great commandment of giving ourselves to His service, the duty of learning His will and laying ourselves out to follow it, is enjoined on this ground, as when it is said by the Holy Ghost (Rom. xii. 1), "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is just as we are taught to feel the dreadful nature of sin's bondage and curse, and the glorious freedom obtained to the believer in Jesus, that so we shall feel the force of such

appeals, and give ourselves to the Lord, "constrained by the love of Him who died for us."

The different relation we now stand in toward God who have received the Gospel of His Son is, let us next observe, taught us forcibly by the peculiar manner in which the law was given from mount Sinai. It was with "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people in the camp trembled, and mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as in a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." This was no doubt that the people to whom God thus spoke might have a due sense of His terrible power, and of His awful justice who thus gave expression to His laws. Then that they might have also a sense of the holiness of the laws and of their Author, they were told to sanctify themselves and wash their clothes before they came near the mount, and the people were charged, "lest they should break through unto the Lord to gaze and many of them perish." Such is the distance between guilty man and God, that we are not fit to draw near to His presence, to hear His voice even for the purpose of receiving His laws.

We can only thus draw near, when we are sanctified in the blood of Jesus the Mediator, which cleansing was thus typified in the outward purifying of the people.

Now that God has spoken to us from another mount, even Sion, and spoken by His Son, giving another law, the law of faith, the law of life, how different is the way in which He speaks, and with what boldness may we approach and listen, and even gaze upon His majesty, "God manifest in the flesh."

The apostle to the Hebrews (Chap. xii. 13—25.) dwells at length upon this difference. "Ye are not come to the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more,..... but ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." What a difference is here in



the manner God has spoken in the law and in the Gospel. The mount cannot be touched, it is the invisible mount of God's Church. There is no blackness and darkness and tempest; there is light and liberty and love; there is no thunder or lightning, there is the still small voice of God's word. There is no sight to make us, as Moses, exceedingly fear and quake, there is the blood of Jesus speaking peace and cleansing a way for us to draw nigh by. What then should be our way of approach, what our feelings while we receive this law at God's mouth? Let us hear the apostle's own conclusion, "See," says he, "that ye refuse not Him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

Yet, alas! the mildness of the way God addresses us in the Gospel is, with too many, a reason for slighting His voice, and giving but little heed to His requirements. But we ought to remember, it is a more heinous offence to neglect the appeals of love than to have slighted the terrors of the Lord. It proves a more hardened, a more careless state of heart. It will be visited by heavier punishment. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Let us then next observe the mistake those persons make who think that the commandments which were given from Mount Sinai, were only given to the Jews, and were only binding on them. There are some who think thus of the fourth commandment, and regard the observance of the seventh day as holy, only binding on the Jews. They give as their reason, that the Lord said, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Egypt." But the answer to this is easy. It is true we have not been brought out of Egypt, literally ; but, can it be denied that the true believer is brought out of a worse bondage than Egypt was to the Israelites. If their obligation to obey God was very great, because of the great and marvellous deliverance from Pharaoh and from Egypt, and from bitter servitude ; is not our obligation a thousand-fold greater, who are delivered from the service of Satan, the bondage of sin, and the wages of death. Our Lord says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matt. v. 17.) One way in which the law is fulfilled in the Christian believer, is, by his having a still stronger motive to obey it, than the Israelite could feel that he had. The love of God in the gift of His Son, whose righteousness is

counted to him that believeth, constrains the believer to love the law God has given, and to take it gladly as his rule of life. So far then from any one of those laws being applicable only to the Jews and not to the Christian, we see the reasons and motives for obedience are increased in number and in weight, and therefore the law remains with all its requirements unchanged. The difference in our condition does but heighten our obligation. True, we are saved, if true believers in Christ, from the curse and condemnation of the law ; Christ is our righteousness,—Christ is our obedience,—Christ is our answer to the requirement, “Do this, and thou shalt live,” for “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth.” (Rom. x. 4.) True our obedience to the law is not that we may obtain life, but, that we may prove love. We work from life, not for it.

But, although the law cannot give life, yet, it can give us good rules for that obedience and holiness of character, which every true believer pants after. Now, he that is thus justified by the grace of Christ from all those things from which the law of Moses could not justify, he is the man most easily persuaded to walk according to the law of love to God, and love to his neighbour. His heart is softened by the love of

God to his soul. God's laws are now written on the fleshly table of his heart, according to the promise, "I will write my laws in their hearts ;" although, it is added, "and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more."

Let us remember, the deliverance we have obtained is different from that of the Israelites, because it is a spiritual one ; so then, our obedience must be a spiritual one, not slavishly conforming to the letter of those laws, but lovingly falling in with the spirit of those commandments which are "holy, just, and good." Holiness is happiness to all God's children. They feel "His commandments are not grievous ;" their greatest grief is that they come short of that holiness God's word and will set before them. Their greatest joy is conformity to His will. The liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, is not a liberty to do as they like, according to the will of the flesh, but to do as God wills ; and the true Christian finds God's will is his will, and that Christ's yoke is easy, and His burden light.

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### PRAYER.

O LORD Almighty, who didst descend upon mount Sinai and speak to Thy people with a

voice of terror, and who hast now spoken again in the soft accents of love from mount Sion! Suffer me to approach Thee at this time, and speak Thou in love to my soul. I know that Thou art a consuming fire. If I draw near in my own sinful state I shall perish. But Lord, I would come with the blood of sprinkling upon my soul. I would ask for grace whereby I may serve Thee acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

May I give heed to all the words Thou hast spoken. May Thy voice be of more weight to me than the voice of the mightiest of men. May none of Thy words escape me. Cause me to hear Thy voice daily, to love Thy will, and more and more to be conformed to it. May none of Thy commandments be grievous to me. Make me to love even those of Thy commandments which call upon me to deny myself. And so make me perfect in every good work to do Thy will, working in me that which is well-pleasing in Thy sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

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*“And God spake all these words, saying,  
“I am the Lord thy God, which have brought  
thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the  
house of bondage.  
“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”  
EXODUS xx. 1—3.*

IN looking at the general character of the commandments we can scarcely help noticing that they are almost all of a negative nature, that is, not so much telling us what we are to do, as what we must not do. This is the case with them all, excepting the fourth, and the fifth. Now the reason why they are so would seem to be this. They are all directed against certain tendencies or natural inclinations, which exist in the human heart. It is the object of God in these laws to forbid the indulgence of those inclinations, and to enforce the duty of the very opposite feeling. But this also may remind us they are not intended to give life, but to show and convince of sin. As it is written, “If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Gal. iii.

21.) And again, "Wherefore then serveth the law? it was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." (ver. 19.) That is, then, the law serves to show us our sins, and to lead us to look to Him, the promised seed, who is able to give life, which the law cannot give. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," and "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. iii. 24.)

The evil tendencies of our nature against which the commandments are given, exist to this day in every human heart. We still need the law to shew us our sin, and all our shortcomings, and that the only righteousness which justifies a sinner in the sight of God is, that of Christ, "which is unto all and upon all them that believe," for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. x. 4.)

But then in the next place, there is another feature in the general character of these commandments to which we must pay especial attention, before we can fully know what our sin is who have broken them, and what is that righteousness which will alone satisfy God, and which only is to be had of Christ.

We must observe then, there are two ways

in which they may any one of them be broken, and two ways in which they may be kept. I mean, they all have a literal and a spiritual meaning. They may be broken in the letter, and they may be broken in the spirit. Real and perfect obedience to them is nothing less than obedience to the spirit of each commandment. This makes God's "commandments exceeding broad." And this makes man's sin "exceeding sinful."

The number of the commandments is ten. Of this there is no doubt, for so it is written. (Exodus xxxiv. 28.) "He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments." They were written on two stones, and our Lord has taught us to view them in the two great divisions of our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbour. Thus when asked, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. xxii. 37, 38.) Here we see that the requirement of the commandments reaches to the heart, and the thoughts of the heart. It is not only that we are to take no other for our God than the



Lord, but He is to have the first place in our affections, and His will and service to be uppermost in our minds.

Before however we speak further of the spiritual observance of this first commandment, it is necessary for us to notice the gross transgression of its very letter which prevails in our day. And this not merely in heathen countries, where, as the Apostle says, "There be they that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many," (1 Cor. viii. 5.) but alas! even in our own land, and among those called Christians, shall we find this first commandment is broken. However much we may wish it were otherwise, and however much we may pity those deceived by the system, for truth's sake we must lay this to the charge of all Roman Catholics who worship according to the doctrines of their Church. And does it not look rather suspicious, when we find in that Church a disposition to slur over the distinction between the first and the second commandments, as we believe the word of God divides them. All are agreed there are ten. We say there are four in the first table, and six in the second. But the Romish Church joins the two first into one. Although they are in our eyes quite distinct, the one forbidding the

religious worship of all other beings than the One true God, the other forbidding idolatry, that is, the worship of any material images or pictures. Then in order to keep up the number of ten, they divide the last, and make this one commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house," &c. into two; whereas it might on the same ground have been divided into seven, according to each object we are forbidden to covet. But it is plain it is all one, and is against the sin of desiring what is not our's, and is that referred to by the Apostle, when he says, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." (Rom. vii. 7.)

But is the first commandment really broken by worshippers in the Romish Church? Surely it is, since they are guilty of paying divine honour to other beings than the One true God. Of course they do not leave out the worship of God, but they add the worship of other beings. It may be said of Roman Catholics as is written of the Samaritans, "They feared the Lord, and served their own Gods." (2 Kings xvii. 33.) Surely they are justly charged with this sin, since they pay honour to the Virgin Mary, to Saints, and Angels,—such honour as is due only unto God. We ought not lightly to charge any

with such a heinous sin as this, or to do it without sufficient grounds; but if we have such grounds, nothing should make us shrink from the unpleasant duty of regarding the Church which teaches such things as idolatrous and blasphemous. Now we do not make the charge lightly, or without grounds, when we can open a Roman Catholic Prayer Book, and find in it prayers in such language as this, "Holy Virgin, mother of my God, defend me from my enemies in my last hour, and present me to thy divine Son. Glorious St. Michael, prince of the heavenly host, and thou my angel guardian, and you my blessed patrons, intercede for me and assist me in this last and dreadful hour." How unlike the prayer of Stephen in his last hour! "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." God says, "Call upon ME in the day of trouble."

Prayer and praise are the highest acts of honour we can pay to God; to pay them to others, is to honour them as we ought only to honour the Father. Yet are all Roman Catholics taught by their Church, "That the saints reigning together with Christ, are to be honoured and invocated (that is, called upon), that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be venerated." (See Pope Pius' Creed.) It is well known they make a

distinction between the worship they pay to God, and that honour they pay to saints and angels. But the word of God observes no such distinction. It countenances no such adoration of saints. When John adored the angel, as related in the book of Revelation, (Rev. xix. 10,) the angel would not suffer it, saying, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, worship God." And the same thing happened again, (Rev. xxii. 8,9,) and it was said to John, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets." Not any such honour may we give to other beings than God. But surely to pray to the Virgin Mary and the saints, is to grant that they have merits and power which God only has, and is therefore to give them divine worship. And even suppose some of the better educated Roman Catholics might observe this distinction, which however is not warranted of Scripture, yet we know the many thousands who are taught thus to call upon the Virgin and saints for help, do actually worship them, and that in the stead of God. Whereas it is written, "Worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Whatever, then, Roman Catholics may say, and whatever individuals among them may do, it is certain that the actual effects of their doc-

trine and prayers are that divine honour and worship are given to other beings than God, and thus they break this first commandment.

It is the great glory of the Gospel that the believing sinner may now go at once with all boldness, and address himself to God, and be sure of acceptance. "There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." There is to us but One Priest, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is but One Advocate and Intercessor, that is this same "Righteous One." Supposing the Virgin Mary were endued with such powers, as to enable her to hear prayers offered all over the world at the same time,—supposing this were equally true of all saints gone to glory, and that they were all so righteous that God would hear them for their own sakes, and so compassionate that they would certainly listen readily to all our woes; and we have not a word of Scripture for such ideas; yet, supposing it were so, what have we gained? Nothing at all! On the contrary, we lose just in the degree our devotion is called off from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no tenderness of feeling in any individual which is not in Him in all perfection, for He is God as well as man. What we may think

we can find in some saints, we know and are sure exists in Him, and that in perfection. Why has He taken our fleshly nature upon Him, and taken the office of Mediator, but that we might have a High Priest over the house of God, "who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 15, 16.)

It is the glory of the Gospel, that it introduces the sinner into the immediate presence of God; for "in Christ we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."

It is the shame of the Roman Catholic System, that it keeps the sinner far away from the presence of God, teaching him that Christ needs to be appealed to through the medium of the Virgin Mary, saints and angels, as though these, naturally fellow sinners with ourselves, were more easy of access, more tender hearted, than the God-man Christ Jesus our Lord, and so "they worship the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." God, in His mercy, deliver us and our country from such a system of false worship!

But let us also take heed that while we break not this law thus in the letter, we keep it in the spirit. Christ is come to fulfil the righteousness of this law in us "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

The true and proper effect of the Gospel is to make us love God supremely above all creatures, and choose His service willingly and lovingly. For this end is given us the word of reconciliation, by which we enter into fellowship with God, and have Him for our Friend. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and these things we write that your joy may be full." So John witnesses. (1 John i. 3, 4.) The Gospel when received into the heart, gives a new motive for loving God, and taking Him for our God. It brings us into a new relationship with Him. It makes us "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." Our past and present sins are frankly and freely forgiven. The gift of the Holy Spirit to teach us wisdom, to help our prayers, and to strengthen us in the Lord, is freely and fully poured out upon us. We are "heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ." We are "sealed unto the day of redemption." We are "passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation."

For all this we cannot but love Him who

first loved us. We are told to call Him, "Abba, Father," to depend on Him with more confidence than on the best earthly parent; never doubting of His love, for that is unchangeable; ever looking to His wisdom to guide us, for that is infinite; and ever leaning on His power to help us, for that is Almighty.

Let us ever pray that thus we may keep this commandment in spirit, because it is God's law; and also because in keeping it there is great reward. Not that our obedience is to give life. After all we are unprofitable servants. Christ is our righteousness. But ever remembering that just as God Himself becomes more the highest object of our affections, shutting out other objects, and keeping them at an infinite distance, so shall we find our souls are satisfied; we shall "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God." (Eph. iii. 19.) Nothing short of this can satisfy immortal souls. This is the restoration of God's image in our souls, this is being "conformed to the image of His Son, the firstborn among many brethren," and "putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. iv. 24.)

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## PRAYER.

O Lord God, who hast revealed Thyself to man as the greatest good, grant me to know this by experience. Come Thou, and take possession of my heart. Cast out every unclean thing. Make me the temple of the Holy Ghost. May I have no other gods but Thee. May I love no creature in comparison to Thee. Lord, Thou knowest this is far from being my state naturally. My soul cleaves to the dust. I love almost every thing better than Thee. But do Thou change my heart, and cause me to choose Thee before all else. Let the love of Christ to my soul bring about this change. Make me to believe that for His sake Thou lovest me, unworthy as I am. Give me faith in all Thy promises of love. Thus as I see thee a God of love in the Son of thy love, may my whole heart be drawn out to Thee, and my affections be set upon things above, where Christ sitteth at Thy right hand. Lord, enable me from my inmost soul to say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee;"—for Jesus' sake. Amen.

## THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

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*“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth :*

*“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ;*

*“And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”*

EXODUS XX. 4—6.

WHEN God gave the commandments, He well knew what were the natural inclinations of man, and what they would be in all ages of the world. Amongst others, He knew man would be prone to fall into the strange sin of worshipping dumb idols, wood and stone. And if we wanted to prove the necessity for such a commandment as this second one, we should say, Look first at the heathen world, and see how all nations are found guilty of making their own gods out of wood, and metal, and stone, and falling down and worshipping them. Then next, look at the

Jewish people, who even in the face of the light of the laws given from Mount Sinai, and the knowledge of the one true God, yet, very soon and very generally, fell into the sin of idol worship.

Then we would say further, see this tendency to idolatry among nations called Christians. See this commandment broken in its very letter, in many professedly Christian Churches.

This commandment then cannot be laid aside,—even by us Christians, there is a proneness in every man to break it in spirit, as says the apostle, “Covetousness is idolatry,” and we find the practice of many called Christians does involve a breach of the very letter.

This command is on this account enforced by a double motive. God reminds us He is a “jealous God,” and punishes even to many generations this sin. God is not of course capable of feeling jealousy or anger, or any other human passion betokening weakness. But the language is adapted to our understandings, and speaks after the manner of men. This, at least it teaches us, that worshipping anything else than God, will lead God to act towards the worshipper as if He were jealous and angry. He will punish such and also their children, even to the third and fourth generation. Not that those among the children

of such should be punished if they were righteous, but if walking in the sins of their fathers. So we are taught in Ezekiel xviii. 14—17.

The present condition of the Jews, scattered among all nations, and cast off from being God's people, is an instance of such visitations. Yet we know how ready is God to receive any from among them who shall return to the Lord, acknowledge, believe, and confess the Saviour. Those are punished who continue among "them that hate Him."

There is also the encouragement of a promise in this commandment. There is an appeal to the motive of love; "Shewing mercy unto thousands in them that love me, and keep my commandments." Jealousy indeed implies love. Jealousy is offended love. Those that continue to serve the living God and do not run after other Gods, find mercy. We have a notable instance of this in the case of Jehu, who was very zealous in destroying all the worshippers of Baal. We read of his servants thus obeying his wishes, "They brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them," and again, "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel." And for this he was thus rewarded. "The Lord said unto Jehu, because thou hast done well in executing that

which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.” (2 Kings x. 30.)

We have surely the most humbling view of our corrupt and fallen nature when we think of this proneness in man to idolatry, and when we consider that man is so far gone from righteousness that not only he does not see God in any of the works of creation, but he delights in making a god out of things without sense or feeling. A picture of idolatry in all its folly and absurdity, is given us in the writings of the Prophet Isaiah. (See chap. xlv. 9—20.) The folly is there pictured of a man cutting down a cypress or oak tree, or planting an ash tree and then cutting it down, using some of it for firewood and of the residue making a god : “ He falleth down unto it and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, deliver me ; for thou art my god.” It is truly and mournfully said of such an one, “ He feedeth on ashes ; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand.” His perishing soul he is seeking to nourish by what seems like food, but is as ashes to the natural body. The cause of it is a “deceived

heart," which makes him cling firmly (with his right hand) to that which can do him no good. We ought to remember how many millions of poor heathen are in this state to this day, and are appealing to us through Missionary Societies to send them the bread of life to feed upon, and the knowledge of the one true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and who is able to deliver their souls.

But we must observe the commandment is needed by, and was first given to those to whom the true God has been revealed. It implies a knowledge of the true God. It is said, "thy God is a jealous God." The Israelites soon showed how they needed such a commandment. They were soon guilty of idolatry. Exod. xxxii. 1—8 gives an account of this first open act of idolatry. While Moses was in the mount with God the people fell into this sin. Aaron helped them, and with their golden ear-rings made a molten calf. No doubt they had imbibed a lust for this sin in Egypt. Yet it is remarkable how when the Lord appeared to Moses and gave the law, He reminded the people that they saw nothing which they could imitate and take to represent God. "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude, on the day that the Lord spake unto you in

Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image." (See Deut. iv. 15.)

The fall of such a people under such circumstances only more plainly shows how such a tendency is deeply seated in the human heart. Would that we could see no such tendency in the present day. Jealousy for the truth of the pure Gospel forbids our passing over such practices in the Roman Catholic Church, which to say the least, have very much the appearance of idolatry. We have seen that they set aside much of the force of this law, by joining it on to the first commandment and losing the distinction between the two. Let us see if they have not good reason in the practices prevailing in their churches to fear and to wish to get rid of this command.

You will observe there are three distinct parts in the sin of idolatry here named. First, making a graven image, or the likeness of any thing in heaven or earth ; secondly, the falling down to it, and thirdly, the worshipping and doing it honour. Now if we go into the Roman Catholic places of worship, we should find in some part of their service they were engaged in bowing down before pictures, crosses, or relics of saints and other things, and in fact to all appearance doing each one

of these three things which together make up idolatry. They perhaps would say they only did the two first, for that they were not worshipping these things in the same way they worship God.

But this excuse will not hold good, for these reasons. First the Roman Catholic belief is this, "I most firmly assert, that the images of Christ and of the mother of God, ever Virgin, and also of the other saints, are to be had and retained; and that due honour and veneration are to be given them." (Pope Pius's Creed.)

Next we must remember that they hold that the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are converted by their priests into the whole substance of the body and of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then in this state they hold it to be an object of divine worship; for they say, "that all the faithful in Christ are bound to venerate this most holy sacrament, and to render thereto the worship (of *latria*) which is due to the true God." They have therefore, a custom of what is called elevating or lifting up the host and carrying it in procession through the streets and public places. All this looks to the simple mind so like idolatry, that it is impossible to distinguish it from it.

A clergyman who visited Rome not long



ago for the purpose of inquiring himself into these things, thus writes, "I speak that I do know, and testify that I have seen, when I say that I witnessed the priests at Rome exhibit the *Host* and the people prostrate themselves before it; and exhibit an *Image* and the people prostrate themselves before it; and exhibit a *Relic* and the people prostrate themselves before it. And I never could discover the faintest shade of difference in the posture, in the manner, in the worship of the people; whether to the Host, the Image, or the Relic. The outward act of worship was one and the same to all." This looks like idolatry.

Again; it is said of Hezekiah, king of Judah, that "he brake in pieces the brazen serpent which Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it." (2 Kings xviii. 4.) How strange that one of the relics venerated by the Romish worshippers who frequent the church of St. Ambrose at Milan, is a brazen serpent said to be the very one made by Moses. It is thus poor ignorant people are deceived and drawn into sin, for this looks very like idolatry.

But of course they who so act, think to justify themselves. They would have us believe that it is not idolatry on their parts, for that

they worship God through these things, and that they do not worship the things themselves. But why, we would say to this, use them at all in a way that has all the appearance of idolatry, and a way which in fact leads to idolatry in the case of by far the greater number of worshippers. Is there any thing said in the whole Bible about spiritual worship being helped by these outward things of sense? Do we ever read of the duty of venerating pictures or crosses, or the bones of legs and arms, and fingers, and other parts and belongings of deceased saints? On the contrary what is said about images shows they are hindrances and not helps to faith. Besides, all idolaters of old were wont to justify their idolatry by saying it was not the idol or the image they worshipped, but the God represented by these things. The molten calf made by Aaron and worshipped by the Israelites was justified in this way. It was said "these be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And so even in the case of heathen idolaters, the stock and the stone were first intended as symbols or signs of the Deity, and to bring the real Deity before the senses, but at last they took the place of the Deity itself, and became real objects of worship. No doubt it is to keep us from any temptations

to such idolatry that the Christian worship is of so simple a nature. "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Our God is invisible. Faith in the revelation of Himself is the way of approach to Him. Where two or three are met together in the name of Christ, there He is in the midst of them. If we have the Spirit of adoption we want nothing more to bring us into nearness to our High Priest above, who presents our prayers with the incense of His own acceptable merits.

But let us also remember our temptation to idolatry in another way. St. John gives this caution, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." (1 John v. 21.) As we have said God regards "covetousness" as "idolatry." We may never bow our knees in worship to the picture, the relic, or the image, and yet may be breaking this command by bowing the affections to some idol of the heart. Every thing that robs God of the affections, time, thought and attention He should have, is doing the work of an idol in the heart. The great idol set up by the devil in this world is, "Mammon." Thousands and thousands are worshipping this god, riches. This has the first place in their thoughts and desires, and the whole of their labours. Their one desire

is that they may have wealth. Their happiness is wrapt up in this one thing they are so devoted in worshipping.

Besides this there are many other idols that we are tempted to set up in our hearts. Self is another very common idol. We all worship this too much. Self-seeking, self-pleasing, is the beginning and end of some persons' activity in life. Then there is the idol of pleasure. Some being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Some make an idol of dress. Some of their children. Thus any one of our possessions may become an idol, and while men make a profession of serving God, they may be thus in reality serving strange gods.

What we all want then is that the one true God should be firmly enthroned in the affections of the heart, and when this is the case, and that heart becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the love of Christ becomes the ruling principle, all other idols will, like Dagon in the Philistines' temple, fall to the ground. The Lord alone shall be exalted in such hearts. Let us be sure too that we serve the Lord with undivided hearts. Too many come before the Lord with idols set up in their heart, and so are wanting in sincerity. A solemn caution let us remember is given to such persons. "Thus saith the Lord God, every man of the house of Israel, that setteth up his idols in his

heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols." (Ezekiel xiv. 4.)

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PRAYER.

O God, have mercy on me, and incline my heart to keep this law. Enable me to cast out every idol to which I am tempted to give what belongs unto Thee. May I never follow the multitude and bow down to mammon. Instruct me how to be content with such things as I have. May I count godliness with contentment to be the greatest gain, and the best riches. Deliver me also from the worship of self. May I deny myself to serve Christ, and love my neighbour as myself. May Christ have possession of the temple of my heart, and every other idol be cast away.

O Lord, have mercy I pray Thee, on all those, who through ignorance of Thee, or the false teaching of men are guilty of this sin of idolatry. Shew to them that be in error, how that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and cause them to be taught to worship Thee in spirit and truth. Lord, send forth the Spirit of Thy Son, whereby I and all Thy children may call Thee Abba, Father, and whereby we may live on Thee and to Thee, as our Father in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

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*“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”*  
EXODUS XX. 7.

THE breach of this commandment is, alas! very common among men; and because it is common it is thought the less of, and many who are guilty of it are quite unmindful of their guilt. But God, it is plain, thinks not lightly of this sin. The commandment, you see, holds its place among the ten. It stands foremost among those which declare idolatry a sin, and which forbid murder, adultery, and theft.

It is a sin committed only by the tongue, and hence men think it a light one. But sin is not so measured by God. The tongue may offend as grievously as the hands. Besides the heart may break a commandment, and make us guilty,—as when wrong desires are a breach of that law which says, “thou shalt not covet.”

The sin appears to have been common in St. James' days. We find him saying, "the tongue is an unruly evil full of deadly poison, therewith bless we God, even the Father: and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." (James iii. 8—10.)

In treating of this commandment, let us first notice some of the ways in which it may be, and is broken. Secondly, consider the sin of such breaches. And then, lastly, let us try to carry away some cautions with respect to its due observance.

It is of course broken by false swearers. When God's name is invoked as witness to something which the invoker knows is false. This indeed is a dreadful crime. The Jews were warned again of it, (Leviticus xix. 12.) "Ye shall not swear by name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God." It is evident from this, as well as from more direct testimony on the subject, that a solemn appeal to God's name, which we call taking an oath, was allowed to be made by the Jews, and is not forbidden to be made by Christians, so that it be done with reverence and awe. "God is my record," is an Apostle's expres-

sion. We may rightly and lawfully take an oath as it is administered to us in a court of justice, or on other such great occasions, without infringing this commandment. Nor indeed can we suppose our Lord forbids this, when He says, "I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." (Matt. v. 34—37.) Among the Jews of those days it was common to hold that they might swear lightly by the name of any creature or thing, so that they did not bring in the name of God. Also, that when they had not used the name of God, the oath was not binding, and they would not be perjured if they were to break such oaths. Against this common and frequent oath-taking did Christ here warn His disciples, and not against that reverent appealing to God as witness on necessary occasions, which their own law allowed, and which we find countenanced after by an Apostle. (See also Heb. vi. 16, 17.) But of all crimes, what more likely to draw down swift wrath, than the oath taken on such



occasions by one who knows, or even thinks, what he is swearing to is false ! It is calling on God to witness a lie. Is it not calling on Him to punish with a curse him who thus acts ?

Then, next, this commandment is broken, when the name of God is taken on the lips lightly and irreverently, without feelings in the heart worthy of that great name. Many are the light expressions which persons are in the habit of using, in which the awful name of God occurs, although they are not in the least thinking high and holy thoughts of God, or indeed in most cases of Him at all. Such expressions for instance as, "God bless us !" "O God !" "Good Lord !" Such words spoken even in prayer ought to be guarded, and not uttered hastily. But to hear them used as they are by many in their common conversation, is to hear the name of God blasphemed. Some persons say in excuse, they did not mean anything. And this alone is enough to convict them of sin, for if they did not mean anything when they used that awful name, they were guilty of taking it in vain, and "God will not hold them guiltless."

You see too how possible it is for us to offend against this law, even in our prayers. The great Name may be on our lips, while the

great Being is altogether far from our hearts. We may thus "offer the sacrifice of fools," and shall not be counted without guilt.

Thirdly, we may incur the guilt of a breach of this commandment, when we use such expressions as, although the name of God is not in them, yet it is implied, and intended, and understood by them. This is the case as regards the strong language used so often by persons in anger, and in all cursing and swearing. Sometimes the name of God is used in such cases, and then the sin is more apparent. Sometimes that Holy Name is left out, and then the sin is not less real. If in anger a man appeals to some one of God's attributes, to pour down vengeance on some object of his wrath, it is the same as if he appealed to God. So when men express their wish that any thing or person may be cursed, or damned, or blasted, as the phrase of the day may happen to be, even if the name of God be not used, this is all one with calling upon God thus to put forth His power, and it is in fact taking His name in vain. They are wishing the worst evil upon the object of their wrath. They are appealing to Him who only has "power to destroy both body and soul in hell."

Another proof there is in the guilt of such

cursing and swearing. And that is found in the anger which prompts the swearer thus to give vent to his wrath in this particular way. He finds a satisfaction to his evil mood, thus to invoke a superior power to curse his enemies. But would he find that satisfaction if he did not in his heart feel he was sinning? No, surely not. For often where anger leads to oaths and imprecations, it is felt against God Himself. The wrathful man would in the hot temper of the moment strike God, as the offender, if he could, and therefore it is relief to him to do that with his tongue, which he knows to be forbidden by God.

Grievous then is the sin of such angry swearing. God holds such men not guiltless indeed, but in great condemnation. Most persons who thus abuse His great and holy name, never use it for any good purpose. They curse their enemies, but never pray for a blessing on themselves, their enemies, or friends. They use the name of God to give vent to wrath in their angry tempers, but they are never found using it with holy awe or filial love at the throne of grace. What therefore such persons know of God will rise in judgment against them, for they have turned that knowledge to evil purpose which might have been for their greatest good.

Grievous also is the sin of idle swearing. Using expressions such as we have noticed, without meaning, and yet not without meaning before God, since His holy name is uttered in a spirit of vanity. He holds such not guiltless either. They are in condemnation, as says St. James, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, nor by any other oath, but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, lest ye fall into condemnation." (James v. 12.)

Bad effects of such a light use of God's holy name must be produced both on those who use it, and on those who hear it so used. It leads to low and irreverent thoughts of God Himself. God would have His creatures ever sensible of His great majesty, that they may be duly affected by His greatness, and so be under the influence of a holy fear. "Holy and reverend is His name." He would have us "stand in awe" of it, and "sin not." Our Lord teaches us this when He tells us how to begin our prayers, and after calling upon God as our Father in heaven, to say, "Hallowed be thy name." But now the first step towards irreverence to God is to think lightly, and speak commonly of His name. When that once becomes an object of thoughtless familiarity with us, then God Himself

will soon become so. He will lose His awfulness and sanctity, and thus the great name of God will not make men fear, or deter them from evil. This may be a chief reason why the Lord gives this commandment, forbidding this great sin.

Again, consider how the Lord says (Matt. v. 35.) that this vain and idle mode of expression "cometh of evil." For He directs, "Let your conversation be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." Many think to add strength to their words, whether stating something positively, (yea, yea,) or denying anything, (nay, nay,) by using some oath or strong expressions very like it. But they do not gain their purpose. Who would not more easily believe a man to be a person of truth, who feared to use lightly God's name, than if he did not mind thus sinning? He who thinks he will not be believed unless he affirms with some kind of oath, gives at least cause to suspect that sometimes when he does not so affirm what he says, he is not speaking the truth. So it will be found, it "cometh of evil." "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The evil One is the author of lying, and so surely of swearing. He prompts the swearer, and puts oaths on the tip of his tongue.

Surely too it should be remembered how all such words will one day be brought in judgment against those who use them. Let it be said, they are only "idle words," yet what is written of them? "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. xii. 36, 37.)

Let us fear this great sin. If we are ever guilty of it, let us look well to the fountain from which such bitter waters flow, and seek to have that cleansed and purified. How can we have a proper dread and awe of the Almighty God, if we can thus lightly speak of Him! We must be wanting even in the first beginnings of true religion. We have no fear of God before our eyes. How can we be in the habit of reading His Word if we are not more impressed with the great sanctity of that Name? How can we be persons of prayer, or be in the habit of addressing our Father, with a due sense of His infinite greatness and our infinite distance from Him, if we do not fear to take that great and holy name into our mouths? You may have such a habit of this sin, you scarcely know when you commit it. But this does not make you less guilty. You

may not count yourself guilty, and the man who hears you may think nothing of it, but the words of God are plain, "He will not hold him guiltless who taketh His name in vain." The sooner you begin to check yourself in the habit the better. Become more impressed with the awful nature of Him you thus blaspheme, and then "set a watch before the door of your lips, that you offend not with your tongue."

"Again, consider, thou that sportest away the name of God in thy ordinary prattle, what wilt thou have to rely upon in thy greatest distresses. The wise man tells us, (Prov. xviii. 10.) "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe." But, alas, what comfort canst thou find in the name of God in thy greatest necessities, since it is the same name thou hast used and worn out before in the meanest and most trivial concerns. Thou hast already talked away the strength and virtue of it, and wilt hardly find more support from it in thy tribulation, than thou gavest reverence to it in thy conversation. Let us then be more cautious than to spend so excellent a remedy against all fears, and sorrows, and afflictions, vainly and unprofitably. "Thy name is an ointment poured forth." (Canticles i. 3.) But certainly if upon every slight occasion we break the box, and expose

the name of God to common air, it will in time lose its scent and virtue, and when we have most need of it, shall find no refreshment nor comfort in it." \*

Let us then that are redeemed with the blood of the Lamb unto God, take heed that we use this little member the tongue, a part of that body which is the Lord's and not our own, henceforth to His glory. The tongue of man is called his glory : (Psalm lvii. 8.) "Awake up my glory." It is in one sense the "best member that we have." Therewith, when the heart is first fixed, we may speak and sing to the glory and praise of our God, we may tell of all His wondrous works, we may use it to administer grace to the hearers, we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and show how much we owe to, and how much we prize, that most precious of all names, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

\* Bishop Hopkins.

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## PRAYER.

O Lord ! I know that all Thy commandments are holy, just, and good. Have mercy upon me, and incline my heart always to keep



this commandment. For Jesus' sake forgive me every time I have offended against the spirit or letter of it in time past, and henceforth enable me to keep it holy. Cause me ever to have a deep and worthy sense of Thy great and terrible name. May it never be heard on my lips without a holy awe in my heart. Make it a name ever dear to me, as the Father of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Make it too great and too much beloved to be used lightly and without thought. Cause me to hate and avoid all vain words and idle expressions. May I keep my mouth as it were with a bridle. And may all my conversation be pure and simple, coming from a pure heart and clean thoughts. May no corrupt communication at any time proceed out of my mouth, but only that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. May I love to plead Thy great and glorious name in prayer. May it be the subject of my praises here, until I am called to praise Thee for ever in glory, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour. Amen.

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

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*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

*“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work :*

*“But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God : in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.*

*“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”* EXODUS XX. 8—11.

THIS commandment is enjoined in somewhat different terms from the others. It begins with “REMEMBER the Sabbath Day.” From this circumstance we are naturally reminded that when it was placed on the tables with the other nine, it was not a new one, but had been in force, though perhaps much forgotten, before this time. Another reason may also be that God well knew the proneness that would be in the people to whom he gave the law, to forget this all-important commandment ; and so He enforced it by asking them to “Remember,” and not forget.

Some persons there have been, and perhaps are now, who deny that this law concerning the Sabbath day has any force now in this Christian dispensation, and they think that it was done away with, when so much of the ceremonial law was set aside by the bringing in of the Gospel, which was the substance of which many Jewish observances were shadows.

But there seems to be abundant answer to this mistaken view of the Christian obligation to keep holy the Sabbath day.

If we look at its first institution, and at the intent and purpose of it, and pay attention to the way Scripture speaks of its perpetual obligation, we shall be afraid of such views, as being not warranted by Scripture, contrary to God, and very dangerous to all who listen to them.

When, and on what occasion, was the Sabbath instituted? Our Lord says, "The Sabbath was made for man." And so we read after the creation of man on the sixth day, God sanctified the seventh. (Gen. ii. 2, 3.) "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made : and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made ; and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created

and made." Now if God's resting on it, was the cause of God's sanctifying this day, it is obvious it was sanctified on and from that very day. This was the time the law of the Sabbath began. It was reenforced with the other laws from mount Sinai, and so it was said "Remember."

If it be said, but we do not read of it being observed in the after history, let us remember in the first place, that history does not enter into minute particulars, as it is the history of a very long period, and so was not likely to touch upon such a subject. But in the next place we observe there are incidental references to the observance of the Sabbath in the interval before the law was given. In Genesis xxix. 27. we read of "weeks." It is probable then, to say the least, weeks were reckoned by Sabbaths. But in Exodus xvi. we find an actual observance of the day is named, although the law was not given. There the Israelites are ordered to gather a double rate of manna on the sixth day, for "tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord."

Surely if this law had been intended to be less binding, and to have been done away as an obligation upon Christians, so great a matter would have been mentioned. But instead of this, we find our Lord speaking

of it to His disciples with reference to their future conduct. He said, (Matt. xxiv. 20.) "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." He was here referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place about forty years after the death of Christ. So that our Lord reckoned Christians would still then be keeping a Sabbath day.

It would indeed have been strange if this commandment had been singled out of all those written by the finger of God on those tables of stone, in order to be set aside. It was sanctified on account of God's resting from all His work of creation,—that reason for its sanctity holds good as much among Christians as Jews. The only difference is other reasons have been added for its being counted holy.

The Sabbath is a "sign" between God and His people,—the people that were His by creation and purchase from the bondage of Egypt. It would have been strange if that sign should not have been ordered to be kept up between God and the people, whom he has not only created and given a temporal deliverance, but whom He has redeemed and purchased from eternal death, by the ransom of His Son.

The Sabbath was a sanctified day in the innocent season of man's existence in Paradise. It had indeed been strange, if at any time while man is an exile from Eden, and in a world of labour and trouble and sorrow, this day had ceased to be a day for special rest and communion with His Maker and Restorer.

The Sabbath is a type of that eternal day of "rest which remaineth for the people of God." A day which will be spent in the presence of God and of His Christ, and the saints. A day in which the praises of God will be sung by the great assembly of saints in glory, unpolluted with the presence of hypocrites, and formal worshippers. Strange then would it have been if this type should have been cast aside, or made less important to be observed, during any of the time before the Sabbath of glory, which it typifies, begins.

But perhaps it may be said, that what makes it have the appearance of being confined to the Jewish economy is, that when the law is repeated, as in the book of Deuteronomy, by Moses, it is then enforced by a motive which only belongs to the Jews, who were descendants of those brought out of Egyptian bondage. A reason added (Deut. v. 15.) for observing the Sabbath day is this, "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land

of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm : therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." But observe, this was an additional motive for keeping God's commandment, which, it is true, affected the Jews only, or chiefly. But it was not the reason for God's setting apart the Sabbath day as holy, for that was His own resting from creation, which concerns all His creatures. Just in the same way that Christians now have another additional motive over and above all others to persuade them to keep this and other laws.

This leads us then to the question, which has still to be answered,—What alteration has been made with regard to this commandment and its observance? In what way did it bind the Jew, that it does not bind the Christian? Plainly, the difference is this. First, the day has been altered : the first is observed instead of the seventh. Secondly, the motive and spirit of observance are altered, which is true of all the commandments.

As regards the first of these,—the change of day,—there is nothing to surprise us that it should be so, and it is easy to gather that it is so. The apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews (iv. 10.) says, "He that is entered

into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." Now Christ is entered into His rest, and that after the work of Redemption, as God did into His after the work of Creation.

Christ rose on the first day of the week. This became the hallowed day to the followers of Christ. So we may infer among other passages, from that in the Acts of the Apostles, (xx. 7.) "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them." Here was a Sunday kept on the first day of the week. Here was a Christian assembly met together by appointment on this day. Here was praying, and preaching, and eating the Lord's Supper. So again, the collection for the saints was to be made on this day : clearly, because on this day when Christians met together, they were to see what they had to spare of their earnings in the foregoing six working days. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." (1 Cor. xvi. 2.) This day was henceforth called the "Lord's day," and from that time to this, there never has been any doubt in the Church of God, that this was the day to be kept holy.

But as regards the spirit and motives of obedience, these are also changed. The rule



remains the same ; the change of day is not a change of law. But we do find that so strict was the observance of this law under the Jewish dispensation, that none might even kindle a fire in their dwellings on that day. A man was stoned for breaking the law by gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. Now all this we know is changed. The Christian is not in such bondage to the law. His rule of observance is love. His motive to obedience is love. He has not the spirit of bondage to fear, but the spirit of adoption to love. The law with its terrors hangs not over his head to condemn him. He is redeemed from its curse. Christ hath fulfilled it for us, not indeed to do away with the fulfilment of it by His people, but to remove the curse which belongs to an imperfect fulfilment of it, and to help us to a better fulfilment. The rule then remains, the day is to be kept holy. The motive to actuate us to obedience is love to Him whose great work of redemption and resurrection is celebrated on this day. We are not then straitened by rigid rules, or terrified by awful punishments into obedience. We are persuaded by love to observe the day in such a way as shall most tend to keep it holy. Such is the liberty of those who are "not under law, but under grace."

How then, let us ask, is this day being kept

by us, who have all these great and mighty motives to move us to obedience?

First, do we remember it is God's day, and do we give it up to Him and not steal it for ourselves? He has given us six for ourselves, and asks but the seventh for Him, and that not for His good, but for our profit! Do we "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and honor him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words?" (Isaiah lviii. 13.)

If it be God's day, we have no right to steal or to defile its sacred hours. We can hardly expect God to bless us in the six days He gives us, if we do not give Him the one day He demands.

Then next, let us remember our rule is to keep the day HOLY. This at once is a guide as to what we should or should not do upon it. We can have no direct rules as to these matters. Only we must take heed we "use not our liberty as an occasion to serve the flesh." Of all we do or wish to do on this day, or to say, we must ask ourselves, shall I be thus keeping it holy, or shall I be profaning it? Let us ask this with reference to the occupations we take in hand, the company we keep, the books we read, the conversation we hold,—will this help me to sanctify this day,

or will it lower its character, and bring it to the level of a common day? Holiness must be our rule,—holy occupations, holy thoughts, holy words, on a holy day.

Then next, remember to use it as a great privilege. It is not a day of restraint or depression. It is a day of holy freedom, joy, and elevation. It is a day for rising above the world and entering the precincts of heaven's courts, and holding communion with heaven's happy circle. It is a day for dressing our souls for the presence of God. Alas! how many make it only a day for decking out their bodies to attract the admiration of fellow creatures. It is a day for quiet and seclusion from the world's busy scenes, and for retiring into our closets to pray to our Father which is in secret. Alas! how many make it a holiday and use it for mixing more than ever in the world's gayest and unholy pleasures, instead of a holy day for holy ends.

Moreover if it be a privilege, let us do our best to let others enjoy its precious hours of gracious liberty as well as ourselves. Consider your servants, your children, your household. What right have we to interfere with other men's liberty in these matters? Yet no doubt, rail-road servants, post office servants, and many other public and private servants have

not this liberty. God has given it them, man has robbed them for his own selfish purposes. We must avoid such service for ourselves. We must never have a share in this sin of enslaving others. We must use every means for helping them to enjoy that which is intended for their profit, their enjoyment, and the elevation of their nature.

It is one of the bitter fruits of the Roman Catholic religion, to defile and profane this holy day. It is the chief day of feasting, and revelry, and profane pleasure in Roman Catholic countries.

God be praised that in our own country, though many things seem to be tending to the same kind of loose observance of this day, yet on the whole, it is observed to a great extent, and thousands do keep it holy. We can never be at a loss for helps to enable us to sanctify the day. We can and should attend public worship. We should never "forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." God will meet us especially at such times, and commune with us. The day is His,—the assembly has the promise of His presence. The word preached is His voice, and His special ordinance for blessing souls. We can also in our spare hours on that day, still think and speak of holy subjects.

Thus it will be a day of joy, of praise, of holy refreshment. It will also be a foretaste of that blessed and eternal Sabbath to be enjoyed hereafter by those whose earthly Sabbaths have thus been stepping stones to glory.

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### PRAYER.

O GOD, help me to keep holy Thy Sabbath day. May I count it a wise and merciful provision. May it be to me a great privilege. May I so delight in Thy presence, that I gladly use every help to drawing near to Thee in closer communion. May my heart be so engaged in the work of praise and prayer, that I may indeed call that day a delight which calls me to that work.

Give me grace to watch against every temptation to pollute Thy holy day. May I be able to put aside all worldly thoughts, and to fix my heart on heavenly things. May I ever be in the spirit on the Lord's Day. May every Sabbath help me forward on my journey home, that at last I may in safety reach the land of eternal rest. Grant these things, O Lord, for Thy Son's sake. AMEN.

## THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

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*“Honour thy father and thy mother : that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”* EXODUS XX. 12.

WE now enter upon a consideration of the six last commandments, which form the second table, and which have respect to our duty towards our neighbour.

This “second great commandment,” is called by St. James, “The royal law : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” We shall find in looking at this second table, that the words of St. Paul hold good ; “He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law,” and, “If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Rom. xiii. 8—10.)

In seeking to give obedience to this commandment, it will be well for us to remember that taking it in the full and spiritual sense, in which our Lord has taught us to take these laws, this one will be found not merely to teach the

dutiful behaviour of a child towards its parents, but also, to have respect to our duties in the various relationships of life in which we can be placed. As a man who in his heart hates his brother is said to be guilty of the sixth commandment ; so he, who offends against the duties belonging to a father, a brother, a husband, a wife, or any other relation, would be guilty of the fifth commandment, which speaks concerning our duty in the first and most important relationship of life. Our present consideration can however, only be with reference to the relative duties of children and parents, for these are of themselves subjects of large extent, and would easily admit of much enlargement.

Truly, there is as much here on the duties of parents, as upon those of children. For what an amount of responsibility is laid upon a parent whom a child is to honour ! How ought they not to take heed that they be objects worthy of that honour which God binds the child to pay to them ! How ought they not to take heed that their child shall find something to honour and not to despise, and that their child shall not be the worse, but better for the respect and attention paid to them.

But, let us first see, what is required of

children. They are to "honour" father and mother. This means, to pay them that respect or reverence which is due to them,—to give them that affection they are worthy of, and to be obedient to them and pay attention to all their wishes. First, there is a kind of reverence and respect due to our parents, which they naturally look for at our hands. The parents are to the very little child as it were in the place of God. And obedience paid to them is the first step towards, and a preparation for obedience to God. The duty of a child to a parent will teach it obedience, humility, and dependance, which it will see as it grows older to be due unto God. No one who does not pay this first duty to a parent, will be likely to pay it to a heavenly Father. To his earthly parents the child owes under God his being, and the great mass of his blessings. He is therefore to regard his parents as standing in the most venerable and the most endearing of all earthly relations to him.

This reverence is to show itself in a respectful behaviour towards parents in their presence. Also, in using respectful language to them, and in words of respect and kindness in their absence, and when speaking of them to others. No less than this, can be called honouring our parents. They offend grievously



against this commandment, who treat their parents in word and deed with no more respect than they would a friend or relation who was their equal in age and other respects. We should remember there may be the most intense affection for a parent, without ever losing sight of their high and exalted position over us as a parent, and of the reverence due to that position. They also are guilty, who speak slightly and disrespectfully, and sometimes, alas ! mockingly, of their parents. These ought to be reminded of what God says of such : “The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.” (Prov. xxx. 17.) This is, at least, a threat of God’s anger and God’s punishment. “We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us,” says St. Paul, “and we gave them reverence.” (Heb. xii. 9.)

The next thing here required of us is obedience. This also, is a part of the honour due to our parents. We have the highest example of this reverence and obedience in the person of our Lord and Saviour. He was “subject unto His parents.” He seems to have lived with them in all subjection up to the very time of His separation from them for the duties of His public ministry. That this was

based on love as well as a respectful feeling is clear from His having provided His mother with a home in his last hours, when He commended her to the beloved disciple. (John xix. 26, 27.)

“Children, obey your parents, in the Lord : for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” (Ephes. vi. 1—3.) The same counsel is given in another Epistle, “Children, obey your parents in all things : for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” (Col. iii. 20.) And again, “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” (Prov. vi. 20.)

Some children are blessed with parents who would give them nothing but good rules and commandments, who would wish them only to learn and follow what is really good, and who set an example at all times good to imitate. Such children are indeed happy. Their duty is as easy as it might be pleasant to them. It is a great happiness to have such safe counselors to go to, and to have such authority to lean upon in the path of duty. Many grown up persons in after life feel the want of such guidance, and would be glad enough to fall back upon such a resource, by which they can

avoid the often heavy weight of responsibility of action. Children should be glad to lean upon their parents,—thankful for such a safe guidance, and only too glad to avail themselves of their parents' experience. If children were more of this mind, they would save themselves many a trouble, and many a disgrace, which by waywardness they incur. Too many are apt to think they are as wise as their parents, and do not know the value of age and years of experience.

But, other children there are, whose parents are sadly the opposite of what we have been describing. They care little what they teach their children, and little what they learn. They are wicked and immoral in their words and conduct.

The path of the child here becomes difficult at times. The duty remains the same always. He must revere, obey, and love those whom the Lord has given him for parents. But, of course, sometimes he will find that in obeying the parent, he disobeys God. The path of duty is plain in such a case. We must obey God rather than man. It is said, as we have seen, "Children, obey your parents IN THE LORD." If parents would lead us one way, and Christ our Lord in another; if it be quite clear and there be no doubt that what they

would have us do is contrary to God's plain words ; then, however painful and whatever may be the consequences, we must obey God and not man. It is of such cases our Lord speaks, when He says, " If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (St. Luke xiv. 26.) This is all one with saying, that our love to Christ must be greater than all earthly affections, and that our earthly affections must never interfere with our duties to Him, but, on the contrary, we must hold them in readiness to sacrifice for His sake, if He command it. This is quite consistent with strongest affection for our parents. Abraham had not abated one atom of his affection for his son when he led him up the mountain to slay him on the altar ; but, his love to God was such that when needful it led him to act as if he hated his son. It may then sometimes be the painful duty of a child to cross the will of even a kind and in other respects, right-minded parent. But let the child be first well assured that in so doing, there is a clear and decided testimony in God's word, forbidding what he is asked to do, or enjoining what he is prevented doing by his parents. A child who is placed in such circumstances may often

be useful to his parents. Sometimes a drunkard or swearer has received timely rebuke from a child. And many a parent owes his best blessings to a child or children who have prayed earnestly for him.

Affection must ever be the basis of our obedience. There is no better way of sustaining and increasing our love for our parents than by ever remembering them before God and praying for them. Whatever be their characters, they require blessings which only God can give. If we really love them, we shall seek for them those blessings which will ensure to them eternal as well as temporal good.

Children must also honour their parents with their substance. They must remember "to requite their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God." (1 Tim. v. 4.)

The children of poor parents may be especially called to this duty in the old age of their parents, who can then no longer labour for themselves and family, as they were formerly wont to do. It is not surely much to ask, that those who have borne us from the cradle, and whose hands have ministered to our thousand wants in the helplessness of infancy, should be in return assisted by us in the equally helplessness and feebleness of old age. Hard must be the heart that will not be

glad, even at the cost of much self-denial, thus to help those that have carried us from the womb, defended us from a thousand ills, watched over us in sickness, and it may be, toiled in our behalf in past years. Unfeeling, inhuman, and not merely unchristian, must that young man or woman be, who having full health and vigour, turns from their infirm parents, thinks them a burden, or leaves them to be taken care of by strangers in a strange home.

Then, besides giving them of our substance, there are always many other ways in which we may show them kindness and administer them comfort in declining years, and so fulfil in spirit and in letter the command that is given, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

But now to turn to the duty of parents. This is not left out of this commandment, because as we have seen, if the child is bound to honour, the parent must endeavour to be, in the best of senses, honourable.

If the child is to fix his affections on his parent; if he is to watch him that he may copy him; if he is to listen to him that he may learn of him and obey him, how does not the child's whole character and well-being depend on what the parent is, says, and does? The first duty of a parent is then, to care for

the soul, the immortal part of the child. It is strange unbelief in God's word to do all we can for the earthly frame our child's soul is clothed in, and to leave the soul to care for itself. Every child should have cause to thank its mother for doing what Timothy's mother did to him, who "from a child had known the Holy Scriptures." Teach them from this book. Explain its doctrines of the atonement and salvation through faith in Christ. Teach them to use it as their guide and rule in life, and then when you have prayed that divine teaching and divine blessing may accompany your instruction you may expect when your teaching ceases and they have to walk this world alone, they will walk securely and uprightly.

Some parents err much in the way they administer correction to their children. Correction is needful we know; many parts of Scripture (Prov. xiii. 24, and Prov. xxiii. 13.) teach us so. But a caution is very needful, that we chasten not in anger but in love, not roughly but gently. "Fathers," says the apostle, "provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." (Col. iii. 21.) If you would have your child honour you, love you, and improve by your correction, abstain from and check a hasty spirit. Many parents lose influence over a child, and quite disappoint the object of

correction, because they do not punish from real love and desire to do good, but from irritated feelings and angry passion. They administer more punishment than is due to the offence, and they do it in an evil, unkind, and rough manner. What should we be if our heavenly Father so dealt with us, correcting us not with judgment, chastening not in love, but with anger? We should be brought quickly to nothing.

The promise added to this commandment should be remembered. It may not always be fulfilled literally. God sees it better for some children who have been most obedient and loving to their parents, to leave this land, and be removed to that which is above. God will however, fulfil His promise as is best to our real happiness. And while it is said, "Whoso curseth father or mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness," it will be found by those who "in the Lord," obey and honour their parents, "godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come." And their light, even that which comes from the "sun of righteousness," shall never be put out, but "shall shine more and more unto the perfect day," until their days are prolonged in the land which is to be the "inheritance of the saints in light."



## PRAYER.

O Lord, grant me grace to be obedient to this commandment. Rightly and properly in spirit and in deed, may I fulfil the duties of that station in which thou hast cast my lot. May I pay due respect to those whom thou hast placed over me. May no pride or rebellious feelings ever get the better of me and make me a rebellious subject, or an undutiful child. Whatever ties after the flesh, thou mayest appoint for me, may I take heed to the duties they bring with them. Unite my heart to my relations in love, that I may seek, if they yet need it, to bring them to Christ, and ask for them the best of blessings. Above all, cause me to know the blessedness of obeying, loving, and trusting to thee as my heavenly Father. Give me more of the spirit of adoption. So, Lord, grant me to belong to the household of faith, that I may have length of days in the land of glory, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

## THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

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*“Thou shalt not kill. EXODUS xx. 13.*

THE necessity for such a commandment as this, goes a great way to prove that man is by nature utterly depraved, and that we live in a fallen world, and that Satan is god of this world, ruling as the prince of darkness. The crime forbidden, is indeed, the most awful. Alas! that we should have to say it is in these days and in this land, very common. Even here, in favoured England, where the pure Gospel is more generally preached and received than anywhere else, and even in this enlightened day, when almost everybody can read, and few comparatively are without education in their youth, and few without a Bible in their possession, yet, even here, amidst all this daylight of religious knowledge, murder is common. Almost every week at this present time, does an account of some fresh committed crime of this kind appear in the newspapers, and excite a sad, but general interest.

Sad proof that the world is not better than it was, and that knowledge is not holiness. Sad proof that the prince of darkness is still

ruling in high places. He was "a murderer from the beginning." He excites to the deed now.

Sad witness too, that without the sanctifying grace of God's Holy Spirit, men's hearts are as pliable for evil as in the days of Cain, the first whom Satan drew into this sin.

In dwelling on this commandment, let us consider what are the ways in which it may be broken, together with some of the exciting causes to it. And then, further, what God's word teaches of the remedy and prevention of this awful crime.

There are two ways of breaking this commandment in its actual letter. Self-murder is one way. We have no more right to take away our own life, than we have to take away another's. It is generally given out that those who commit this awful crime of suicide were at the time, out of their proper and right mind. It is the best thing that can be hoped for those who have so fallen by their own hands. But, in many cases it is done by a wilfully determined, desperately wicked mind. No doubt Satan has possession of those who commit this act on themselves, as much as he has of those who do it on others. Sometimes satanic possession shows itself in madness. But, that a child of God should ever be left

in Satan's hands so as to commit such an act as this, we can scarcely suppose. Those who are driven to this act have rarely, if ever, been persons in whom the good Spirit of God has taken up His abode. For though in the inscrutable providence of God, some of His own children have for wise reasons been suffered to err in intellect, we cannot but conclude, they have been kept from doing devilish deeds.

But what urges men to the crime of self-murder, is generally desperation—a wretchedness of mind, which has refused to look for the consolations of the Spirit and promises of God's Word. Sometimes this may be helped on by physical causes, a lowness of spirit, the result of a disordered or diseased body. The unhappy men or women who have come to this pass, we may be quite sure have not been Bible readers, frequenters of the house of God, or persons of real prayer. The real reason they wish to get rid of life, has been disappointed pride, or lust, or ambition, or fear of shame and scorn from the world, to which they have lived in bondage.

So awfully foolish is this way of thinking to escape present evil, by rushing headlong into eternal misery, that it seems not strange we should generally suppose and hope persons

who have done so, may not have been in their right minds, and therefore responsible for their actions before God. Most likely, a coroner's inquest held over Judas Iscariot's body, would have returned the verdict of "temporary insanity." But in this, as in all such instances, the real case is known unto Him who searches the heart. In many the case is as of Judas, he "fell by transgression," and he therefore, "went to his own place." Even, where there may be madness at the moment the deed is done, yet, God knows how far a previous state of iniquity was the cause that led to that unsound state of mind, and to the consequent dreadful acts.

Suicide, is then, the most dangerous and desperate sin that can be committed ; it can leave no room for repentance in the unhappy person ; it can leave but very little room for charity and hope in the person's friends. Such wretched creatures die in their sins. Their last act is a damning act. They not only destroy body, but soul.

But the murder of another is of course referred to and forbidden here. Every one knows this is a most heinous and black sin. A sin too, which generally pursues the conscience of the murderer with horrible frights, and terrors, and dreams, and fearfully haunting

thoughts, often leading to confessions of the crime, when no other evidence had appeared. It has been observed, so hateful is this crime in God's eyes, that although, the altar was a place where other offenders might find refuge, yet, a murderer might not find shelter there. (Exodus xiv. 24.)—"If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour and slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die." Solomon, we read, did this to Joab. When he had fled and laid hold of the horns of the altar, Solomon gave command to have him slain there. (1 Kings ii. 30.)

This sin cries loudly to God for vengeance. It is not only doing the worst injury to a fellow-creature who ought to be loved,—nor only robbing God of a created-being precious in His eyes; but it is also destroying a being made in the image of God. This is given as a reason why God appointed it should be punished. (Genesis ix. 6.)—"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." To slaughter man, is to stab God in effigy. For though the image of God's holiness and purity be totally defaced in us since the fall, yet still every man has some portion of that divine image remaining. It always cries loudly there-

fore to God for vengeance. The blood of the murdered is loud and clamorous. The first that was ever shed was heard as far as from earth to heaven. It was said to Cain by the Lord, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground." (Genesis iv. 10.)

It is often wonderful to observe how such crimes are brought to light, by the most remarkable chain of evidences providentially discovered, and bringing the guilt home to the guilty. Few ever pass undetected even in this world. It is evident that God intends this crime to be punished by the death of the murderer. No satisfaction might be taken for such guilt. It was said, "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, but he shall surely be put to death. So shall ye not pollute the land wherein ye are, for blood defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." (Numbers xxxv. 31—33.) And again, "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death." (Lev. xxiv. 17.) It cannot be doubted what was to be done under the Jewish dispensation. Is there any doubt whether it be right to punish in the same way under the Christian dispensation? Surely not in his mind, who takes the revelation of God for his guide, and who un-

derstands Scripture in its simple and literal meaning. Long before the Jewish law was given, it had been said by God, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The reason added must remain the same in all ages and dispensations, "for in the image of God made he man." (Gen. ix. 6.)

It was once the custom in our land to make all kinds of crime, as theft and forgery, punishable with death. This was no doubt an error in one extreme. We have seen our fault, and corrected it. But as is usual, there are those who would go into the other extreme, and desire to make no crime punishable with death, not even murder. But this appears to us to be framing laws independently of God's mind on the subject. There is surely a sword put into the hand of the magistrate to be used to fulfil God's orders given to mankind in general, as we have seen. "He beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Romans xiii. 4.)

But let us next observe, that to avoid the guilt here spoken of, it is not enough that we be kept from the outward horrible act of taking away the life of a fellow being. The thoughts of the heart must be watched against, which if they do not lead to the act, may yet



make us offend against the spirit of the command.

Every crime, even the worst, has begun with an evil thought. The most horrible murderer that ever died upon the scaffold would once have shuddered at the thought of the crime he dies for ; thus it was with Hazael who murdered Benhadad, king of Syria. (See 2 Kings viii.) When told by the prophet all the evil he should after do, he said, "but what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" But Elisha was right. The next day found Hazael beginning his crimes by the murder of his master.

If we enquire into the histories of the many murderers we read of in the present day, we find this sin never stands by itself. Some other crimes have led to it.—Drunkenness, adultery, robbery, covetousness, or envy have been first indulged in. These have had their small beginnings. The listening to the enticer to drinking ; the "hearkening to be with" the unholy object that tempts to adultery ; the desire for what is not possessed, the dwelling on the possibility of getting it by foul means ; these have been the beginnings of crime. The natural heart is a "cage of unclean birds." "Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

thefts, &c.” The beginning of these is “evil thoughts.” These coming in and out of, and finding a welcome in, the natural heart, is the cause that has led to the worst crimes. Such thoughts are like the thin end of the wedge, and the devil knows it. He is never safe from the worst crimes, who cannot say, “I hate vain thoughts,” and does not make it his aim to “bring into captivity to obedience to Christ every thought of his heart.”

Have we a real horror of this crime, and do we think of murder as the most debasing proof of our fallen nature? Then let us not be content without being removed to the utmost distance from such disgrace. Let us not forget that murder is the blossom and fruit that springs from the bud of hatred in the heart. We must not forget what is said of a spiritual breach of this commandment. “Who-soever hateth his brother, is a murderer.” (1 John iii. 15.) Nay, more than this, the absence of love is what marks the presence of hatred in the heart. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” The same Apostle traces the bloody deed of Cain to this very same evil, namely, a want of love. In fact the same root of evil which produced murder in Cain, lies in the heart of every man in his natural and unconverted state.

Let that man then be watchful over his thoughts who would be clean in God's sight, and who would be kept from evil deeds. Judge of their vileness by what they would lead to if unchecked. And as murder is abhorred, so unkind thoughts will be hated.

But this is not enough with the Christian. It is not enough that he is as far as possible from the breaking the commandment given, he desires to do all he can to obey the opposite precept. The God who forbids all wrong done to a neighbour or fellow creature, enjoins that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. As it is a sign of being of the Wicked One that a man hate his brother, so is it a gracious sign where true love exists. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God : and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." (1 John iv. 7.) That love must begin in Christ. We shall never love as we should love, till we love with somewhat of that love, wherewith Christ loved us. This is what St. John refers to when he writes so much on this subject. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." What love is it he refers to, but this most marvellous of all loves ! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our

sins.” (1 John iv. 10.) The foulest murder ever committed on this earth, was the slaughter of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, by wicked hands. Falsely accused, grossly insulted, unfairly tried, roughly dealt with, unjustly condemned, and at last publicly and shamefully executed was the only Righteous One that ever trod this earth.

His blood cried aloud to God for vengeance. But what answer hath the Lord returned? Even to the very doers of the deed,—and our sins have made us all partakers of the guilt,—yet even to us this blood speaketh peace, and the blood shed “by wicked hands” will wash those hands and make them clean. It was His own giving up of life, that we might through Him have life. He let His blood be poured out, that we might have a fountain to go to, and be made clean from every defilement. This blood cries not in vain to heaven. It brings down speedy mercy to those who make it as their plea to heaven for acceptance. None have ever pleaded it in vain. It is “the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” It is a sense, a deepening sense of this great mercy, that is the great preventive to unkind feelings to a brother, and that is by far the most persuasive argument for loving and seeking to do good to a fellow sinner. “This commandment have

we from him, that he that loveth God, love his brother also." (1 John iv. 21)

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### PRAYER.

O Lord God, Almighty, how many and how black are the crimes Thou seest done upon the earth! Oh! how great is Thy longsuffering to us-ward, for Thou seest how Thy commandments are broken in spirit and letter every day, and every moment; yet art Thou always visiting man with mercies, and waiting to be gracious even to the sinner that returns to Thee.

Lord, pardon all my offences against this commandment. I have often erred against its spirit, and hated my brother. Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Deliver me from unkind, angry, and all unholy feelings. May I be taught of Thee to love my fellow beings. May the love wherewith Christ hath loved me soften my heart, and make me pitiful, courteous, and considerate towards others. May I be at peace with those with whom I hold intercourse or dwell in the same house; and may we have grace to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and all malice; and may we be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as Thou for Christ's sake hast forgiven us. Grant this, for Jesus' sake. AMEN.

## THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

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“*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” EXODUS  
XX. 14.

OF all the crimes that debase human nature, bringing man down to the level of the brute beast, that which is forbidden in the text is the most revolting.

It is scarcely less awful than the sin of murder. It involves the guilt of two persons, and generally the misery, and sometimes guilt of a third person—the injured husband. We cannot therefore be surprised that under the law it was a crime punished with death of the guilty parties. “The man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus xx. 10.) The same is also written in Deuteronomy xxii. 22.

But this, like other of the commandments, must be looked at as of more general meaning than merely forbidding that gross and terrible crime. Our Lord tells us that the sin may be committed in the heart.

We may regard it then, as forbidding, First—the gross crime itself. Secondly—the

sin of fornication and all uncleanness. Thirdly —impurities of affection and thought.

We need not dwell much on the first of these. Few enter upon such crimes without their conscience reminding them that they sin against the laws of both God and man, and that from the former they stand exposed to great wrath and awful judgment. It is only by thrusting away the thoughts of such judgment they are able to commit such crimes without fear. They do not believe such words as are written against sinners, nor that the “wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” (Rom. i. 18.) Such revelations trouble not their minds, because God’s word is a dead letter to them. If they had the smallest faith in the “terrors of the Lord,” if they believed really in the eternity of the “lake that burneth with fire,” if they did not think of all these things as cunningly devised fables, oh! could they enter upon such damning crimes, or sit easy in the very enjoyment of their sinful lust! The word of the Lord is plain against such sinners against their own souls. “Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” (Heb. xiii. 4.) There is a solemn and a warning passage against such sinners occurring in the book of Proverbs. It is there said, “The

commandment is a lamp, and the law is light ; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life : to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of the strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart ; neither let her take thee with her eyelids : for by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread, and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life : can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned ? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned ? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife ; whoso toucheth her shall not be innocent.....whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding ; he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away." (Proverbs vi. 23—33.)

In this passage we are taught several things concerning this and such like grievous crimes, First, that the word of God is the only security against such sins. He only is safe, whatever he may think of his own security, who believes, remembers, and loves, and acts upon God's word.

Next, we learn that he who would be safe from the gross crime must keep from the small beginnings of it. The flattery of the



tongue, the lustful look of the eye, the inward desire of the heart ; these are the beginnings of the sin.

How did Joseph resist this sin, to which he was tempted by the tempter ? First, he was impressed with the greatness of the crime. He said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" But chiefly, he consented "not to be with" the object of temptation, nor would he listen to the "flattery of her tongue." (See Genesis xxxix.)

The next sin, and akin to this, forbidden under this precept, is the sin of fornication. Such sinners are likewise, with the adulterer, shut out from the kingdom of heaven. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.)

We ought not indeed to have any occasion to warn any called Christians against such evils. The things are so opposite and contrary—to pretend to be a follower of Christ, and to be yielding to the dictates of the flesh, and following the devil in reality ;—to be professing to have had body and soul ransomed and bought by Christ, and to be joining that body to a harlot, and destroying the soul by the

most defiling sin ! So reasons the Apostle, who in his day warned professing Christians against such things, so common among the heathen around them. He says, " Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot ? God forbid ! What ! know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body, for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body : but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's." (1 Cor. iii. 15—20.)

The highest motives are here urged to keep from the most degrading sins. Your bodies are bought by the blood of Christ, ransomed from the pit of destruction ; therefore do not give them to the devil. Your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost ; do not profane those temples, or defile them with unholy practices. He that is not worked upon by such appeals, will not be moved by the terrors of the Lord.

We are either the Lord's, and must acknowledge our obligation to give ourselves to Him, or we are Satan's, now to do his work, hereafter to receive his pay. We are either bought with a price, and must wholly dedicate ourselves to the Lord, or we are in the awful state of unredeemed property, choosing to remain a slave, to serve sin, and receive the "wages of sin—death!"

Yet it is an awful thought how many with a Christian name are guilty of this sin. How all large towns are wholly defiled with the presence of those whose trade is such soul-destroying sin. How many young men and women are thoughtlessly following, to the injury of their own souls and bodies, these pernicious ways. Oh! who can tell one half the wretchedness those endure who are slaves to this sin,—the misery of mind, and often body, and the awful degradation and utter absence of all shame and proper feeling such sin is sure to bring upon its most unhappy victims! How shall such escape the damnation of hell!

Oh! that they would hearken in time to the warnings of Scripture. They are among "the simple ones," spoken of by Solomon, who "pass through the street in the evening, in the black and dark night," and who are "met by a

woman subtil of heart," who with an "impudent face" invites them to crime. "With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks: till a dart strike through his liver, as a bird hasteneth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life. Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths: for she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." (Prov. vii. 21—27.)

Then, in the next place, we cannot but notice how near another class of persons come to the sin of the text, in our day. Do those persons know that they are guilty of this sin, who think nothing of forming attachments which lead to sinful intercourse, but who satisfy themselves and the party they seduce by promising marriage afterwards? What is this but fornication; even though the parties afterwards marry? Yet it is common, sadly common, and because it is so, therefore it is thought nothing of. However sincere such per-

sons may be in their intentions and promises of marriage, yet such a connexion, thus begun, is unholy, and leads often to much misery, disappointment, shame, and suffering. Surely such things might oftener be prevented by parents exercising more authority over their children, and not suffering such acquaintances to be made and kept up, unless the parties are pure in intention and practice. "Marriage is honourable in all, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

But the root of all these evils in practice is sin in the heart. Our Lord strikes at the root of the evil when He reminds us with respect to this very commandment, that it may be broken by the unclean thought of the heart. As there is heart-murder, so there is heart-adultery. Our Lord thus speaks, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matt. v. 27, 28.) Who then can put away this commandment, and not feel he has need to pray, "Lord have mercy on me, and incline my heart to keep this law." Sometimes those who have had most horror of such crimes, have yet gradually been overcome by them, and all because they have

not had strength to suppress the first risings of evil thoughts in the heart. Such, we may conceive, was David's case when tempted to this sin with Bathsheba. Our only safety is to aim at "bringing into captivity to obedience to Christ, every thought of the heart." The indulgence of impure thoughts even if they lead to no unclean practice, which can scarcely for any time be the case, yet is in itself an evil quite opposed to what must be the character and the aim of every true child of God. It is especially said that "no unclean thing" can enter into the holy city, and "nothing that defileth." Purity of heart is an essential part of that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." Remember and ever keep before you these words, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. v. 8.)

How then shall we best attain to this purity? First, make it the special subject of your prayers. No efforts of your own will keep out impure thoughts. The devil is stronger and more subtil than yourself. He knows how to present objects to your eyes or mind which shall beget unclean thoughts. You want a strength stronger than his. You must pray for it from above. God only is the author of holy desires. It is the presence only of His

Holy Spirit will keep out the suggestions of the evil spirit. The heart must be renewed before it will thus have the current of its thoughts turned into a channel so opposite to what is natural. For out of the natural "heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries," and all other crimes. Let the heart then be brought daily, nay, hourly, to the throne of grace, let it be laid open before the Lord, and while prayer is made for the blood of sprinkling to wipe away the guilt of past evil, let it also be your earnest prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm li. 10.)

The next step must be to watch against the intrusion of evil thoughts, remembering always that idle thoughts are evil ones, for from them the step is easy to unholy thoughts. It is mockery to pray if we do not watch against sins. It is asking God to do His part, but acting against Him ourselves. These are joined together for the rule of the Christian, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Now to watch, is to be on the look out. In olden times there were watch-towers, on which watchmen were set, who looked out, that they might give alarm at the most distant approach of an enemy. So it is in watching against our enemies of unholy thoughts; we must take

alarm before the thought has got possession of the mind. The object, the conversation, or the company that would introduce it must be avoided. And if a thought have entered the heart of an unholy nature, let it at once be repelled as an unwelcome intruder. Habit will make this easier; and the devil, finding no admittance, will depart, as it is promised, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

The best way of becoming pure in heart, is to have a good store of Scriptural thoughts. Let every day's reading be food for meditation. There is abundance of food for constant thought in the promises and prophecies, and histories, and precepts of Scripture. Let a text or more be stored up in the memory, and dwelt upon in the mind every day. The words of God are pure words, and must purify the heart. They will both keep out that which is unholy, and will fill the mind with thoughts that sanctify, both to your own profit, and that of those with whom out of an abundant heart you converse. This is the meaning of the exhortation, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother, bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law



is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." (Prov. vii. 20—23.)

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### PRAYER.

O ALMIGHTY God, who knowest all the workings of men's ungodly hearts, and who hast given Thy commandments to check and restrain their evil, I pray Thee for grace to keep Thy word, and to conform me to Thy will. Cleanse Thou me from my secret faults. Deliver me from the guilt of all those unholy thoughts which have too often crossed my mind. Let the "blood of sprinkling" be upon this unclean heart of mine, that Thou turn not away Thine eyes from beholding me.

O God, from whom all holy thoughts and good desires do proceed, cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit. Let the words of Christ dwell in me richly, and ever supply me with holy thoughts. Fill me with thoughts of faith in Thy promises. Fill me with thoughts of love to Thyself. Grant me also to abound in a blessed hope of the glorious presence of my Saviour, that having in me the blessed hope of seeing Him and being with Him, I may daily seek to purify myself as He is pure. So let me be among those of whom Thou hast said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," for Jesus' sake. AMEN.

## THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

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*"Thou shalt not steal."* EXODUS XX. 15.

HERE is another law, the object of which is to keep us from doing injury to our fellow creatures. The golden rule laid down by our Lord on this subject is this ; "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets." (Matt. vii. 12.) Were this rule engraven on the hearts of men and put into practice, there were no need of such a law as this, which forbids our taking that which is not our own. We have learned both law and Gospel in vain, if we are not taking this for our rule. It is the "law of love." Many an act should we be kept from, if we would only thus simply question ourselves, How should I like this done to me, which I am doing to another. And if I should not like it myself, I have no right to do it to another.

So speaks the apostle of all these commandments, "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law ; for this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not

steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet ; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 8—10.)

There are more ways than one of offending against this eighth commandment. It is not only the notorious thief, the pick-pocket, or the house-breaker, who is guilty of this. It is written against all acts of dishonesty of any kind ; it requires perfect honesty and uprightness in all our dealings. This is the Gospel obedience to this command. This is acting on the law of love.

But as Satan is clever in deceiving men into unjust acts while shutting their eyes to the real evil of them ; so, he has many devices by which this commandment is broken in spirit by those who would shrink from the plain act of thieving. But it is evident in whatever degree the gross crime of stealing is blameable and to be condemned, so also are those acts by which we do virtually take from another or keep from another that which of right belongs to them, and this is doubtless the case in every act of dishonesty, over-reaching, and defrauding. The same language must be applied to all who

are thus guilty. "Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 10.)

The thief who lives upon his unrighteous and ill-gotten wealth, must, one would think, have but little enjoyment of it, since he can scarcely be without some anxieties and perplexities of mind, as well as some disturbance of an uneasy conscience. Conscience, if it be not stupified and senseless, will be ever haunting him with troublesome thoughts. So that it may truly be said, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right." (Prov. xvi. 8.) And again, "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing." (Prov. x. 2.)

Were it not for the way persons deceive themselves about the harmlessness of dishonest practices, such thoughts would trouble the minds of many besides the open and notorious thief.

In every rank and station of life we have some temptations to such dishonesty. But of course in some positions in life there are more temptations to this sin than in others. Sometimes the very condition of life is made an excuse for such unrighteous dealing. Excess in poverty and want in the eyes of man seem to lessen the guilt of one who steals to satisfy his want. As it is said, (Proverbs vi.

30.) "Men do not despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry." They cannot do so in the sight of God. The state of want which in our eyes would seem to lessen the guilt, is the very state from which God looks for an exercise of faith and trusting in Him for the required supply. So of all such cases of great need and poverty, never let us suppose it for a moment justifies the unrighteous act of taking what does not belong to us, even though it be of the smallest value, and even though there may be not the smallest chance of discovery. God knows our condition, He is trying us by it. To use unrighteous means is to distrust His Word, and not only involves us in the guilt of theft, but also is to be guilty of an entire want of faith. As God's eye is over such persons to behold and perhaps discover their guilt, so also His eyes were over them to see their wants, and had they sought His help to relieve them. Our Lord was in excessive want of food from having fasted forty days, when the devil came and tempted Him to what would have seemed the small fault of working a miracle to satisfy His hunger. But this was no excuse to Him whose trust was in His heavenly Father, and shortly "angels came and ministered" to his wants. You may be in utter want of food, or clothing, or fuel for

kindling for yourself and family, and see no source from whence your help is to come, but if you call in faith upon Him who owns the whole of this earth and all upon it, you will soon have cause to be thankful you were led to no unrighteous act, you will be blessing God for the wonderful way He put forth His hand and helped you. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." (Psalm xxxiv. 6.)

Neither again are any justified in taking what is another's by reason of the smallness or little value of the thing taken. If it be a thousand pounds, or if it be a park paling to kindle a fire with, there is equally in both cases a breach of the "command which is holy, just, and good," there is an injury done to a fellow creature, there is distrust in God.

Nor again should we let Satan deceive us with the thought, that the practice being what is commonly done is therefore less blameable before God. Many no doubt do shelter themselves under this false comfort. "Numbers are always doing this, therefore it cannot be very wrong," say they. Surely we should rather reason in an opposite way and say, may not this common practice be the habit of the world that knows not God, and by conforming to it, shall I not very likely be "following the multitude to

do evil," and be going with the "many" down the "broad road to destruction?"

Many would indeed be kept from all these unhallowed practices if they would but believe the motto of Hagar, "Thou O God seest me." The guide to many of what they will do, and what they wont do, is alas! shall I be likely to be discovered or not? So it is with the poacher, who steals forth at night with his ungodly companions, setting his traps and taking up his snares, having only one care, and one only fear, lest he be caught by man. Surely he believeth not that verse which says, "Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." (Psalm cxxxix. 12.)

But it is not only poverty that makes many yield to this temptation. There are some situations in life which afford peculiar ease for dishonest doings.

Such is the situation often of a house servant. It is like all places of trust, one in which it is often in the power of the servant to wrong his or her master, without any or but small fear of discovery. They may the more easily take to themselves or give away to others what is not their's, since so much of another's property is in their hand. They may waste or be careless how they use their master's goods, and so

be guilty of this crime as really as he who runs off with another's garment. But though they may in such practices wholly escape a human eye, we know they are answerable, and will have to answer to a Master that is above, and to whom they must one day give account. "We exhort you," says the Apostle, "that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such." (1 Thess. iv. 6.) Again, it is written, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things.....not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus ii. 9, 10.) If servants did but know the great value a good master or mistress must ever put upon a faithful and trust-worthy servant, they would indeed find, even as regards their worldly interests, "honesty is the best policy."

Then again, persons are tempted to the sin forbidden here whose calling is in some trade, or who employ many hands in labour. Those engaged in trade well know the thousand tricks, and underhand practices that tradesmen in a general way have recourse to. All these are marked by Him who hath said, "Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord."



(Prov. xx. 10.) Such practices may be very common. It may be but a very few who have strength of principle enough to stand against the tide of worldly custom; still for all that we may be sure, this does not lessen the guilt in the eyes of Him "by whom actions are weighed," nor make them less a breach of the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal."

So too, those are equally guilty who take unfair advantage of those employed by them, as labourers in any work. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." There is a due measure of pay, a proper amount of kindness and consideration, as much due to such persons as any thing that we have belongs to us as our property. If any of these are kept back from those employed, God looks upon it as stolen property; such have defrauded their brethren; and He is the avenger of all such. Some may prosper for a time from such unfair advantages taken over the weak, but they surely are abiding under the curse of a broken law, and therefore the wrath of an angry God.

Are not also the rich therefore often tempted to this sin? It is such are warned in the words of Scripture, which words apply not only to cultivators of the ground, but to manufacturers, and all who employ hands under them. "Behold the hire of labourers who have reaped

down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth ; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." (James v. 4.)

What is the difference between defrauding by keeping from others their due, and defrauding by taking from another what belongs to him? They therefore who live beyond their means, and contract debts they know they have no reason to expect they can ever pay, should ponder well, whether this is not to defraud others, and running counter to the spirit if not the letter of this command, which says, "Thou shalt not steal."

But the Christian's aim is not merely to be unspotted from this guilt, but to do all he can in the opposite direction of giving to others what they need. He not only desires not to take from others what belongs to them, but to give to others what belongs to himself. So the Apostle exhorts, not only "let him that stole steal no more:" but he adds, "rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephes. iv. 28.) True repentance and true charity produced this fruit in Zaccheus, who once had been in the habit of greatly breaking this commandment. He both restored what he had taken, and gave

to him that needed. The "man that was a sinner" stood forth and said publicly, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (Luke xix. 8.)

This is the spirit we should seek, and not be content with saying, "I am not a thief." We are debtors to our fellow men. The love of God in Christ should make us feel this. We owe them the debt of love. All that love would prompt us to do and desire for ourselves, we owe to a brother, and are called upon to pay as opportunity serves. So it is written, "As therefore we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. vi. 10.)

But such debts are only paid by those who feel how still larger a debt they owe to God. With reference to this debt it is asked, "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi iii. 8.)

Yet how much do we rob Him, if we only think what we owe Him, or if we think how all we have is His, and yet how much we use it as our own. We owe Him indeed our ourselves. We owe Him our best affections. We owe Him our service, our strength, our mind. Unless we are Satan's, and choose to serve him,

we must acknowledge we are Christ's, paid for by His blood, "we are not our own." Are we paying our debts? Or are we robbing God? Oh! "let him that stole steal no more" in this respect. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey." (Rom. vi. 16.) Do we indeed acknowledge that hell would have been our final dwelling place, Satan our master, sin our service, death our wages, unless bought for ever by the blood of Christ? Oh then, shall we not acknowledge God's right to our persons, our hearts, our all? Let the love of Christ constrain us thus to live to Him who died for us, and now prays for us, and while we seek to pay the debt of love to Him who has forgiven us so much, let us also see how best we can pay the other debt of love to fellow men for Christ's sake, lest indeed, robbing both God and man, it be proved that Redemption be but a name, and not a real blessing to us.

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## PRAYER.

O Gracious God, who knowest the many temptations to which we Thy creatures are exposed, I entreat Thee to look upon me Thy weak and unworthy child with the eye of pity. Loosen me from those bands of sin by which I am so often bound to this earth, and enable me to rise upon the wings of faith that I may cheerfully run in the way of Thy commandments. Enable me to put far away from me every thing like dishonesty. May I be just and true and honest and faithful in all my dealings. May I keep constantly before me the great day of reckoning. May I labour to be accepted of thee both now and then. May I so act as never to fear the disclosures of that great day. Make me pure in heart and of clean hands. Give me grace to avoid even the appearance of evil. Let thy good Spirit work in me the great end of sanctification, which is Thy will. Lord, I would bless Thee for the unspeakable blessing of redemption, and I pray that I may give myself wholly to Thy service in both body and soul, through Jesus Christ my Redeemer.

AMEN.

## THE NINTH COMMANDMENT.

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*"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."* EXODUS xx. 16.

THE eighth commandment forbids our taking away our neighbour's property. This one is to defend our neighbour's name and character, and forbids one man hurting another by bearing false witness, or saying evil things against him.

The most open breach of this law is when a person goes into a court of justice and bears untrue witness against any one accused of a crime. There are not wanting such cases in the world. Scripture History affords instances of it. So alas! would the world's history at all times. Some are utterly careless how much another suffers, so that their own interests are served.

There must have been many such very easy to be found in the days of the wicked Ahab, king of Israel. Many came forward at the bidding of the depraved Jezebel, and bare false witness against Naboth. No doubt their eyes were blinded to the sin they committed, and their ears closed against the cries of poor

innocent Naboth, (who by their testimony was stoned to death,) by the money which they received for their evil deeds. (1 Kings xxi. 13.) They who did this deed are well called the "Sons of Belial." None but the children of the devil would be found to soil their hands in such dark and loathsome crimes.

Another instance we have in the case of those by whose witness our Lord was condemned. We are told, "Many false witnesses came."—Many ready to lay charges to His door which they could not prove. "Yet found they none,"—no charge that could be supported "at the mouth of two or three witnesses." "At the last came two false witnesses ;" these perverted the words of the Lord, because they misunderstood him. (Matt. xxvi. 60, 61.)

This sin of course is most hateful in the sight of God. It can be but little removed from murder in many cases. It is lending a helping hand to another's ruin, and that by the foul means of lying. It was severely, *but* justly punished under the law. "If the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother, then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother." (Deut. xix. 19.)

We may never be called upon to bear witness at all in a court of justice, and so we may

never be in danger of offending against this law in exactly this way. But should we ever be put in such a position, how cautious must we needs be that the witness we do bear, and which is so to tell upon a brother's character, shall not only not be wilfully false, but to our knowledge be perfectly true. We may bear false witness without ever intending to do so, or having the malice for it, by stating what we are not positively sure of. All said at such a time is stated under a solemn oath. And it were better not to open our mouth at all, than to open it to the injury of a brother's name and character.

Another way in which persons may offend against this law, is by bearing false or unkind witness against a neighbour in private. We may never swear falsely in a court of justice, and do injury in that way to our neighbour,—but we may do him as much harm by the way we open up his character, and give him a *bad* name in the eyes of the world. This is equally to break this command. It is a fearfully common crime. So many appear to forget that another man's character ought to be as precious in our eyes as anything belonging to him. We have as little right to take the one as we have to take away the other. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." (Prov. xxii. 1.)



One of the chief ways many offend in this respect is by a too free use of their tongue in discussing other person's characters and actions. "Who art thou that judgest another mans' servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." (Rom. xiv. 4.) We may not too readily call in question other people's conduct, nor be in a hurry to condemn them. Yet it is generally for this purpose that persons' names are brought up in conversation. You will find in some companies, that if you take away the one topic of their neighbours' doings and character, you leave very little conversation behind. So natural is it to us all to like such employment, though it is seldom we can be so occupied without sinning. It is too easy to indulge in the secret satisfaction of pointing out, or listening to those who are pointing out a neighbour's misdeeds or failings. This is little removed from bearing evil witness against a neighbour. If we study other persons' characters, if we do mark their failings, let it not be to proclaim them to the world,—but rather inwardly to mourn, and secretly to resolve to avoid the same sins.

Backbiting is often condemned in Scripture. No backbiter will come into the Lord's presence. As David says in the answer to the question, "Who shall dwell in God's holy

hill? ...he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." (Psalm xv.) It is a sin that belongs to the heathen who know not God. (Rom. i. 30.)

It was written in the law, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." (Lev. xix. 16.) St. Paul speaks of some "having damnation, because they had cast off their first faith," of whom he adds, "withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tatlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not." (1 Tim. v. 12, 13.) Alas! how seldom do people think that the tongue is like a sword, or, as David says, "a sharp razor;" (Psalm lii. 2.) and great is the sin of using it to cut up, and perhaps try to cut down our neighbours' fair name, or to rip open his blemishes and weaknesses!

It is wonderful to think how seldom we see in active exercise that sweetest grace of charity, which "rejoices not in iniquity," and which "covers a multitude of sins," that is, puts a covering over a multitude of faults seen in a neighbour. It is to too many among us a secret pleasure to hear of other persons' faults and failings and flaws. This is no doubt because we love our selves better than our neighbour, and

what lowers him raises us. True Christian love will make us wish to hide those evil reports which we hear of a neighbour, even when they are perfectly true. Our first feeling ought to be, a hope it is not true. Our next, a wish it may go no further. We may do as much harm by spreading a true report, which carries evil in it, of our neighbour, as we may by helping forward a false one. We have no more right to expose him in the one case than in the other. This is "to rejoice in iniquity."

Some do not hide the existence of such feelings in their breast. But others are secretly malicious, and hide their inward satisfaction, as it has been well said, in some such way as this, "With a deep sigh and a down cast look, and a whining voice, and an affected slowness, they whisper to one, Alas, did you not hear of such a gross miscarriage by such an one? and then whisper the same thing to another, and a third; and when they have made it as public as they can, hypocritically desire every one to keep it secret; for that they would be loth their neighbour should come to any disgrace and trouble about it. Believe me (adds the same writer,) that though the matter you report be never so true, this is nothing else than slander; because it is done

to no good end, but only to feed your own malice."

This is a great sin, though it be so little thought of as such by most persons. If you measure it by the rule of charity and true Christian love, it is a great sin. If you measure it by the harm it inflicts on a neighbour, it is a great sin. Much is said of the evil of it in the book of Proverbs. It is one of the greatest evils that result from an unbridled tongue; and we know what Scripture says of this one thing, how it casts a shade of doubt over the whole of a professing Christian character. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." (James i. 26.) The tongue is "a world of iniquity," and "defileth the whole body." It is used with very little trouble to ourselves, but it may bring great trouble to a neighbour. It is a sword that is easily drawn from the scabbard, but once thoughtlessly brandished, and none can measure the harm it may do. It is well said, "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, they go down into the inmost parts of the belly." (Prov. xviii. 8.)

An untrue or an ill-natured word concerning another may be uttered in a moment, and without a thought by the speaker; but re-

peated by the hearer, and taken up, and perhaps enlarged upon by a third person, it quickly from a little spark becomes a great flame, which no one can perhaps extinguish. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth." It is then only in the power of the first hearer of such reports to stop all this evil, by keeping them to himself.

Again, let us bear in mind how we also are guilty of having a share in such sin, when instead of turning a deaf ear to what things we hear said against a neighbour, we lend a ready and a glad ear. Such easy listening to bad and foolish and unkind reports, certainly helps them forward. It is the way to encourage the slanderer, who would soon cease from his work, if he found no ears into which he could pour his venom. It countenances him in his evil work, and makes us a partaker of his sin. Besides we can hardly be thus ourselves entertained with such stories without soon learning to give back stories of the same kind in return.

Let us ever remember then that in discussing, or hearing discussed, character and conduct, we tread on delicate ground; we need be much on the watch, lest it prove an occasion of sinning against the spirit of this commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not

bear false witness against thy neighbour." Instead of giving ready ear to those who slander and backbite, shew rather your great dislike to such converse, and it may be your conduct shall have the effect described in the book of Proverbs (xxv. 23), "The north wind driveth away rain ; so doth an angry countenance a back-biting tongue." Then, as regards your own tongue, keep a watch upon it, and be very "slow to speak" on such subjects.

Perhaps the best remedy against such sins will be found in frequently reflecting on our own sins and failings. We can seldom hear of any in our neighbours but what we may find as bad, or worse, in ourselves. We may well be reminded of these at such times when we hear of the failings or falls of others. If we are not guilty of such things at the time, was there never a time when we were? Is our past life so fair and unblameable, that we can see no spots and blemishes such as now bring disgrace upon our neighbour? Our shame for our own sins should be a covering for our brother's.

Let us take heed, the words of our Lord belong not to us, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother,

let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." (Luke vi. 41, 42.)

If God by His restraining grace has kept you from those wickednesses into which you hear others are fallen, yet then look inward, search narrowly your own heart, and you will always see enough to humble you and to silence you, when reflecting on a brother's falls; and you will be led to say within yourself, "How can I reproach him who is but carrying into practice desires and thoughts which have found a place in my own heart, and would lead me to act in the same way, were it not for the restraining grace of God? How can I expose his infamy, who hath but done what I have much ado to keep myself from doing? Possibly the same temptation might have prevailed over me too, had God let it loose upon me. I owe my preservation, not to any difference that was between us, but only to the free and arbitrary grace of God. By this it is that I stand; and shall I reproach him for falling, who should also myself have fallen, were I not strongly upheld by

another.” Thus by reflecting on ourselves, we shall be withheld from being hurtful in our censures or reports of others. This is the Apostle’s rule, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” (Gal. vi. 1.)

Lastly, let us remember to go as far as possible from the danger of such sins. We should seldom be occupied with the sins of others, and let us often be conversing on high and holy subjects.

There is a holy, spotless, and unblameable Character, we can never too often contemplate or converse upon with others,—Jesus, the Holy One. This is an endless subject to think of, and an inexhaustible subject to speak of. We should much profit our own souls if we dwelt much on all the excellencies of His character. We should never weary of listening to those who tell us of Him, or of reading the Book that describes Him, and the things He has done for us. Nor should we rest from praising Him, and commending Him to others. To be like Him,—to see Him as He is,—to hear His voice,—to be with Him,—this is the blessedness of glorified saints; and the best proof that it will be our blessedness



hereafter, is that it is our work and pleasure now, as far as it can be enjoyed by faith, and communion with the Lord.

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### PRAYER.

O Lord God Almighty, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, give me grace to keep this commandment. Keep me by Thy power from the unholy work of slander, backbiting, or speaking evil of any man. Teach me to profit by the sins of others. May I remember my own proneness to fall, and cling more eagerly to thy grace. Shew me more of my own failings, that I may keep my eye on these more than on my brother's sins. May I remember my own faults, and be ashamed. Set a watch, O Lord, before the door of my lips, and keep me from the sin of idle speaking. May my brother's character be counted precious in my eyes. May I be moved by love to put a covering over his sins and errors. Give me the spirit to pity and pray for those that err from thy ways, and give me grace to try and bring them to the ways of righteousness when I can. Teach me to love others, as Thou for Christ's sake hast loved me, and to seek to do them good, for the same precious Saviour's sake.  
AMEN.

## THE TENTH COMMANDMENT.

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*“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.”* EXODUS xx. 17.

THIS tenth and last of the commandments seems as it were to strengthen and confirm the foregoing ones, those at least, which compose the second table. These had reference to the words or actions of a man towards his neighbour, but this one applies to his heart and thoughts. The eighth commandment forbids our taking what belongs to another, this tells us it is wrong even to wish it were our own. “Thou shalt not covet,” or lust after “anything that is thy neighbour’s.”

This demand on the obedience of the heart seems also to remind us forcibly that these are God’s, and not man’s commandments. Man can make laws which bind or regulate our actions, but more than this he cannot do. God, to whom all hearts are open, and to whom all hearts belong, frames His laws with respect to those hearts, and by them gives rules for the

restraint and guidance of the very thoughts and desires of the inner man.

It is surprising how apt we are to forget this, and to think of God's laws, and to judge of His will with respect to us, as we do of man's laws and man's requirements of us. God is a spirit, and He rules the spirits of men. His law is spiritual. His commandment "is exceeding broad." His word "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." He "requires truth in the inward parts."

The law then that forbids our desiring what we have not, is exceedingly instructive in many ways.

In the first place, let it teach us, as it did the apostle Paul, something of the true character of sin. He says in one place, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." In another, "I had not known sin but by the law ; for I had not known lust except the law had said, "thou shalt not covet." (Rom. vii. 7) It is by the law that we know what sin is, for "sin is the transgression of the law."

But more particularly the tenth commandment shows us what sin is by forbidding unholy desires. If God had not said this was sin, none of us would have thought it. We can easily conceive that to take away another's life or property or character, would be wrong, but

it would never have gone against any one's conscience, untaught by God, simply to wish for something that belongs to his neighbour. Nevertheless this is God's law and His account of what sin is. If men oftener judged themselves by this law, they would oftener plead guilty before God. How many are constantly pleading innocence on the ground that they have done no one any harm. They have been good husbands, good wives, good masters, or good servants,—they have wronged no one that they know of, by word or deed. Such persons are indeed pleading a vain plea. They are judging by man's judgment and not God's. They are forgetting the spiritual nature of God's law. And even supposing they were innocent in respect of the first table which requires love to God from the ground of the heart, and supposing their lives would bear comparison with the spirit of the other commandments, and which require us to love our neighbour as ourselves, still we see they stand condemned on the ground of this tenth commandment, which finds fault with them for having desired in their hearts anything belonging to another. Thus we see the truth of that Scripture which says, "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." And when we further recollect, how, "it is written,

cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10.) And again, "Who-soever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." (James ii. 10.) Surely we see how we must each one plead guilty before the Lord, and every mouth must be stopped, when He enters into judgment with man.

Yet, may it not also remind us of the inestimable value of that redemption which has ransomed the believing sinner from this curse.

One only upon this earth has lived without coveting anything, and kept whole and undefiled the spirit and letter of every one of the commandments. His obedience is counted to the sinner that believeth in Him, "for to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.) O blessed and glorious doctrine! Most precious to him, who knowing his own shortcomings, has yet earnestly desired to attain to the glory of God, and the acceptance of his own person with a holy and most just God! How blessed, while looking at the commandment and seeing death, to be able to look at the Righteous One who hath kept the law, and see life. How blessed to be able to say, though I am guilty of all, yet am I, by

grace, counted guilty of none. Though I am in most just condemnation by reason of the laws I have broken, yet is there now "no condemnation to me who am in Christ Jesus, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Though I deserve wrath by reason of my many transgressions, yet by reason of my Saviour's obedience, I inherit God's favour, and eternal life.

Let this commandment then serve to teach us how truly "blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not his trespasses!"

But let it in the next place remind us where sin begins, and how it must be successfully resisted. Every sin done against our neighbour may be said to take its rise in a breach of the tenth commandment. Nearly every such breach begins with coveting to the injury of our neighbour, what belongs to him; and all of them begin with an unchecked evil desire of the heart. The course of sin is well described by St. James. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (Chap. i. 14, 15.) Would we keep free from the sin we must not let lust conceive. And to keep lust from conceiving we must keep lust from the heart altogether. Out of this evil treasury proceed all evil words and deeds; and all the

fruits of the flesh receive their sap and nourishment from this root of bitterness. It ought therefore to be the great and chief care of every Christian, to lay the axe to this root. This is the fountain which sending forth such corrupt and poisonous streams, must first be purged and healed, and then as the heart is kept from indulging sinful thoughts and affections, the life will be clean in consequence. Therefore it was the Lord thus pleaded, in old time, with His people, "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness : how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" (Jeremiah iv. 14.) Ours must be the daily and almost hourly prayer, "Cleanse thou me, O God, from secret faults, then shall I be innocent from the great offence."

But furthermore, the necessity for this commandment has arisen out of the natural feeling of discontent which too often possesses the hearts of men. God by it declares that to be a sinful state in which we crave for more than we have, being reminded of our wants by the possessions of our neighbour. This feeling sometimes is connected with one of envy, but even when it is not, it is not free from sin in the eyes of the Most High. He would have us content with what He gives us, and He counts it sin when not being so we crave for more than we possess.

One reason why there is guilt in such a

feeling is, no doubt, because it arises from distrust in that Almighty Father who promises to supply all the wants of His children. And, since the cause of such a state is unbelief, so, the remedy is a stronger faith in His power and will, to give us all we need. So, writes the apostle to the Hebrews, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. xiii. 5.) Here, we see, discontent is called covetousness, and the remedy is a trust in His word : who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God has said this to every one of His children, therefore, though they may feel the want of everything, they shall never feel the want of His gracious presence and support, nor will He suffer any want so to press upon them, as to do them any real harm. His infinite power can in a moment supply, what His infinite love will not let them be long without.

Yet, when we think of the few we see quite content with what they have and what they are ; and when we remember the many whose countenances of anxiety show a carefulness within, little short of discontent and covetousness, we are led to say, this state of happy contentment arising from firm trust in the



promises of God, is not so easily obtained. It is even so. But it is our duty to seek it and to be learning it out. St. Paul was, doubtless, one of these happy ones, but he did not attain to the state in a day or a week. Let us hear how he speaks of his having attained to this gracious disposition. He says, "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Observe here, how he speaks of his having learned this lesson. Once he did not know it. But he says, "Now I have learned." And again, he says, "I am instructed." Mark too, who it was that instructed him; of whom did he learn to be contented in whatsoever state he was! He adds in this place, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 11—13.) Christ was his teacher. By Him was he thus instructed. And who indeed so fitting and able a teacher as Christ! To be free from coveting,—to be really contented, and that in time of what the world counts want and distress, is a disposition which can only be wrought in us by grace,

and by Him who has the "residue of the Spirit." From Christ then must we receive this grace. He has ascended up on high that He might receive such gifts for men.

Who, moreover, so ready and willing a teacher? Yea: even though like the disciples of old, we be very slow to learn and very dull pupils. Does He not still invite us to come to His school? Does He not say, "Learn of me?"

This lesson we cannot learn ourselves, nor can any man teach us, but He only, at whose feet the apostle Paul sat. St. Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and he never learned this lesson, but before he had been long in the school of Christ Jesus, he could say, "I am instructed both to abound and to suffer need." The advice he gives, as himself taught by the Spirit, we shall do well to follow, when he writes, "Be careful for nothing: but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. iv. 6, 7.)

Lastly, does not this commandment teach us to aim at living so above this world as to avoid all temptations to coveting? In other

words there is a coveting which Scripture commends to us, and which we should aim at. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." We have a neighbour who is a prince, endowed with an ample fortune of the best kind of riches, riches of grace and riches of glory, and on those riches we may cast our eyes and earnestly covet to possess. This prince is exalted very high, sitting at the right hand of His Father in heavenly glory. He is exalted for the very purpose of listening to the wants of His people on earth; representing them to His Father and supplying them. "All power in heaven and earth is given unto Him." Oh! could we but covet more of these riches,—better far than the best earthly treasures, we should then become more like to this Prince, and more fitted hereafter to enjoy his presence. Let us covet earnestly then, these best gifts. Those are best for us, which we most need to deliver us from our most besetting sins, and to work in us the graces we are most wanting in. Let our coveting these be made known unto God. Before all let us covet that goodly garment of righteousness, the "righteousness of faith," in which alone we can face God now or hereafter. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isaiah lxiv. 6.) They cannot hide the shame of our sins, or screen us from

the utmost severity of God's righteous wrath. But lift up your eyes to the heavens, and behold one "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." With the apostle be it our desire, for the obtaining of which we willingly give up all else, "that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Philip. iii. 9.) Let us ask for wisdom: "He giveth it liberally and upbraideth not." Let us ask for strength to fight the great battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. "Through God we shall do valiantly, for He it is that shall tread down our enemies." Let us ask for love that we may give to Him who alone is worthy of them, our best affections. Thus being enriched by Him "from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift," we shall not only be free from the sin of covetousness, but shall have our hearts surely there fixed where true joys are to be found, and "at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

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## PRAYER.

O GOD ! help me to come unto thee and to pray to thee in spirit and in truth, in the name and merits of my Gracious Redeemer !

Lord, keep me from the sin of coveting. Preserve me from the evil of loving this world too much, and thinking of the next too little. I find it hard not to wish for many things which I have not and others have. I do not enough trust thee and rest upon the promises of thy word. Deliver me, O Lord, from this guilt, and save me from the power of this sin. Turn away mine eyes lest I behold vanity. Teach me, O Saviour : instruct me, that I may learn how to be content, in whatsoever state I am.

Grant me grace to covet the better gifts of grace and glory. May I fix my eyes on these more steadily, and desire them for myself, and those dear to me. May I daily become more spiritual and heavenly-minded. May I know how to use this world as not abusing it. May I live more as a stranger and pilgrim, and be looking for and earnestly desiring that city which hath foundations, and which is the inheritance of those that love thee, for Jesus' sake. AMEN.

## THE ALTAR OF EARTH.

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*“ And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.*

*“ Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.*

*“ An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen : in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.*

*“ And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone : for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.”* EXODUS XX. 22—25.

AFTER the ten commandments were given, there followed a number of other laws and rules for the guidance of the Israelites. Some of these are further enforcements of some of the ten, explaining in more minute particulars the way they were to be observed. Others of these have reference to particular rites and ceremonies which God had commanded. It will be well for us to observe the spirit of these laws, and the great principles which they involved : and also, as we proceed, we shall see

cause to dwell more in length on some rules in particular. For while many of these laws had reference only to the conduct of the Jews at that particular time, many of them were types and shadows of those things which belong to the Gospel dispensation.

These laws are called judgments : (Exodus xxi. 1.) those who would be appointed judges had to enforce their observance. While therefore Moses was the great lawgiver of the Jews, yet it is observable how in truth God was their lawgiver. Moses and the judges he appointed had to put in force what God had commanded. Nothing was left for man to appoint. The laws were ready made. This was the great privilege of this highly favoured nation.

The Israelites were especially to remark that these laws were given them by God Himself, and that He talked with them from heaven.

After the tenth commandment had been given, it is said, " All the people saw the thunderings and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking ; and when the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off, and they said unto Moses, speak thou with us and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, fear not, for God is come

to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces that ye sin not." This appearance of God, and these terrible effects of His voice, were to make the people ever remember that God, and God only, was their lawgiver and their object of worship, and that they might not be tempted to put up any object of worship and reverence between them and God. So it was that "the Lord said unto Moses, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven." Then comes an enforcement of those commandments which forbad idolatry, "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold." (Exod. xx. 23.).

The Lord knew they would be tempted to this sin. It is natural to man to wish for some such visible objects which he perhaps vainly thinks may assist his devotion. Forbidden under the law, how doubly sinful does not such idolatry seem under the spiritual dispensation of the Gospel? Yet are there not such approaches to idolatry to be found among professing Christians now a days? There are crucifixes, and consecrated wafers, and high altars, and elevated hosts, and pictures, and images, and relics, all by some deceived worshippers thought to be helps to devotion,



instead of, as they are in reality, helps to idolatry.

That Israel might be kept from idolatry, it was especially ordained that they should see no likeness of God which they could imitate. "The Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire; ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image, &c. (Deut. iv. 12—15.)

Surely all this is very suitable to idolaters of the present day. How fearfully near idolatry do those come who have images of the Saviour and the cross, and the Virgin Mary, and bow down before them, as if thereby to help their devotion. If the Israelites "under a law of a carnal commandment" were forbidden such helps (as they are thought to be) to devotion, how much more must they be forbidden us under the spiritual law of the Gospel, and who are especially called upon to worship God in spirit and in truth, and whose faith in approaching the Invisible cannot really be helped by the things of sense and of sight.

The next law concerning these altars is

likewise instructive. It was this, "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thy oxen : in all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone thou shalt not build it of hewn stone ; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it."

This rule was also to keep them as far as possible from temptations to idolatry. The altars were to be very plain. No ornaments, no labour bestowed in beautifying them. Yet you will recollect, that the altars of the tabernacle and of the temple were not made according to this rule, but were in character with the rest of those constructions which were made and ornamented according to the pattern. The rule before us then concerning plainness, applied to the altars raised before the tabernacle and temple were made, or to any that should be raised apart from the temple or tabernacle, such as Gideon built, and Manoah, and Samuel and others. We see then why this rule did not apply to the altars of the temple. Because the temple with all its beauty and grandeur was intended to shadow forth the spiritual beauty of that temple which the body of Christ became when God became "manifest in the flesh."

It pleased God to record His name first in the tabernacle and then in the temple. His glory appeared in them. He appeared above the mercy seat. "There, (said the Lord,) I will meet with thee, and commune with thee from above the mercy seat." (Exodus xxv. 22.)

Before then the tabernacle and temple altars were ordered, altars of sacrifice were to be very plain, either of earth or unhewn stone : teaching that the beauty of worship was its spirituality, not the outward ornament of the necessary instruments.—These were only ornamented or beautified to the outward vision, when intended to foreshadow and typify what was beautiful in a spiritual sense ; and thereby men were taught to avoid that outward splendour in the accompaniments of divine worship which might tend to make people honour them and even adore them instead of God Himself.

Now therefore that the temple is destroyed and its beauty put aside because of the greater beauty of the temple which is the body of Christ, and now that it pleases God in that temple only to record His name, so that what prayer is not offered through Him is not acceptable, it is evident we must return to that plainness which was ordained of God to be the character of all outward accompaniments of worship. The hour is come, foretold by

Christ, when "neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem we worship the Father." The character of acceptable worship is that it be in spirit and in truth, for "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." To worship Him in truth is to worship Him through His Son, who is the "way to the Father." To worship Him in spirit is to pray and praise with the heart, and not only lips or outward adoration. Christ then is the beautiful temple in which it pleases God to record His name, where He will come to the believer and bless him. Christ is our altar. He also is our sacrifice. He is our High Priest. Prayers in His name are accepted for His sake.

We see then the danger of forgetting this rule of spiritual worship. Our places of worship should be neat and plain, showing that the beauty of worship is internal and spiritual, not outward and carnal. The Jewish temple is no pattern or model of a Christian place of worship. The beauty there was special, being specially to shadow out a beauty that is spiritual: and now that the substance is brought to light, the shadow is done away. We mislead minds when we aim at imitating in our places of worship the beauty of the temple of old, or any thing like the fashion of the tabernacle.

Decency, order, and the best convenience for praying, and praising, and hearing, are the chief points we should aim at. God will record His name, and come and bless a congregation in a plain upper room of a house, or on the sea shore in the open air, if only they who make the congregation be gathered in the name of Christ.

How hideous then in God's sight, and how awfully delusive to souls, is all the gaudy grandeur of what is called the "High Altar" in the Roman Catholic places of worship. They have an altar in such places. They have a priest. They have a sacrifice : but they are not appointed of God. A human priest, an earthly sacrifice, and an altar which is forbidden have they, which things are not according to the spiritual character of Christian worship, but after the carnal commandment of men. The sin of such worship is as the sin of those who should have broken this law concerning the altar of earth. If one had builded an altar of hewn stone, richly ornamented with carved figures, or highly decorated with the work of the chisel, and had taught the people that this tended to make their worship more acceptable, he would have sinned greatly : yet not more surely than those who teach now that acceptable worship must be made on an

altar, with fresh sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ,—by a human priest, in a highly decorated dress ; and that these are all parts of acceptable Christian worship. No ! Christ is the only priest. His body, “once offered,” the only true sacrifice. His cross the only altar. As under the law it was said God would only meet and bless those who sacrificed in the place where He recorded His name, (Deut. xii. 13, 14.) so now the only one way to the Father, is through Him who has said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” (John xv. 6.) Prayer through His name is sure of acceptance, and sure to be heard and answered. No fresh sacrifice is needed. By His one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. x. 14.) What we want in our places of worship is the inward adornment of meek and quiet spirits met together in the name of Christ the Mediator, to pray for one another and themselves, and to “offer up the sacrifices of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” (Heb. xiii. 15.) Our chief ornament in our assemblies must be the presence of Christ.

Let us then now ask what is this truth to us, and how are we making use of this most blessed and glorious promise,—“In all places

where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee." This was the promise of the law. The Gospel promise, we know, is like unto it, "wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.)

Do we know the value of this promise? First, in the house of prayer, the assembly of saints on the Lord's day, and at other times, do we go up with the multitude expecting to find the Lord present, and to be blessed by Him, according to His promise? It is not the presence of the minister, nor of a priest, nor the bare assembling of persons in their best dresses on the Sunday that brings a blessing, but seeking Christ and finding Christ there; hearing His voice in the Scriptures, addressing Him in our united prayers, and singing praises with understanding, and with the warm feelings of gratitude for his mercies; this it is brings the fulfilment of this promise in all its blessedness, "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and bless thee."

But then further, do we know the privilege of this promise as it may be fulfilled to us more privately? "Two or three" met together may be sure of reaping this special blessing. United prayer is not only a great privilege, but one of the greatest sources of obtaining help and

blessings of any kind, besides the good effect it has of binding together hearts, and causing them to feel one for the other. The parents and the children should thus meet and join their prayers and praises. The husband and the wife should thus sanctify and strengthen their union with one another, and raise their affections to spiritual things. The friends, the brothers and the sisters, all in fact who are wont to unite for other purposes, should above all for this, that they may agree touching what they will have done for them by their Father which is in heaven, resting assured of the faithfulness of Him who hath said, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee."

Lastly, never forget, that one of the places where God records His name is the closet of him who goes in secret to worship Him who seeth in secret and rewardeth openly. Yes! "I will come to thee and bless thee," proclaims God's willingness to give to every one that seeketh in the name of His dear Son,—by His Holy Spirit to come and bless them with those blessings secured by the covenant he hath made with them in Christ.

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## PRAYER.

O LORD God Almighty! Thou hast promised that in all places where Thou hast recorded Thy name, Thou wilt come and bless Thy people. Come Thou at this time and bless me. I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof. No! not the most beauteous temple on earth is worthy Thy presence, but Thou art pleased to record Thy name in the temple of Thy dear Son. Towards that holy temple do I look, and according to Thy promise plead for blessings.

Lord fulfil Thy promise, and come, and by Thy Spirit dwell in my heart. Let my body be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Cast out all that is unholy in this temple of my heart, and take Thou possession of it. Be Thou alone exalted in that temple. Let all idols and images be thrown down and cast out, that Jesus may reign supreme. I am unworthy of, alas! at times unwilling, for this great honour. But do Thou by Thy mighty Spirit purify my desires, and by the blood of Jesus cleanse my heart. Record Thy name in my heart. Seal me with the spirit of promise unto redemption, and come and bless me for Jesus, His sake.  
AMEN.

## THE SERVANT'S EAR BORED.

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*“Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.*

*“If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve : and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.*

*“If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself : if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.*

*“If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters ; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.*

*“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children ; I will not go out free :*

*“Then his master shall bring him unto the judges ; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post ; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl ; and he shall serve him for ever.”* EXODUS XXI. 1—6.

THE law is not contrary to the Gospel. Neither were any of its rules touching duty to God or to man, different in spirit from what the Gospel enjoins. “Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." So spake the law. The Gospel also is the law of love.

Neither again is the law contrary to or against the promises of God in the Gospel. For though the law cannot give life, yet it is our "School-master to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith." (Gal. iii. 24.) Hence then it is a mistake to suppose that any of the rules and judgments of the law enjoined any thing contrary to the spirit of love, either to God or to a neighbour. And a mistake likewise it would be in us, not to look beyond the rites and ceremonies, and see how they preach Christ and Gospel truth. We may learn much Gospel truth in this judgment before us concerning servants.

First, notice the graciousness of God's care and provision for servants. One of the earliest of His laws was to provide for their comfort and happiness. Their comfort is as much His object as that of any of the princes of the earth. There is no respect of persons with Him. Nor are any of His creatures out of His sight or providence. Not a sparrow is forgotten before Him.

God knew that servants needed special protection. It was poverty that led them to become servants, and they would be exposed

to hardships, rigour, or injustice, according to the character of the masters they served. That the master's trust might not be abused, He made certain laws to guide them.

The Israelites having just been delivered from the heavy servitude of the Egyptians, these laws were all the more suitable. Some might have been tempted to exercise the same harsh treatment over others, which they themselves had received. God especially taught them not thus to learn evil, and moreover that they were to regard one another as brethren, and not even the poorest among them as a slave. They were all servants to God, and brethren to one another. The mercy they had received from Him in their bondage in Egypt was to incline their hearts to show mercy to one another. All this we learn from what is written in another place. "And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond servant; but as an hired servant, and as a sojourner shall he be with thee," .....the reason is added, "for they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bondmen, thou shalt not rule over him with rigour, but shalt fear thy God." (Lev. xxv. 39—43.) So in another place it was said to

them, "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence, therefore I command thee to do this thing." (Deut. xxiv. 18.)

The same merciful consideration for servants is the reason of the command given in the words we have read. "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing." Every seventh year was the year of release. A breach of this commandment was regarded as a heavy offence by the Lord, and was visited with severe punishment in after time upon the Jews. You will find this related in the Book of Jeremiah. It was the sin of the people in the days of Zedekiah, and for this sin they and their king were given into the hands of the king of Babylon. So we read, (chap. xxxiv. 17.) "Therefore thus saith the Lord, ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth." And in the verses before, the prophet had reminded them of this very judgment which the Lord had appointed,—“In the day that He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt,

out of the house of bondage, saying, at the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew which hath been sold unto thee." So that this among others, was one of the chief offences for which the Jews were sent into captivity.

The spirit of mercy and kind consideration here taught is of course also taught in the Gospel, and will be carried out by Christian masters and mistresses to their servants. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven." (Col. iv. 1.) This is one of several such like rules drawn by the apostle from the Gospel.

And here we cannot but notice how sad a thought it is that while we read this, even at this time, there are those called Christians, buying for slaves and causing to serve with rigour, those who have been first carried off against their will from their own homes and country. How does such conduct, we cannot but ask, tally with the rules God laid down for the guidance of the Hebrew family, and how does this cruel barter in their own flesh and blood agree with the spirit or letter of the law of love which our Heavenly Redeemer and Master laid down for the guidance of the Christian family! Oh!

that such persons would more consider the great harm they do, by such conduct, to the profession of Christianity they have taken up, and the great stumbling-blocks they put in the way of fellow Christians. Could they preach the Gospel and say to the poor creatures of their unholy traffic, "Ye are bought by the blood of Christ, wherefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, WHICH ARE HIS."—or must they shun to declare the good tidings of such glorious liberty to them, lest they condemn their own selves? Surely if the truth of Christ had made them free from the bondage of sin, they would be constrained to show more love to their fellow men; surely then everything connected with the slave-trade, and all its inseparable cruelties, would be an abomination in their sight.

But let us now in the next place see how we also learn here something concerning the free and happy service of Christ. We are led at once to think of our blessed Lord in this passage, because there is an allusion to this practice of boring the ear in the fortieth Psalm, which Psalm plainly speaks of Christ. There we read, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened (or digged or bored): burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo!

I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me I delight to do thy will, O my God : yea ; thy law is within my heart." (v. 6—8.)

This speaks of Christ's readiness to become a sacrifice for sinners, a servant of the Lord among men that he might "save his people from their sins." He took this service on Him willingly, as the servant under the law is represented as continuing in his master's service of his own free choice, when he might go out free. The ear being bored through with an awl to the door post, was a sign expressive of the servant's readiness henceforth to give his ear to all his master's wishes and orders, and to show how he was ready constantly to be employed in his master's service, and never stir from it, nor so much as go over the threshold of his master's house.

In this then we have Christ for our example. As He thus served His Father for us, so would He now have in us willing servants. For this end our motive of service must be like the servant's under the law, that of love. We must with him be able to say plainly, which means decidedly and without hesitation, (saying he shall say) "I love my master, I will not go out free." The servant who said this had for six years found a happy home, a good master and a pleasant service. He did not wish to leave these comforts, therefore he remained.



Do not the true disciples of Christ feel the same? They have indeed a good Master to serve. "One is their Master, even Christ." They love His service. They would not leave it for anything.

Every one is in service of some kind in this world. Those who think they are not, are the greatest slaves of all. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." (John viii. 34.) In this service we are all by nature. Satan our master, — sin our service, — death our wages. Christ alone delivers from this bondage, as God delivered the Hebrews from Pharaoh and Egypt. To them that are delivered He says, "ye are bought with a price, wherefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his."

The yoke of Christ is far lighter than that of sin, or of the world. He says truly, "My yoke is easy." It is a free service. "His commandments are not grievous." They are all the appointments of love. They are for our own good and happiness. Moreover for that which we find hard for flesh and blood to perform, He promises spiritual strength. "Without me ye can do nothing." But "learn of me." and "ye shall find rest unto your souls." Have we chosen this Master? Are we delighting in this service? Can we say plainly, "I love my Master.?"

Then again, observe a further reason led the servant under the law to stay in his master's service. That was, affection for his family. He said, "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free." If he was unmarried when he entered the service, and had obtained his wife while in service, he could not take them out with him. Of course this was another reason for wishing to stay.

So too, the disciple of Christ finds his earthly ties an additional inducement for clinging to the service of Christ. He desires that those that are dear to him from earthly ties, should also know the blessings and the sweetness of the service of Christ. He cannot bear the thought of leaving them to another service than that which gives him so much pleasure. He shudders at the thought of their remaining in the cruel service of sin. Moreover he would desire never to be separated from them. But this must be if either they or he remain not in the household of Christ. They would part for ever at death or the day of judgment. True love shrinks from all this, and desires that all who are of the same family according to the flesh, should belong to the same family after the spirit in Christ. Therefore does the true servant of Christ say, "I love my master, I love my wife and my children, I will not go

out free." I will stay in the service of Christ. I will persuade those dear to me to join me in it. I will endeavour and pray that we may live together in the free service of the best of Masters now, that we may live together with all the saints of the household of faith hereafter for ever.

Notice, lastly, how before the servant under the law had his ear bored, he was to say all this plainly, and before witnesses. "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges," and then to the door. Otherwise he might have said it unadvisedly and without consideration, and before he had counted the cost. Besides there were to be witnesses who could testify against him in case at any time afterwards he should be tempted to withdraw from his master's service.

It is even thus we are required under the Gospel, plainly and openly to confess that we have chosen the service of Christ. To such a confession as this St. Paul alludes in the case of Timothy, who had chosen the service of Christ, and was zealously engaged therein. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." (1 Tim. vi. 12.)

Baptism is also another occasion when before

witnesses such a confession is made. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And so Confirmation as appointed in the Church of England is intended to be an opportunity, when those who have had their confession made for them in childhood, should now themselves come forward and say plainly, boldly, and openly before the Church, "I love my Master, I choose His service, I desire to embrace and follow it."

Communion at the Lord's table is another such opportunity. Where there is a shrinking from such occasions of open confession, you will always find there is an absence of this real love both of Christ as a Master and His service. Such as love not that Master will be ashamed to confess before men to have chosen His service.

But just according as we feel it a great privilege and an unspeakable mercy to belong to the service of Christ, we shall wish for opportunities of testifying to others the choice we have made, and the benefits we derive from it. When we feel the power of Divine grace overcoming sin within, and giving us a good hope beyond the grave, we shall say with him of old, who so faithfully served, because he deeply loved his Master, "I am not ashamed of the

Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Rom. i. 16.)

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### PRAYER.

O! LORD God, Heavenly Father, I am Thy servant : help me and teach me to serve Thee. Thou hast redeemed me unto Thyself that I may be peculiarly Thine, and zealous of good works. May this redeeming love of my Master incline my heart to serve Him faithfully and zealously. Lord, I do love my Master, but, Oh! make me to love Him more. May I choose His service before everything else. Teach me, O! God, to do Thy will. May I daily see clearly what Thou wouldst have me to do. May I never be a servant of the world, or live in bondage to its sinful customs and ways. May I never find Thy yoke heavy or any of Thy commandments grievous. Grant that I may never shrink from an open avowal of my Lord and Master. May Thy grace enable me plainly to declare to the world, and to all who know me, that I love my Master, that I desire to honour Him, to serve Him here and to be with Him and serve Him for ever hereafter. Lord, hear me for the same blessed Saviour's sake. AMEN.

## CAPITAL CRIMES.

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*“He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*

*“And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.*

*“But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.*

*“And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.*

*“And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.*

*“And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.”* EXODUS XXI.  
12—17.

MANY of the Jewish laws seem to have been very severe. Death was the punishment inflicted for many crimes. Some which we should have thought too light, were yet thus severely visited. Of course God had good reasons for this severity. Our ignorance of the nature of sin, holiness of God, and other things, make us judge harshly of His laws, and many in their ignorance and folly would think to be wiser and more merciful than God

Himself. But whence shall we learn what is right and what is wrong in these matters, but from the Lord Himself? Are we wiser than He? Are we more merciful?

No real harshness is in God. Mercy is over all His works. If peculiar laws, strictly enforced, helped to magnify His justice, to show His utter hatred of sin, and the excessive purity of His holy nature, and if they helped to make His people see sin in the same light, then His wisdom is seen in framing such laws, and His mercy shines in them as brightly as His justice.

One striking point may be observed in these laws concerning death. Death was in no case inflicted where only property, and not person was injured.

The crimes punishable with death were these. Idolatry, witchcraft, and the false prophet. (Deut. xviii. 20.) Every species of incestuous connexion and unnatural crime, murder, man-stealing, disobedience to parents, and confirmed disobedience to the magistrate, judge, or priest. (Deut. xvii. 12.) The deliberate Sabbath-breaker was also punished with death. We have an instance given in Numbers xv. 32. Also the blasphemer was punished with death, as we find in the case of the son of Shelomith, mentioned in Leviticus xxiv.

Another thing we may note of these and other of the Jewish laws. Just retribution seems to have been a principle which God intended His laws to enforce. This principle is laid down in this same chapter. In certain cases of injury inflicted, it is added, (23—25) “And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

It is a great mistake to think that this doctrine was intended to teach the Israelites to exercise a spirit of revenge. Certainly this passage, taken by itself, might mislead people, and make them think this; but a moment's consideration will show it is not so. Remember, these were not rules laid down to guide private individuals in their conduct one toward another, when it was said, “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, &c.,” but rules to guide the judges, who had to decide what punishment was due in cases that came before them.

No doubt the Jews did often in aftertimes greatly abuse these rules, and act upon them in order to satisfy private feelings of revenge. To this our Lord refers, when He says, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you that ye resist not evil.” (Matthew



v. 38, 39.) Our Lord did not mean to say that the same spirit of meekness under provocation was not taught under the law, for He plainly said that the law taught them to love their neighbours as themselves. And in Leviticus we find it said, "Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord." (Lev. xix. 18.) What our Lord spoke against was an abuse of the law, and a wrong interpretation of that commandment, which is "holy, just, and good."

Let us now consider some of those crimes mentioned in this part of Scripture, as punishable with death. We cannot but observe how often the crime of murder is spoken of as a capital crime, and the murderer is declared to have forfeited his life.

"He that smiteth a man so that he die shall surely be put to death." And again, "If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour to slay him with guile, thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." This shows that much as he may pity, the judge may not spare the man that is wilfully guilty of murder. This is not like some of the other laws here named, peculiar to the Jewish nation. We have seen it was given to mankind in general, when it was declared to Noah, as God's law,

“At the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made he man.” (Gen. ix. 5, 6.) It is indeed a solemn thing to take away a wicked man’s life from him, leaving him but little time for any hopes of amendment and repentance. But then it is an awful and a solemn deed that he has done, when he sent a fellow creature by his murderous hands into the eternal presence of his Maker. Besides, if it be God’s law, it must be observed, and not be questioned. “Thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.” This does not signify that such guilt cannot be atoned for, and the sinner be pardoned by the Lord. The altar of the cross, and the blood of the Lamb are doors of mercy, even to the worst of sinners. If it be indeed true change of heart, and true faith, that leads the sinner whose soul is thus blackened with guilt to the cross of Christ, he shall find the promise holds good to him : “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him : and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon him.” (Isaiah lv. 7.)

It is possible, and may doubtless sometimes

be the case, that such as have been guilty of this most fearful crime, and have suffered the extreme penalty of the law, may have been "delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1 Cor. v. 5.)

The next crime named here is this, "He that smiteth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death." In another place we read, "Every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother: his blood shall be upon him." (Lev. xx. 9.) So also here, verse 17.

This, taken in connexion with the fifth commandment, which requires us to honour our parents, shows in what importance God holds obedience to parents, and how hateful is the sin of dishonour and disobedience.

Parents should indeed think of this, as they are to be such examples to their children as that the honour and confidence and obedience due to them from their children shall not be misplaced, but bring their own blessing upon them.

Children ought above all too, to think of this. For even in these days it is true, "There is a generation that curseth their father and doth not bless their mother." (Prov. xxx. 11.)

Dishonour to parents is, we see, a great sin in the eye of God. It always is the beginning of a host of other sins. The son or daughter that shakes off the restraining fear of a father or a mother, we may be sure will not be held in by any other righteous bonds. They will soon shake off all fear of God, and soon stifle the last voice of conscience.

It may be the way of young people sometimes, when they get from beneath their parent's eye, to encourage one another in carelessness and negligence of the parents' words and wishes, and those may be laughed at who show themselves to be under their influence; but it is a crying evil in the sight of God. Such ought to remember how terribly they would have been punished under the law for speaking evil and cursing, or dishonouring their parents. Let them read the statement in Deuteronomy xxi. 18—21.

The transgression of the Jews in this respect at the time of our Lord is worthy of our notice. Jesus told them, "God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father or his

mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions." (Matt. xv. 4, 5, 6.) This was their way of escaping the obligation to honour their parents by maintaining them and supporting them in time of need. It was indeed, as our Lord says, "hypocrisy." That which their conscience and their law taught them they should have given to their needy parents, they took for themselves; having devised the plan of pronouncing the word "Corban," or, gift, over it, and then reckoning it their's, and that they were made free from the obligation of helping their parents. So we see that the Lord counts it dishonouring our parents, if we let them suffer want, when they might be assisted by us.

We learn also the tendency of man's traditions. It is to lower the commandments of God, or alter them so as to make them more to man's liking and convenience. Others than the Jewish church have erred in the same way, and with regard to this very commandment. Tradition of the Romish Church has taught some young people to listen to the subtile teaching of a falsely-called priest, and unknown to their parents, in heart to adopt the creed of that false church. Many in our days have there been who have thus dishon-

oured their parents, and who being taught to consider that the Romish church is their mother, they have made this the "Corban," whereby they have satisfied their conscience, and gone over to that apostacy, to the great grief and dishonour of their parents, and probably to the ruin of their own souls. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." (Prov. xxx. 12.)

Another crime named here is man-stealing. To deprive a man of his liberty is not more lawful than to deprive him of his life. Under the Jewish law the sins met with the same punishment. "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." This sin is named, among others, by St. Paul to Timothy as one against which the law was made. (1 Tim. i. 10.)

Thanks be to God, it is a crime that can seldom be chargeable on any in our own country. Would that other nations and kingdoms were as free from this guilt! Would that no poor Africans had still to groan under the terrors brought upon whole families and villages in their native land, by those who live upon the profits of this most cursed trade, and grievous crime of man-stealing! Would

too that none of our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic, professing the same God, the same Christ, and reading the same Bible with ourselves were chargeable with this crime, and the causers of so much misery to their fellow creatures, and stumbling blocks to their fellow-christians! May we pray for those who sin and those who suffer in these respects!

The next crime worthy of death is in the next chapter, verse 18. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The same law is repeated, (Lev. xx. 27,) "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them." So again in Deuteronomy xviii. 10.

Of the power of witches we have an instance in the history of Saul. One was able to bring before him Samuel, in such a way as he could converse with him. (1 Sam. xxviii.) She was a woman that had a familiar spirit. Of the source of this power, we can have no doubt. It is of the devil. What revelations are not of God, must be of that Wicked One.

There are perhaps no such possessors of familiar spirits in our own country. It is said by some that in idolatrous countries, as India, where the devil's power is not, as here, short-

ened and kept under by the prevailing power of God's word and Spirit, that he is still able to work the abominations, as in times of old, and among the heathen in the days of the Jews.

Perhaps in the latter days, and before the end comes, as the devil is to have greater power before he is finally destroyed, he may again bewitch people, and show himself in "sorcerers, enchanters, and charmers." Sorcerers are named in the last chapter of Revelations, as shut out from the kingdom of glory.

Let us be careful that we never encourage the least approach to a resemblance to these abominations. Some are found who for the sake of gain, pretend to be able to tell us our future fortunes, and other wonders. Too many are ready to consult them, and to look to them for advice, relief under sickness, or guidance in difficulty. It is of course a vain search, and it is certainly a sinful one.

One, and one only, oracle have we,—the Word of the living God,—to which we must go for an answer to every question that can make us anxious or troubled in mind. This is the voice of the Good Spirit, and all that he declares is truth. He, it is promised, "will guide us into all truth." He will "show us



things to come," unveiling as far as is good for us to know, the mysteries of prophecy ; He will show us all those things which belong to our peace.

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### PRAYER.

O GOD, Thou hast taught me to hate all manner of sin, and by Thy holy law Thou hast declared thy hatred against it. I am indeed worthy of death, for I have sinned against Thee. In my heart is found the root of every sin. Lord ! when I am judged by Thy law, I am utterly condemned. But O ! merciful Father, I look from the law unto Christ. On Him be my sins, and let His righteousness be mine. Let all my past, present, and future short-comings be forgiven me, and let the blood of Jesus be upon me. Let the seeds of Thy grace take the place of sin within, and be daily springing up in fruits of righteousness. Let the love of sin be put wholly out, and let the love of Christ take possession of my whole soul. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law, yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Keep me from evil of every kind, and preserve me by Thy power blameless unto the end, for Jesus Christ His sake. AMEN.

## S U N D R Y   L A W S .

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*“And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect.”* EXODUS XXIII. 13.

MANY laws and rules which are given here, are repeated in other parts of these Books of Moses. This was, no doubt, because of their importance, and the proneness of persons to forget them. For the same reason, the people are here called upon to be circumspect, that is, very careful, and keeping a constant watch over their actions.

The Christian is reminded also of the need of this circumspection and careful walking. St. Paul says, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.” (Eph. v. 15.)

Let us note some of the chief rules laid down here for the Jews. Where the letter applies not to us, the Spirit does always.

Thus, of this that is written, (Chap. xxii. 28.)—“Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.”

The word “gods” is used here in a peculiar sense. It means here as it does sometimes in other places, princes, magistrates, and judges. It is used in this sense in the Eighty-second

Psalm,—“ God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, He judgeth among the gods.” In the same Psalm and sixth verse, it is written, “ I have said ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High ; but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”

The term probably came to be applied to judges and rulers in the land, from the fact of their being appointed to speak to the people the mind and will of God, and to pronounce judgment, instead of making application to God Himself, each time. Thus, the Lord said to Moses, (Exodus vii. 1.)—“ See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh.” By which was meant that Moses should act as God’s ambassador, and represent God to Pharaoh, requiring obedience to God’s commandments, and inflicting punishment for disobedience.

We find St. Paul acting upon this precept and quoting it, when standing before the great council of the Jews, he was accused of reviling the High Priest. He said, “ I wist not, brethren, that he was the High Priest, for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.” (Acts xxiii. 5.)

This command is to be obeyed, even when the rulers may be ungodly, and in no wise actuated by right motives. We are to respect them and their office, and obey their laws,

except when running counter to the obedience we owe to God. So, our Lord taught His disciples to act. "Jesus spake to the multitude and to His disciples, saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." (Matt. xxiii. 3.)

It were well if this principle laid down by the Lord, were more thought of now-a-days. Many are too apt to forget it, and fall into the sin of those spoken of by St. Jude, who "despise dominions and speak evil of dignities." Against such conduct, is set the example of Michael the arch-angel, who when contending with Satan "the god of this world and prince of darkness, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." (Jude viii. 9.) Those then who hold office and exercise lawful authority over us, even though the spirit of Satan should be in them, are not to be abused or spoken evil against. Do not according to their wicked characters or acts, but set them a better example by submitting to their lawful requirements, and refraining from any railing accusations. "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that

resist shall receive to themselves damnation.”  
(Rom. xiii. 1, 2.)

The spirit of insubordination and disobedience which shows itself towards rulers and higher earthly powers, is a spirit that will be found to exalt itself against God, and in fact, to be rebelling against the Highest Power of all. Yet, no doubt, some excuse themselves from submission to and respect towards earthly powers, on the very score of their own submission to God, which they vainly imagine thus sets them at liberty “to despise dominions, and speak evil of dignities.” Such persons are either hypocrites, or are grossly deceived. Their liberty is not of God; because their conduct is exactly contrary to His word. If the truth had really made them free, the truth would have taught them humility and meekness.

“Thou shalt not raise a false report: nor put thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” (Chap. xxiii. 1, 2.)

Two important rules of action occur here. They refer first to our conduct in courts of justice. The evil of raising, receiving, or helping forward testimony that we know not to be true, or know to be false, is forbidden. The temptation to be led to such conduct by the multitude,—the many that may be doing

so, is to be resisted. The rules also have a reference to our daily conduct towards our neighbour. Slandering and backbiting is a degree of false witness-bearing. A man's reputation may under certain circumstances lie as much at the mercy of any company or even individual who converses about him, as his estate or life does at the mercy of a judge and jury, and witnesses in a court of law. So, that he who raises, or knowingly spreads a false report against his neighbour, sins as much against the laws of truth, justice, and charity, as a false witness does. Oftentimes the injustice and mischief done in such cases is worse, because it is not in the power of the injured person to right himself.

That which we translate,—“Thou shalt not raise,” is in the margin, “Thou shalt not receive a false report.” Sometimes the receiver in this case is as bad as the first promoter of a slander: and a backbiting tongue would not do so much mischief, if it were not countenanced. We cannot always help hearing an evil report, but we must not receive it with pleasure and delight, as those that rejoice in iniquity. Certainly we need never have a hand in spreading it.

Very important also is the next caution, not “to follow a multitude to do evil.” There is

no doubt that the influence of example has a great effect in drawing men into sin. The countenance of numbers is a great support to many who are doing what is wrong ; and many a man takes comfort from being able to say, "There are numbers doing the same thing," or, "everybody does so and so." Many would not dare to sin alone, who are yet forward to sin in company. Much is it to be feared that thousands sin fearlessly, because they find, by far the greater number of people are following the same course. But, we ought to remember what a dangerous thing it is to follow a multitude, simply because it is a multitude ; and what a false source of comfort this is to him who is doing wrong, that thousands or even millions are doing the same thing. This is not Scripture comfort. We are told, "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil." An old writer says on this, "General usage will never excuse us in any ill practice, nor is the broad way ever the better or safer, for its being tracked and crowded. We must inquire what we ought to do, not what the most do, because we must be judged by our Master, not by our fellow-servants ; and it is too great a compliment to be willing to go to hell for company."

God's Word tells us that for the most part

what the many do is evil. It is the many that rush thoughtlessly along the broad road that leadeth to destruction. It is the few that find the narrow road that leadeth unto life. Yet, doubtless, most men court to be among the many, and fear to be among the few, at least, in strictness of life. The very thought that most people go wrong, should put us on our guard, when we find ourselves acting in concert with such great companies, and at the least, should make us never justify ourselves on the score of the common practice, and the way the world does. Let us follow a principle of our own, and not be tossed about by the uncertain opinions of the multitude. It may encourage some of us now to feel we have numbers on our side, and thousands to whose examples we can point as being like unto our own ; but this will be poor comfort when we find ourselves lost and ruined, in company with the many. It would be little comfort if you were sailing in a sinking vessel, to know there were hundreds of fellow-passengers in the same plight. It was no comfort, but a worm that gnawed the conscience, to the rich man in hell, to remember that he had five brethren who would shortly join his company in torment. It can never lessen the pain of the damned, to feel it is shared in by ever so



many besides themselves. When a man dies, he cannot take any of the world's company with him, though up to that very time it may have been the chief guide and friend to encourage him in his mode of life. We must die alone. "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. xiv. 10—12.) Let us then now follow a guidance that we can appeal to in that day. It will never do to say, I have done what the world has done ; this will not justify. Let us rather follow the few to do well : yet, not following them because they are few, but, because and so far as they are the chosen of God, and beloved. Let the Word of God be our guide. Let Christ be our example, and His disciples our companions. Let the Holy Spirit be our interpreter. So shall we be in good company, on a good road, and in the way to the most glorious end. Nor be we disheartened because the company be small, the road narrow and sometimes rough, and the end little thought of by the world in general. The Gospel rule agrees with this of the law, "Be not conformed to this world : but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove (know by experience) what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. xii. 2.)

The next command, we may notice, is one that shows how much the spirit of love ran through the law of Moses, and how far it was from the spirit of revenge. "If thou meet thine enemy's ox, or his ass going astray : thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden and wouldest forbear to help him : thou shalt surely help with him." (xxiii. 4. 5.) How well did the giver of this law know the sinful inclinations of the human heart :—"If thou wouldest forbear to help him." And who would not at first be disposed to pass by on the other side and not help one in trouble who hated us, and against whom we owed a grudge. Natural feelings would prompt us to be glad to see our enemy in distress. For the "natural mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom. viii. 7.) But the law gave no sanction, but on the contrary, forbid the indulgence of such a feeling. To love our enemies and do good to them that hate us, is not a new, but a very old commandment ; found, indeed, in none of the laws of the heathen, but foremost in the laws of God. We find the same thing taught us in another place, (Prov. xxv. 21, 22.)—"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat ; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink : for

thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee." And if so spake the law, how ill indeed have they learned the Gospel, who know not that this is its spirit also. Christ says to His followers, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father, which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 44.)

Alas ! how opposite to this, is the spirit commended by the children of this world. With them revenge is a noble spirit. A falsely called proper pride is aimed at, and to bear insult patiently, and to stoop to kindness to those that injure us, is thought inconsistent with a proper self respect. But self-abasement is the aim of the follower of Christ. We can never stoop as low to others, as Christ has done to us sinners. As Christ has received us to glory, so ought we to receive one another. What is the distance between us and him who has done us the utmost injury, compared with that between hell-deserving, backsliding, inconsistent sinners, and the pure and spotless Holy One ? What service that we can render to a fellow creature who is our enemy, can be compared with the service Christ accomplishes for the sinner, whose natural feeling is ever

hatred against Him, and who only loves when Christ has first loved him, and changed his heart by grace? Let this then be our rule, and grace will enable us to walk according to it. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. v. 1, 2.)

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## PRAYER.

O Lord God, give me grace, I pray thee, to walk circumspectly, and in faithfulness to all thy precepts. May I never wish to put them away as burdensome. May I never want to lower them to suit my corrupt nature. But rather let thy grace make me find them not grievous, but an easy burden and a light yoke. Change my nature that I may rise in will and power to the spirit of all thy laws.

May these that I have just read be duly impressed on my heart. May I study to be

submissive and obedient to all in authority over me. May I hate to raise or to spread unkind reports, whether true or false of other persons. May I love even those that hate me, and live peaceably with all men, as far as in me lies. May I have the heart to pity, pray for, and do good to those who have even devised my hurt. May thy Spirit so work these things in me, that I may have evidence that I am one of thy children, and not of the world. May I never follow the multitude to evil. But may thy Word be my guide, and thy Holy Spirit my counsellor, now and evermore, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

## THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE.

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*“Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*

*“Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.*

*“But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.*

*“For mine Angel shall go before thee.”* EXODUS  
xxiii. 20—23.

THE angel which is promised here is referred to in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah. This part of the history of the Israelites is there spoken of by the prophet, when pleading with the Lord, and, as it were, putting Him in remembrance of His former mercies, he asks for more mercy,—“I will mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according

to the multitude of his loving kindnesses. For He said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE saved them: in His love and pity He redeemed them: and He bare them and carried them all the days of old."

Moses also referred to this angel in after times: when speaking of past events he said, "and when we cried unto the Lord He heard our voice, and sent an angel; and hath brought us forth out of Egypt, and behold we are in Kadish." (Num. xx. 16.)

Many think it likely that this angel was none other than the Son of God, the same as is called the "Messenger or angel of the covenant" in the book of Malachi, chap. iii. 1.

There are, doubtless, reasons for thinking so. The authority given him, and the obedience demanded for him seem to make it probable. "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions." None, we know, can forgive sins but God. Moreover it is said, "My name is in him." Such an angel it was appeared to Moses in the bush, of whom it is said, "The Lord spake to him out of the bush." Such also appeared to Joshua near Jericho, as the

captain of the Lord's host, before whom Joshua fell on his face and worshipped. Had this been a mere angel, or even the archangel, it would have been said to Joshua as it was to John when he would have worshipped an angel, "See thou do it not: worship God." (Rev. xxii. 8.)

In the next place we must remember that all God's dealings with mankind take place through the mediation of Christ. Even the creation of the world is referred to Christ. "For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth,—all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col. i. 16, 17.) It was in Christ Jesus that God chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and made a covenant in Christ with them and their seed. It is "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world," that we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephes. i. 3, 4.)

The Rock that followed Israel, it is said, "was Christ," and therefore it is not strange that He who now led the way before them was the same "angel of the covenant." To this angel did Jacob on his death-bed refer when blessing the sons of Joseph, he said, "The angel which redeemed me from all evil bless the lads." (Genesis. xlviii. 16.)



This angel was to "go before the Israelites to keep them, and bring them" into the promised land. It was said on another occasion, "mine angel shall go before thee." (Exod. xxxii. 34.) Yet was it also said on that same occasion by the Lord God to Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (xxxiii. 14.)

The Israelites were to "obey his voice," and we know the voice they heard all along in their journey was the voice of God Himself, who spake to them from out of the fiery mountain, or from above the mercy-seat in the tabernacle.

Now the promise of this angel's presence, while it was a ground of comfort and encouragement, was also the ground of caution. To such as, like Moses, wanted God to be with them, and could feel as he did when he said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," it was a promise full of the greatest comfort. To those also who saw all the dangers that lay before them, the greatness of their enemies, and the littleness of their own strength, it was great comfort to receive the message, "Mine angel shall go before thee and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and I will cut them off." But others needed more the caution that was added, "beware of him, and obey his voice, and provoke him not." Experience afterwards proved how much this warning

was called for when they "provoked the Holy One of Israel."

Now we Christian pilgrims have all to remember how this all equally applies to us. The presence of the Lord is promised us in the same way in this wilderness world. The promise Christ made to His disciples, when He sent them into the world, "Lo, I am with you always," is equally in other parts made to every believer. It is mentioned sometimes as a reason for putting away all feelings of discontent, covetousness, and disquiet from fear of want and danger; as in Hebrews xiii. 5, 6. "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

It was found a great comfort by the apostle Paul when all human friends had forsaken him, and he was forced to say of those who had before kept with him, "All men forsook me," he then was enabled to add, "notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.)

It had the effect of making David search his own heart, and pray God to take from him all evil ways, when he remembered that God

“compassed his path and his lying down,” and he said, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psalm cxxxix.)

Who that feels encompassed by the “iniquity of his heels,” who that knows anything of the sore temptations around him, the many enemies and the many difficulties between him and his final salvation, who that has experienced with sorrow the ensnaring force of this world’s attractions, and the unhallowing influence of the men and things of this world on his spiritual state, but what is very glad of such a promise that in all places and at all times the angel of God’s presence shall be with him to keep him and bring him unto the desired land!

Are we very liable to be deceived by false teaching, and does the spirit of error abound on all sides? the true believer has the promise of the company and guidance of the “Spirit of truth” to lead into truth, and give an “unction” to the understanding, by which he may “know all things.” Are we often in doubt as to the way we should go, to the right or left, and which is the path of duty? then have we the voice of this angel to tell us; our “good Shepherd” speaks to us in the Word of God, and the prayer of faith never fails to find guidance. This Word is to the believing reader

as clear a guide as was the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that betokened to the Israelites the angel of God's presence.

God is also present with His people by the in-dwelling of His Holy Spirit. They are "temples of the Holy Ghost." "I will not leave you comfortless, but will come unto you." How is this promise fulfilled but thus, as is said in the same passage, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth." (John xiv. 16—18.)

This is great comfort, leaving no room for doubt in the believer's mind that God will be with him in all troubles, and help him,—in all afflictions and strengthen him to bear under and profit by them,—in all temptations and make a way to escape. He will be "preserved through faith by the power of God unto salvation." This God shall be "our guide even unto death."

But with this comfort there is ground for caution and solemn warning. It is said in one place, "Quench not the Spirit, (1 Thess. v. 19.) meaning, when the Holy Spirit would warm you by the gracious influence of His teaching and comfort, do not as it were throw cold water on that holy flame by neglecting to listen to His voice, or in any way turning from

...and the Holy Spirit is the one who leads us into all truth, as He says in John 16:13. The Holy Spirit is the one who teaches us the things that we need to know in order to live a life of holiness and obedience to God.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh, as He says in Ephesians 6:10-12. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to love one another, as He says in 1 John 4:7-10. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be patient, kind, and gentle, as He says in Galatians 5:22-23. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be faithful, as He says in 1 Peter 1:5-7.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be holy, as He says in 1 Peter 1:2. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be obedient, as He says in Colossians 3:10. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be faithful, as He says in 1 Peter 1:5-7. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be patient, kind, and gentle, as He says in Galatians 5:22-23. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be holy, as He says in 1 Peter 1:2. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be obedient, as He says in Colossians 3:10. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to be faithful, as He says in 1 Peter 1:5-7.

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His guidance; so it is added, "Despise not prophesyings." It is said again, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephes. iv. 30.) We grieve the Spirit when we give way to those tempers and unholy feelings which are contrary to the Spirit: for so it is added, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice."

But some there are who need the caution in another sense. Some in whom the Holy Spirit has never found a welcome, in whose hearts He does not dwell. They close their hearts against His strivings. They desire not the presence of God, they say to the angel of His presence, "Depart from us." Yet with them as with the Israelites, this angel is near them. Not only is it a fact, that "in God they live and move and have their being," (Acts xvii. 28.) and that God is "about their path," and they "cannot flee from His presence;" but more than this they live in an age when God speaks to man loudly and solemnly by the voice of His Spirit in the inspired Word, and in the ministry of that Word. Well may it be said to them therefore, "Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for my name

is in Him." None in these days can live without hearing,—we might almost say, seeing, this holy angel of God's presence, this Spirit of Christ, who is with us in our journey here. He speaks in the Bible which every one has, He speaks in the sermons of the divinely-taught minister, He is seen in the powerful workings of grace in the lives of the saints, and the conscience of every man tells him this is true, whether he hears or whether he forbears.

Are we heeding or are we neglecting this great voice? Are we eagerly listening to or are we provoking this mighty Spirit? Oh! "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh."

How terrible will be that second shaking to those who have not hearkened to God's voice. If it made men fear and quake when He spoke only to command and give laws, what will they feel when He speaks to pass sentence on those that have not obeyed His commands. Where will the neglecter of God's word and the rejecter of His Spirit be found when the Lord shall utter His voice, "when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth!" (Isa. ii. 21.)

Put yourself under His guidance, and you are not only safe, but doubly blessed. The temporal blessings promised Israel if they obeyed the voice of this angel, and all the



spiritual and eternal blessings promised God's children in Christ are ours if we are "led by the Spirit," and are therefore "sons of God."

Entire destruction of their enemies you will find was one thing made sure to them. "I will cut them off." So to the believer who "through the Spirit" is seeking to "mortify the deeds of the flesh," it is promised "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Yet observe it was to be a gradual destruction of their enemies, and they were not to be discouraged if they found enemies in the land some time after they had entered it. "By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land." (v. 30.) Be not therefore discouraged if you find enemies you had thought destroyed still waging war in your heart and in your path after Christ. Only "make no covenant with them." Contend still against them. In God's time and in God's strength they shall be cast out. Your's is the promise, "I will be an enemy unto thine enemies."

Again, the promise was and is, "ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." First, our bread and water shall be sure. The angel that is with us shall be like him with the

“widow of Zarephath.” It shall be with us as with her, “the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruize of oil fail.” (1 Kings xvii. 14.) He will give us our “daily bread.” Next, our food shall be blessed to us. It is “sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” It shall nourish us as long as God wills our bodies to be the tabernacles of our souls. Sickness shall not visit us, save when God permits it as the gentle rod of correction by which the body is brought low that the soul may be exalted, the appetites for this world’s dainties made to give way and make room for the appetite for heavenly food. God will be with us and “strengthen us on the bed of languishing, and will make all our bed in our sickness.” (Psalm xli. 3.)

So shall the man be blessed that hearkens to the voice of God as He speaks by the “angel of His covenant” and the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Word. It was so with Israel. They that provoked the angel,—believed not,—and obeyed not,—“their carcasses fell in the wilderness.” They that obeyed were safely brought through all the terrors of the wilderness, safely delivered from all the enemies in the land, and securely and happily planted in Canaan. There “remaineth now a rest for the people of God.” “As many as are led by the

Spirit they are the sons of God," and this is their promise and comforting word,—“Behold I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.”

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### PRAYER.

O LORD God! I pray thee to look in mercy on me at this time, and grant me to enter into the fulness of Thy most gracious promises. Let it be with me as with Thine ancient believing people. Let the angel of Thy presence go before me and bring me into the land Thou hast prepared. May I hear the voice of Jesus in the Word! May I feel the Holy Spirit in my heart! May Thine everlasting arms uphold and lead me. Forbid it, Lord, that I should grieve this holy Messenger of Thine. May I listen eagerly to catch every accent of His voice, that I may know Thy will. May I go where Thou callest, do what Thou sayest, and suffer what Thou layest upon me. May Thy grace go before and Thy blessings follow after everything I undertake and carry out. Bless my bread and my water. Take away sickness from me and my family; or at the least, cause all things that happen to work together for good, and fall out to the furtherance of my salvation: for Christ's sake. AMEN.

## OFFERINGS FOR THE TABERNACLE.

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- “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,  
“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring  
me an offering : of every man that giveth it  
willingly with his heart ye shall take my  
offering.  
“And this is the offering which ye shall take of  
them ; gold, and silver, and brass,  
“And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen,  
and goats’ hair,  
“And rams’ skins dyed red, and badgers’ skins,  
and shittim wood,  
“Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for  
sweet incense,  
“Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod,  
and in the breastplate.  
“And let them make me a sanctuary ; that I may  
dwell among them.  
“According to all that I shew thee, after the pat-  
tern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all  
the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make  
it.”* EXODUS XXV. 1—9.

THE law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. And a sad mistake it is to set aside these portions of the Old Testament, as if they could teach us nothing that concerned us.

Even in the giving of the law, which “cannot give life,” and in the structure of the tabernacle, we may see much Gospel truth, and learn much of our need of Christ, and His all-sufficiency as a Saviour.

In this, and several chapters in the book of Exodus, we have very particular descriptions of the structure and the furniture of the tabernacle, which Moses at this time was ordered to make. We cannot dwell on all these particulars, but we may mark some of the most striking and obvious ones, and gather instruction from them.

Before we speak of the rules concerning the tabernacle, let us notice some points in the grand and awful appearance of God upon the mount from which Moses received the law, and on which he and the elders of Israel saw the glory of the God of Israel.

We read, “Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in clearness.” (chap. xxiv. 9, 10.)

It is said elsewhere, “No man hath seen God at any time.” We must conclude that what these people saw was such a glorious ap-

pearance of the presence of God, as left no doubt in their minds that God was there. They could not see God Himself, for "He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see." (1 Tim. vi. 16.) Nor did God ever suffer these people to see any such appearance, and so be tempted to approach to idolatry. So it was said, "Take ye good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner of likeness on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image." (Deut. iv. 15.) And so we observe, there is no mention of any form, human or divine. But in this, as in other descriptions of the appearance of the glory of God, (see Ezekiel i,) we observe the things seen are described by those earthly things to which they bore most resemblance. "Under his feet was paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven for clearness."

But now let us mark in this approach unto God, how man was reminded of his sinfulness and need of that atonement, which is now made known to us in the work of Christ.

First, Moses builds an "altar under the hills," and then "sent young men of the children of Israel which offered burnt offer-

ings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord." Here was the preparing the way of access to the holy and sin-hating God. Man may not draw near, even to hear God speak, or to receive His commands without a sin offering. The great sin offering is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It is our privilege to have access with boldness by the faith of Him.

We next read, "Moses took half the blood and put it in basons: and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar:" and again, "Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." (8th verse.) The apostle Paul speaks of this, (Heb. ix. 19,) and adds, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood: and without shedding of blood is no remission."

He calls these things "the patterns of things in the heavens;" and says that the "heavenly things themselves" had need of "better sacrifices than these." The better sacrifice is the blood of Jesus. His blood is called the "blood of sprinkling," and "the blood of the everlasting covenant." His blood sprinkled on the conscience of believers speaks peace and pardon to them, and cleanses from all sin.

The covenant of grace is made with them, by the which free access to God, and all its following blessings, even unto eternal life, are made sure to them; not depending on what they do, but on what Christ hath done for them.

It is said, "the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel." It is still so. "Our God is a consuming fire." All that is unholy and defiled with sin is as dry stubble, and must be consumed if it comes near to this terrible God. If we draw near in our own persons, with our sin-defiled hearts, we shall certainly not be accepted, and in the end we must miserably perish. God's awful justice is still flaming. Oh, let us be sure we are screened by the mercy that is in Christ,—that we are "accepted in the beloved," and through Him have "grace whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear."

But let us next notice God's orders concerning the tabernacle. Moses was in the mount with God forty days and forty nights, receiving commandments from God. He received very minute orders as to how the tabernacle was to be made. What it was for is here thus stated, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." God's presence was to be sought and found in this tabernacle. It



pleased God always to let His glory appear in it, and there He spake to Moses, and the priest had access to Him with the blood of sacrifices. St. Paul lays stress on this point, that it was all made according to order from God: "For see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount." (Heb. viii. 5.)

Perhaps Moses was made to see a model of the tabernacle which he was to make. Certainly he was to make it in all points according to God's instructions. And what is the reason? Doubtless, first, that it might be regarded as a divine, and not a human plan and building. It was made from no mere design of any human architect,—the great mind that framed it was God's. And next, and chiefly, because God had a purpose which it was to answer,—it was to prefigure something which was to come after, it was a shadow of a substance, that substance was known only to God. So the apostle says, that the priests under the law "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." (Heb. viii. 5.) The priests under the law serving in this tabernacle were types of the High Priest, Christ, who serves in heaven itself. So then the tabernacle was a type of heaven. And may it not also have been a type of Christ's body? For that is

the abode in which it has pleased God to dwell and to tabernacle among men. "God was manifest in the flesh." "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." (John i. 14.) "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." (Col. ii. 9.)

If the tabernacle represented that glorious body in which Christ dwells, we see why the divine mind planned every part of it, and why it was to be made of the most costly materials. The ideas of preciousness, and beauty, and of the best of every thing, were perhaps intended to be the character of the things of which the tabernacle was to be constructed. So the "true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man," even the body of Christ, was glorious, precious, and perfect.

The things of which the tabernacle was to be made, were to be freely offered by the Israelites for the purpose. "Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering."

It was thus the Lord would put their love to Him and His worship to the test. He appealed to their love. No other offerings would He accept at their hands than those which flowed willingly and freely. It must be

given "willingly, and with the heart." Those who loved their gold and their silver, their fine linen, and their shittim wood, better than God, they were not required to part with these things. It is the same now in all God's demands upon our substance. He does ask for something from each of us. His church upon earth, which is the mystical body of Christ, is in that state that many of its members are poor in this world's goods, and many of Christ's little ones are in want both of spiritual and temporal good. We that have what they have not, are appealed to in the Gospel to give of our offerings unto the Lord. God's appeal is not to our fears, but to our love. It is especially said, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix. 7.) So here "every man that giveth it willingly, with his heart, of him shall ye take my offering." If our alms-deeds, and other acts of charity, and our offerings to the Lord, are ever grudgingly drawn forth from us, to please man, or merely to satisfy our own conscience, there must be something wrong within, and we have not yet attained to the pure motive, nor learned that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" the love of Christ must have but little place, if any, in our hearts.

Now we may learn something of the motive which should influence us by the example of the Israelites on this occasion. They brought so readily of their offerings, that at last it was said by the collectors, "the people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the Lord commanded to make." (chap. xxxvi. 5.)

It may be asked here, how it was they could have all these things to offer, seeing that they were travelling in a waste wilderness with no inhabitants and no wealth. But we have to remember from whence they had lately come. They had left indeed the house of bondage, but God had made it an occasion of enrichment. "Though they had lien among the pots, yet they were as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." (Psalm lxviii. 13.) We must not forget how God had accomplished His word of promise, "They shall come out in the fourth generation with great substance." And here it is we can see the reasonableness of God's request, and the reason of a powerful motive at work with those who had these riches. All that they had was once God's, and not only that, but they owed their very lives to His mercy, who had wrought for them and redeemed them from their mighty enemies.

Those then who felt how graciously He had dealt with them, and how all their belongings were connected with their greatest mercies, and given them by the Lord, they would feel God was indeed worthy of their best offerings. They were but giving back to the Lord what He had bestowed on them ; nor could all their worldly goods repay His mercy in their wonderful deliverance.

It should be so with the believer, who is asked to give of his substance to the Lord. He must feel that he owes all he has and all that he is to that Saviour who has redeemed him. Had he his true deserts, he would have been in hell. Had he not been redeemed by blood, he would have been Satan's. Had not grace delivered him from the love and power of sin all his worldly goods had but ministered to his own evil and been accursed. Now his body and soul have been bought with a price beyond silver and gold,—even the precious blood of the Lamb, therefore they are the Lord's. Now all things he possesses are sanctified to his use, and being sanctified minister to his happiness and peace. They also are the Lord's, and when asked for shall be given to Him. We ought to be like the owner of the colt, only waiting to hear from the lips of those who would ask for any

of our substance, or energy, or time, "the Lord hath need of it."

God never asks for what we have not. The offerings of the Israelites were various according to their possessions, and the requirements for the tabernacle. Some had gold and other metal, some the colours, some the cloth, and some the hair, and some the needle-work that was required. Even so now, the wants of the Lord's church on earth are various, and so are our means. The Gospel must be preached to the poor at home, and to the heathen abroad. Some can offer for this work their own persons, some their substance, some their time and thought, some their needle-work:—each can do something, according as God has given to each. Many of God's servants are in poverty, some in sickness, some in sorrow. In different ways can we each administer to the comfort and assistance of such cases. Each can do something. It should be said of us, "She hath done what she could." It should also be done "willingly, and with the heart."

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## PRAYER.

O GOD Almighty ! who in thine awful justice art a consuming fire, give me, I pray Thee, grace that I may serve Thee with reverence and godly fear. I would worship Thee through Him whom Thou hast appointed as a Mediator between Thyself and the sinner. I would come boldly, and ask for the richest blessings, for Thou Lord lovest those whom Thou hast given unto Him. I would put Thee in remembrance of the covenant made with blood with all Thy people in Christ. Let that blood be upon my soul, and let it give peace to my conscience, and hope to my heart.

May the love of Christ to my soul make me a willing offerer of all that I have to Thee. Lord, I present my body to Thee a living sacrifice. Teach me how I may best devote its energies to Thy service. Show me how I may best serve the cause of truth and the Church of Christ. Make me a willing offerer of time, money, thought, and every thing else that can promote the salvation of souls, and the kingdom of the Redeemer, in whose most holy Name I ask these things. AMEN.

## THE HOLY OF HOLIES.

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- “And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold : two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.*
- “And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.*
- “And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end : even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.*
- “And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another ; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.*
- “And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark ; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.*
- “And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”* EXODUS XXV. 17—22.

WE have in this and other chapters a very minute account of all the furniture of the



tabernacle. Moses is told how the things in it were to be made, and what they were to be made of. Since it is so often said that he was to make them according to the pattern showed him in the mount, we are led to suppose that every part had some special meaning in it, and perhaps pointed to some truth concerning Christ and the work of redemption by Him. Certain we are that all the chief parts of the tabernacle had this meaning, and perhaps the more we searched the Scriptures carefully, and prayed to be guided by the Spirit of truth, the more we should see how Christ magnifies the law and makes it honourable in all its parts.

The meaning and use of some parts of the tabernacle and the things in it are at any rate plain and not difficult to understand.

Let us now consider some of these. The tabernacle itself was a kind of tent which was moveable, and could easily be taken up and down, as occasion required. It was the dwelling place of the most High. In this it pleased God to manifest Himself, and to speak to His people. In this the priests had to perform the sacrifices and all the religious worship in which the people also shared. The Israelites pitched their tents, during their wanderings, around this tabernacle.

The tabernacle was divided into two parts.

They were divided by a veil. As it is said, (xxvi. 33.) "And the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place, and the most holy." So also it is referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, (ix. 3.) "And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all." The meaning of this we are told was this.— This holy of holies represents the highest heavens, and the immediate presence of God. Into this then only the high priest might go, and when he did he went with blood, offered for his own and the people's sins. As it is written, "Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was standing, which was a figure for the time present." (Heb. ix. 6—9.) Christ then we see is the High Priest who with His own blood offered not for Himself but His people, "Has entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Again the apostle explaining this part says, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with

hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." When the high priest came out of this holy place, the people then felt that their sacrifices had been presented and accepted, and their sins were forgiven them; so "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 28.)

This is the reason why, when Christ was just yielding up the ghost, and had sacrificed Himself on the cross, it is said, "the veil of the temple was rent in the midst." By the death and sacrifice of God we have access through faith into the presence of God. This is the conclusion the apostle draws after speaking of these things. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh: and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." (Heb. x. 22.)

Where there is a real sense of sin, and a conscience so sensible of the great weight of sin that it is made sorrowful and feels oppressed, then this free and open access to God is

valued highly. A sense of unworthiness must always keep the sin-smitten sinner from approaching boldly, or expecting any blessing from that holy and most just God he has offended, and it becomes a real relief and a most blessed boon when he feels, "well now, with all my unworthiness, and filth of iniquity, I may yet go at once and directly into the presence, and may rejoice in the favour of a reconciled God, because of this blood, this high priest, this rent veil." No human priesthood is now available, no intercession of saints above can make this way open, or give us this boldness as we have it in this faithful high priest. It is also through this same veil that the believer has assurance of entering himself into the holy of holies, and living hereafter in the eternal favour and presence of the Lord. And this will be when that prayer is fulfilled which the Lord prayed for His people, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 24.) Then also shall that be fulfilled which says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3.)

Every true Israelite felt an interest in what was going on in the inner sanctuary. The offering of the priest, the blood, the prayers, the atonement, the incense ; and so every true believer must feel the deepest interest in what is now taking place in the true tabernacle above. Christ is there appearing in the presence of God for him, " Ever living to make intercession " for him, praying that his faith may not fail, pleading His own merits in his behalf, and preparing a place for him in glory. If we are perfect strangers to such interests, let us indeed fear lest we have no interest in the great sacrifice for sin, and the merits of the Redeemer.

The things mentioned as being in this most holy place, are the golden censer, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat.

Directions are first given as to the making of the ark of the covenant. It was a chest made of wood not likely to rot,—shittim wood, of about four feet in length, and two feet and a half in breadth and in depth, plated all over within and without with pure gold. It had also a crown or cornice of gold around the top of it. In this ark was placed the two tables of stone on which were written the law of the ten commandments. Hence it is called the "ark of the covenant." It was said "in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I will give thee."

The covering of this ark was made of massy gold: and this was called the mercy-seat. "Thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold." It was added also, "Thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat."

The very name of this piece of tabernacle-furniture tells us what it signified. God's glory appeared above the mercy-seat. Here it was His voice was heard. "There will I meet with thee and commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony." The mercy-seat covered the testimonies. God's mercy in Christ covers our transgressions and our breaches of those laws. Through Him too His mercy in the new cōvenant reaches to the believing sinner. The two cherubims were representations of the angels "desiring to look" into the mysteries of redemption. (1 Pet. i. 12.)

We also are reminded how angels attend upon the Redeemer to whom they were ministering spirits, waiting and ready to do His will. The sure way to mercy through Christ is here set forth. Through the sprinkling of His blood and the intercession which as our High Priest He makes in the true holy of holies, God appears to sinners with mild glory, upon a mercy-seat, and accepts the persons and services

of believers, dwelling among them, and abundantly blessing them. You may now go boldly unto the throne of grace, however unworthy in yourself you may be, and may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.

The golden censer also stood within the holy of holies. It is not mentioned in this place, but is spoken of by St. Paul, as we have seen, and is referred to in many other parts of Scripture. In Leviticus xvi. 12. we read, "Aaron shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil, and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." This sweet-smelling incense going up in clouds of smoke before the mercy-seat, must represent the prayers of the people of God coming up and smelling sweetly before the Lord. Hence there was in the outer tabernacle an altar on which it was said "Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning, — a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." This may represent the constant intercession of Jesus, whose prayers are ever going up into the presence of the Lord, and produces as it were, a sweet-smelling

savour before Him. The incense then that was taken on the golden censer into the holy of holies, might mean the prayers of God's people accepted and sweet-smelling, because offered through the merits of the Holy One. And hence the great sin of offering "strange incense" before the Lord. This was the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Their offering was sinful because they offered strange incense, and they offered it not through the high priest, therefore the Lord was angry, and destroyed them and their followers. (Num. xvi.)

In the book of Revelations we read of the elders before the Lamb "having golden vials full of odours, (or incense) which are the prayers of saints." (Rev. v. 8.) We read also in the same book (Rev. viii. 3, 4.) of an "angel having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne, and the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

Thus are we reminded even to the last how it is any of our prayers are acceptable before God. It is only through the mediation of Him in whom God is well-pleased. So David hoped and prayed, "Lord, I cry unto thee: make



haste unto me : give ear unto my voice when I cry unto thee, let my prayers be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (Psalm cxli. 1, 2.)

And now let us ask, is it thus our prayers go up before the mercy-seat and find acceptance with the Lord? Do we know and value this free and open access into the holy of holies and the presence of God? "In Christ we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." (Eph. iii. 12.) Have we ever really felt the want of thus entering into the holy presence of the great God? Have we felt our distance by reason of our sins, our utter unworthiness even to come and ask for mercy? If not we shall have had no pleasure in this new and living way through the veil, that is to say, His flesh which He hath consecrated for us. But if on the other hand we do feel in "His favor is life," and in His displeasure is eternal wrath, —if we have felt the greatest misery is distance from God, and the greatest happiness is His love,—if we have felt, "it is good for me to draw nigh unto thee ;" then shall we indeed rejoice in this glorious scheme of the mercy seat, and the incense, and our sure acceptance in the beloved. "There will I meet with thee and commune with thee from above the mercy

seat." Oh! what need have we to be often there, to speak to God, and to hear God speak to us. Early in the morning, and when we end the day, should we go into the holy of holies, and bow down before the true mercy seat. The oftener we are found there, the happier will our spirits be, the more peace we shall enjoy, the more strength we shall gather for the battles of the day, the more patience and submission for the trials and afflictions which may be our portion here. What load so great that we cannot leave it before this mercy seat? What sins so black we cannot have them washed in the blood of sprinkling? What cares, or troubles, or sorrows, that our merciful High Priest will not lighten?—for over the house of God we have a Priest who can "be touched with the feelings" of all our infirmities, and who while He invites us to this mercy seat, saying, "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden," promises, "I will give you rest," and, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

And let us remember God's presence here will lead to God's presence hereafter. If we are found now praying before the mercy seat in the holy of holies, we shall be found hereafter praising the same God in the glorious sanctuary of the highest heavens hereafter.

## PRAYER.

O GOD, who dwellest in light which no man can approach unto, and who art of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity; I, a sinner, am emboldened to come into thy presence, and appear before thy mercy seat. Thou hast opened a way through the flesh of Thy dear Son. Let me be accepted on His account,—sprinkled with His blood. Let my prayers be heard and answered, being mingled with the incense of His merits.

Teach me to value more and more this throne of grace and mercy. May I bring all my cares and cast them upon thee. Do Thou commune and speak with me from above the mercy seat. Teach me by Thy Spirit and Thy Word what is Thy will. Give me strength to perform it. May Thy grace make me equal to my duties, strong against temptations, and patient—yea, joyful—in all tribulations. And so Lord, grant that loving Thy presence here above all things, I may be permitted at last to enter into Thy eternal presence hereafter, and join with saints and angels in offering the pure incense of praise for ever and ever. AMEN.

## THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.

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*“And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold :  
of beaten work shall the candlestick be made :  
his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his  
knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.”*  
EXODUS XXV. 31.

WE have yet to consider the furniture of the holy place in the tabernacle. These were the table on which was placed the shew-bread, and the candlestick, and the altar of incense.

It is not easy to speak positively of the spiritual meaning of every part of the tabernacle, and all the things in it. Still our rule must ever be to try and see Christ in all. The apostle teaches us to do this when speaking of these things in the epistle to the Hebrews.

It has been well observed by an old writer, “Although Christ be but one, yet is he understood by us in a manifold manner. He is the tabernacle, on account of the covering of his flesh : he is the table, because he is our food and life : he is the ark, having the hidden law of God, because He is the Word of the Father : he is the candlestick, because he is spiritual light : he is the altar of incense, because he is a sweet savour for sanctification : he is the altar of burnt-offerings, because he

was offered upon the cross as a sacrifice for the life of the whole world."

Christ was set forth to the Jews, and is set forth to us in different ways, because of the many things we have to learn about Him,— what He has done for, and what He is and will be to the sinner.

See Him first in the shew-bread. "Thou shalt set upon the table shew-bread before me alway." It might be called "bread of presence," or, bread before the face of God. It is spoken of again in Numbers iv. 7. "And upon the table of shew-bread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes and the spoons and the bowls, and covers to cover withal, and the continual bread shall be thereon." We read also concerning the making of these loaves, and their number,— "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake, and thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, before the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every Sabbath shall he set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant; and it shall

be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place; for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, by a perpetual statute." (Lev. xxiv. 5—9.)

Thus we learn these loaves were twelve in number, no doubt one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The priest put them fresh on the table every Sabbath-day. Each loaf must have been of a good size, since it was of two tenth deals of flour, which are about six pints.

This bread was then surely a type of Jesus. He is the food for His church. He said of Himself, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." (John vi. 50.) The supply we have seen was abundant. It was double the quantity for one individual's wants. This is perhaps to teach that there is a sufficiency so complete in Jesus, that there is more for us than we ever draw from Him. Yes! there is plenty on His table to satisfy the most hungering souls, and there is a welcome to all who will come to Him to be fed. It is our own fault if we are not fed to the satisfying of our hunger. Bread and to spare is there. The words that Christ speaks, they are spirit and life. His promises,—His comforts,—these are what satisfy the believer. "Blessed are they

which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall be filled."

The next thing mentioned is the candlestick. "And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold;" and again, "their knops and their branches shall be of the same; all of it shall be of one beaten work of pure gold. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof, and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it." This candlestick with its lights was to be attended to and kept burning by the priests. The pure olive oil which was burned in it was to be brought by the children of Israel for that purpose. So we read in Leviticus xxiv. 1—4. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children that they bring unto thee pure olive oil, beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the vail of the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning, before the Lord continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord continually."

We read of this candlestick being thus kept burning in the days of Eli the priest. It was "ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God

was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, that the Lord called Samuel." (1 Sam. iii. 3.)

There are other parts of Scripture where a golden candlestick is spoken of so as to help us to understand what this one placed in the tabernacle was intended to signify.

In the Revelation of St. John we read, "being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." These were probably seven branches on one stem,—the same kind of candlestick as was placed in the tabernacle; and our Lord, as seen by John here, is dressed as the High Priest, and is represented as attending to the candlesticks. John was told, "The seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches."

We can scarcely be wrong then in supposing that this candlestick represented the church of God. The holy of holies represented heaven. The outer sanctuary represented spiritual or heavenly things enjoyed on earth. Here then was the church of God, whose office it is to give light in a dark world.

Let us give heed a little to what we here learn of the character or office of a true church.



First, we see its close union with Christ. He is the golden shaft from which spring the branches. He bears them all up. It is as they are thus connected with Him that they can receive oil, burn, and give light. This is often taught us. There can be no church without this union. It is like the vine and the branches. (John xv.) It is like the body and its limbs. (1 Cor. xii. 12.) "Not holding the head," (Col. ii. 19.) is the sign of a false church.

Then next, we see Christ superintends his own Churches. He is the priest walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. He sees all the doings of His people. So of each of the seven churches in Asia, He said, "I know thy works." Moreover it is He that must quicken and inspire His people to "make them fruitful in every good work," as the priest trimmed the lamps to make them burn brightly. If the church's light grow dim and feeble, it will be by the members of the church looking up to Christ, and by His strength stirring the gifts and graces that are in them, that will make them give a purer and stronger light. Ever remembering how we learn also that the life and light of the church is the Spirit of Christ. The olive oil feeding the flame of every lamp is the Holy Spirit. In Rev. iv. 5.

“There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” Seven is the number of perfection. And in Rev. iii. 1. Christ is represented as giving the Holy Spirit, who is the oil to each candlestick. All light was from the pure oil : so all grace in our hearts, in our actions, in our words, is from the Spirit. Christ pours the Spirit into His people’s hearts, as the priest poured oil into the lamps, “from morning to evening continually.”

Thus do we learn of every Church as of every professing member of Christ, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.” Without oil, the wick of the lamp would be extinguished, and after a short blaze darkness would be around it. And so, without the Holy Spirit, the church and every member would sink into the darkness of the surrounding world.

This is the security of Christ’s church, even to the end of the world. The Spirit of truth was promised by Christ to lead His people into truth, and to “be with them and abide with them for ever.” (John xiv. 16, 17.) Christ has always had, and will always have His witnesses on earth. They are to give forth light as received from Him.

The possession of this Spirit of truth is the

real ground of claim for being a true church. A candlestick without oil and without light is no use, however beautifully it may be made of the best wrought gold. The Church of Rome reminds us of such a candlestick, since, while it boasts to be the true church of Christ, yet, hides Christ from the people, keeping from them the Scriptures, and darkening the great doctrines of grace.

Nor let us forget that this oil is promised to every member of Christ's Church. It is the anointing from the Holy One, spoken of by St. John, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." And again, "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." (1 John xi. 20, 27.) While then it is true the ministers of Christ's church are to teach us, and God means them and enables them "to give to every one of His children their meat in due season," yet, let us not forget that their teaching is not enough, we want also, the teaching of God. Our faith must "not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." Every believer who listens to a minister's preaching, is as much a part of Christ's church as the minister himself; and therefore, every such one must draw for himself of the pure oil which is to feed his soul.

This is our only safe-guard against error and false doctrine :--Not that we are sure that any body of men called a church cannot err, or that any individual called a Pope has a promise of never being mistaken ; but, that God " will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him," and " giveth wisdom liberally to all men." This Spirit is the Spirit of truth who cannot err. And as God's will is written by the Spirit in His Word, so, the same Spirit will enlighten men to read that Word and understand God's mind, " The Spirit searcheth all things ; yea, the deep things of God." And we, if knowing and using our privileges can say, " Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God : that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." (1 Cor. ii. 12.)

But let us also learn from this candlestick the duty of a church and of every member of it. It is to give light. In the midst of a dark world believers are set up as lights. They should be as John the Baptist was, " a burning and a shining light ;" so that men may " be willing to rejoice in their light." The Lord has said to us, " Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.) This shows that as

we shine and reflect light, men who see the light must be able to trace it to its first source, even to the "Father of lights."

Hence then, each of us has a duty to perform as a member of Christ's church on earth. Others are to get the benefit of the light Christ sustains in us. We may not hide that light, or selfishly think it enough, if we can see our own way to heaven. We must shine upon the paths of others. We must shine by grace. Grace is the beaten oil which must keep the flame kindled. Not merely good nature or natural benevolence, but love, "the fruit of the Spirit," must be seen in our character.

For this end we must ever let Christ's hand keep our lights trimmed. When lukewarmness, or slothfulness, or pride, or love of the world are darkening our lights, let the hand of the High Priest dress the lamps. Let us go to Christ and ask for more of His Spirit, that we may shed forth more of His light.

Every day too, must this light be shining. In all companies and in all places we must shine. To be saint-like when we are with saints, is a small matter, if we hide our light when we are among the worldly, and with those who most need our light. We must shine with equal light, and then it will be with

profit often to a "crooked and perverse generation." We must shine all days alike. Not letting a little feeble light be seen on Sundays, and then none all the week days. But as in the tabernacle, whenever men drew near to the sanctuary, they saw these lights shining on the shew-bread, and the veil, and the other holy things ; so, the church of which we are members should be such a light always shining on the table spread with good things of the Gospel feast, and making men desire to have an interest in those holy things within the veil.

Who can tell how much depends on the shining of only one member of the church. We should shine as if we each were the only light. Perhaps, if you shine brightly, you may light some friend to glory.

Pray then, O believer, for more of that pure oil which shall make you send forth a clear, unflickering, steady light. Pray, that "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may shine in your heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

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## PRAYER.

O God, who didst appoint and set in order all things in the tabernacle for the instruction of Thy people, teach me, that I may understand all that Thou wouldest have me learn from these things. May the Spirit set Christ before my eyes in all these things, that I may know more of His excellency and His suitableness to my wants as a weak and helpless sinner. May I know Him as the bread of life. May I know what it is to hunger and thirst after righteousness. May I daily feed upon the bread which came down from heaven. May I never be satisfied with an earthly portion. May I more and more be filled with all the fulness of God.

May I fulfil my duty as a member of Christ's Church. May I so follow Him who is the light of the world, that I may never walk in darkness, but have the light of life. May Thy grace be seen by others in my daily walk and conversation. May others take knowledge of me that I have been with Christ, and that His light is in me. And oh! may that light lighten me all through my path here, and through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and into the glory that is beyond the veil, for Jesus' sake. AMEN.

## THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS.

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*“And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad ; the altar shall be four square : and the height thereof shall be three cubits.*

*And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof ; his horns shall be of the same : and thou shalt overlay it with brass.*

*“And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans : all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of brass.”—EXODUS xxvii. 1—3.*

IN the court of the tabernacle and under the open sky, stood two important holy things used in the worship of the Jews. One of these was the altar of burnt offerings. The other was the laver. This last is spoken of in chapter xxx., and we are thus told the use of it, “Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass to wash withal : and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put



water therein ; for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat, when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water that they die not ; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord : so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not." In all this we see the excessive purity and spotless holiness of God pointed out. The unworthiness of all who approached Him, and the need of being cleansed from guilt before they could be accepted, are the things chiefly taught us here. All partakers in divine worship were constantly reminded of this, for there were many ways in which cleansing and purification were enjoined. The filth of iniquity must have been ever before their minds.

But the laver reminds us that even the priests, who had been consecrated and set apart to minister unto the Lord, needed themselves cleansing in order to be accepted. The imperfection and insufficiency of the earthly priesthood was thus taught, and men were made to feel their want of One higher than the sons of men, who needed not for His own sins to offer any sacrifice, but who should be without sins, and not need any cleansing from its defilement. "For such an High Priest became us, who is

holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens ; who needeth not daily as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's : for this He did once, when He offered up Himself." (Heb. vii. 26, 27.)

How blessed to think that in the High Priest we have to do with, there is no imperfection. In Him is perfect innocency. We in Him are dealt with as innocent. Still must we remember our constant need of washing in all our approaches to God, not of "the filth of the body," but that filth of the soul we are always contracting here on earth. Even in our "holy things,"—even in our worship, our prayers, and all our services, we need washing. Let Christ on the cross be our laver. Let faith in His merits be our way of washing therein, and then in this sense can we say, "I will wash my hands in innocency ; so will I compass thine altar." (Psalm xxvi. 6.) Who that has ever sought the Lord with fervency of heart, but what has found his efforts in prayer are tainted with guilt. Weakness of faith, weariness of flesh, wandering of thought, ignorance of our necessities, these and other infirmities make our prayers and acts of worship far from worthy of the acceptance of the most High, and may well remind us of our need of a double

purification. We need the washing in the blood, and the cleansing by the Spirit of Christ. Both are promised the believer. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." (Rom. viii. 26.) "Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. ii. 18.)

THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS stood conspicuously in the court of the tabernacle, and was the first thing that attracted the attention of any one on going in. It was indeed the most important piece of tabernacle furniture. There could be no going into the holy place, nor any ministering in the holy of holies without first ministering at this altar. Every day something fresh had to be consumed on this altar. There could be no acceptance, there could be no drawing near, no devotion at all without sacrifice on this altar.

The altar was a kind of coffer of shittim wood, covered with brass plates, rather more than five feet square, and three in height. At the four corners of it were four horns, supposed to be of the shape of pyramids. They were hollow, for sometimes the blood of the victim had to be poured into them. There was a grate of brass in the hollow of the altar on which the fire was made, and through which the ashes fell, and were received in a pan be-

low. At the four corners of this grate were four rings, and four chains which kept it up at the four horns of the altar. Such was the altar of burnt offerings belonging to the tabernacle. The one afterwards made for the Temple of Solomon was much larger.

David refers to the horns of the altar, and tells us one of the uses of them when he says, "God is the Lord who hath shewed us light, bind the sacrifice with cords even unto the horns of the altar." (Psalm cxviii. 27.) Horns are often mentioned in Scripture as symbols of power, as they are the strength and defence of animals. So these on the altar may have reminded worshippers, that it was the God of all power that needed being approached by sacrifice, or else of the power of the atonement thus represented in the sacrifice. No evil should come from any of the four quarters of the earth or sky on those for whom God was thus appeased. We may gather such a meaning as this from a passage in the book of Revelation. John sees, "Four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth."—To these angels it was cried, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." In another part we read, "The sixth angel

sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates." Then follows an account of a judgment, by which the "third part of men" are slain. (Rev. ix. 13.) It is the altar of incense spoken of here. It is on this altar the prayers of saints as incense are said to have been offered. (Chap. viii.) It is in answer to the prayers of God's saints, (viii. 4.) and (vi. 10.) that judgments descend upon the ungodly, and help forward the kingdom of Christ; when therefore two severe woes are coming upon God's enemies, the voice which commands the loosening of the four angels that had been bound, comes from the four horns of the altar from which the prayers of the saints had been offered; and the God of all power lets loose His judgments which had only been kept back till His people had been marked for preservation.

Now the great idea taught us and the Jews by the altar of burnt offerings, is, that we as sinners have need of what is called an atonement for sins, a sacrifice which shall so satisfy a holy and just God in our behalf, that we shall not like the victim offered on the altar, be consumed by the destroying fire of God's

wrath. The multitude of animals that were continually being offered on the altar, was ever teaching people this one thing about their sins. But of course the value of these sacrifices was in that one great sacrifice which they represented,—the Lamb of God offered on Mount Calvary. And since from Adam's time men have been sinners and have had need of atonement, so from that time sacrifices on altars have been made. We read of Abel's sacrifices. We read of Noah building an altar. We are told of Abraham offering up "a ram for a burnt offering." Many others also. So that it was no new appointment under the law that sacrifices should be made on the altar. What was new in the appointment was the place where they were from that time to sacrifice,—the particular kind of animals,—the time of offering,—and the persons appointed to sacrifice.

Now this idea of sin, and of sin needing an atonement has we find pervaded the whole world. There is scarcely a heathen nation we ever come upon that has not its altars, its sacrifices, and its priests. No doubt then where these ideas came from. They are the imperfect remains of the knowledge which the descendants of Noah carried with them into all parts of the earth. Men do not indeed

shew by these sacrifices, that they know anything of Christ as the one offering which takes away sin, but they do show that they stand in need of such an offering as Christ is. Thus it was with the Athenians among whom Paul found "an altar" built "to the unknown God." "Whom they ignorantly worshipped," Him St. Paul in the Gospel declared unto them, "God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." (See Acts xvii. 23.)

We now then see when the altar in the tabernacle and temple ceased to be used according to God's appointment. It was ever after that day, when the body of Christ was presented by himself as High Priest, and offered up on the cross to God. This was indeed the substance of which all altars before had been the shadows. This then is our altar, and this our only sacrifice with which we have to do. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Let us mark what is said on this point in the epistle to the Hebrews. It is said there, (Chap. xiii. 10—12.) "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the High Priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate."

We learn from this several things about the altar of burnt offering, which the Christian has now to do with.

First.—Christ is that altar. Christ is the burnt offering. Christ is gone into the sanctuary with His own blood. His people are sanctified, set apart as holy, on whose hearts His blood is sprinkled.

Next we learn who are the persons shut out from partaking of the benefit of this altar. Namely, such as “serve the tabernacle ;” that is, those who cleave still to the national altar and the sacrifices appointed for the tabernacle. If then any are so doing like the unbelieving Jews, or if any are looking to any other altars or sacrifice than the one offered in the body of Christ, as the Romanists do when they think to make a fresh sacrifice by bread and wine changed into Christ’s body, then such persons do shut themselves out from benefits of this altar of Christ’s. “We have an altar, of which they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Christ “suffered without the gate” of the city, turning His back as it were on the temple and its altar. We must “go forth” from these material things if we would benefit by the sacrifice “without the camp.”

A grievous error, and the source of a thousand other errors is that false doctrine,



which supposes that there is any material altar or atoning sacrifice belonging to the Christian worship now. Christ has been offered once for all. Faith in that sacrifice is the only way to derive benefit from it. Christians have no other altar than that which must be seen with the eye of faith,—no other sacrifice of merit than that which atones for sins through faith in the Lamb of God. A table we have in our Churches, on which we commemorate the sacrifice of Christ, and eat and drink the bread and wine, emblems of the body and blood of the real sacrifice, but no altar.

The only sacrifice which the Christian can perform, is that which the Apostle mentions as being accepted, if offered through Christ, but in itself having no atoning power. “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.” (Heb. xiii. 15.)

Oh! surely if we are once sensible of our debt to Christ for this great sacrifice of Himself in our stead,—if we can really lay hold of the benefits purchased for us in that sacrifice, we shall feel ready to give the sacrifice of praise. Prayer for more of those benefits will be a delight. Praise will be ever flowing from our lips.

Then, too, another sacrifice will be a pleasure: "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." We are indeed to be constrained by the love of Him who sacrificed Himself for us, to "present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God." Our substance too, all that we have, is now consecrated by His offering, and to be laid upon the altar of dedication to God. With these God is well pleased, when they spring from faith in the atoning sacrifice of His dear Son, and when they come up perfumed with the incense of His merits.

By Him then let us thus labour to be accepted. Let us often stand before this great altar, and behold this wondrous sight,—the Son of God pouring out His soul unto death. Let us gaze on it till we are affected by a sense of those sins, which need such a sacrifice, and by our hardness of heart, which is moved so little by so great suffering; and thus, smiting on our breast, let us go home and see how we can best pay the debt of love we have contracted, and prove our devotion to a crucified and risen Redeemer.

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## PRAYER.

O GOD of mercy and love, who hatest sin, and yet maketh a way of mercy for the sinner,—suffer me to draw near to Thee at this time. I come before the altar of burnt offerings, and plead the merits of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Behold me, O God, as sprinkled with that blood. Accept my person and my service, for His sake in whom Thou art well pleased.

Give me a grateful heart, that glowing with love, I may offer continually the sacrifice of praise. May Thy praises often be on my lips. Out of the abundance of a heart ransomed from wrath, may I ever speak and tell of all Thy mercies. May I also have the heart to do good and to communicate. May such sacrifices be a pleasure. May the good Christ hath done to me, be the means of stirring my heart to do good to others. Make me perfect in every good work to do Thy will. Work in me that which is well pleasing in Thy sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

## THE HIGH PRIEST'S DRESS.

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*“And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.*

*“And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.”* EXODUS xxviii. 29, 30.

WHEN the tabernacle and its furniture had been arranged, Moses received orders concerning the priesthood. He is told who is to be set apart for the office, how they are to be dressed, what they are to do, and how to be consecrated upon first entering the holy office.

First it is said to him, “Take thou unto thee Aaron and his sons with him from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.” It was not anybody that might be taken for the office; the appointment was of God of a certain family, and out of a certain tribe, that it might be known to be of God's and not man's appointment. The family or persons thus

singled out were henceforth to be viewed as holy, and qualified to do a work which other persons might not undertake. A person who interfered with the priest's work was always punished severely. Even a king was smitten with leprosy for presuming to burn incense in the temple. (See Chron. xxvi.) The priests on that occasion said, "It belongeth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense." This is intended to teach us that no man may meddle with the work of Christ, the great High Priest. He is the only Mediator between God and man. He only is able to undertake the great work of sacrifice and intercession in behalf of sinners. It is an awful thing to attempt to interfere with that great work.

The next thing Moses is told about is the dress of the priests, and especially the high priest, whose dress was very beautiful and rich. "Thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty."

As Aaron in his office of priest was a type of Christ, so also his very garments had a meaning in them, and teach us something concerning Christ. They are called "holy garments," for holiness was the end of their use, and holiness the lesson they teach.

In the Gospels the Lord is pleased to use the figure of a wedding garment to instruct us as to our need of spiritual clothing in which our souls must appear before God; in the same way, the dress of the high priest is a fit figure of the beautiful garments of a spiritual nature in which Christ our Saviour is clothed.

The garments ordered were these, "a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre and a girdle." Some of these had very marked meanings, and are very instructive in the work of Christ. This is the case especially with the breastplate, as we shall see.

But first concerning the ephod, which was the outermost garment of the priest. A linen ephod was worn by the common priests, and one interwoven with gold by only the high priest. We read of Samuel being clothed in one. (1 Sam. xi. 18.) "But Samuel ministered before the Lord being a child, girded with a linen ephod." David wore one when he danced before the ark. (2 Sam. vi. 14.) But the high priest's was called "golden," for much gold was woven into it. It was a short coat without sleeves, buttoned close with a "curious girdle" of the same stuff. In allusion to this, Christ, our High Priest, appeared to John "girt about the paps with a golden girdle." (Rev. i. 13.) This was the curious girdle of the ephod.

Another important part of the dress was a golden band that was worn across the mitre which the high priest wore on his head. "Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD; and thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre, upon the forefront of it it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." (Exod. xxviii. 36—38.) This was to remind the worshippers that holiness became God's house, and that the end aimed at in all the appointed garments and sacrifices, and acts of worship on the part of the high priest was that the Lord might be approached in all holiness; and so as the worshippers would know that the priest could not go into the sanctuary without this engraving of holiness on his forehead, so they would be reminded that the God whom they served "could not look upon iniquity," and "without holiness no man should see the Lord." The golden plate of holiness which Christ our great High Priest wears in the sanctuary of heaven in the presence of God, is the pure attribute of holiness which

belongs to Him as the Son of God of pure and spotless character. The "iniquity of our holy things" is thus borne by Him, as He intercedes for us and presents our prayers to the Father. Through Him what is amiss in our services is pardoned.

Another particular in the dress named here, were the ornaments upon the skirts of the "robe of the ephod." These were to be "golden bells and pomegranates round about, and it shall be upon Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not." The pomegranates added to the beauty of the robe, and the sound of the bells gave notice to the people in the outer court when he went in to the holy place to burn incense, that they might then apply themselves to their devotions at the same time, and thus let their prayers ascend up before God with the incense which betokened their acceptance. May we not say, Blessed are they that know the joyful sound of the entrance of the great High Priest of the Gospel into the holy of holies, and who lodge their prayers in His holy hands, and trust to the sweet incense of His merits.

Next to these let us notice the "breastplate" which was worn upon the ephod. It had on



it four rows of precious stones, and in each row the names of three of the tribes of Israel. There was a tribe on each precious stone. "The stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes." (v. 21.) There were also put in the breastplate what are called "the Urim and Thummim." What these were is not certain. The first word means "Lights," and the second "Perfection." They were some piece of curious workmanship worn on the breastplate by the high priest when he went into the holy of holies, and when he went to enquire of the Lord. What they had to do with the Lord's answer to the priest who consulted is not certain. We only can now know that the Lord did keep His word which He had spoken, "There will I meet with thee, and commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." In what way we are not sure. Probably the priest who consulted, having put on the Urim and Thummim, heard a voice from above the mercy-seat. It is mentioned of Saul, "The Lord answered him not either by dreams nor by URIM." They are also mentioned as in use in the time of Ezra. (Ezra ii. 63.) Eleazar the priest was to consult the Lord for Joshua when he succeeded Moses, by

this means. "He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of URIM before the Lord." (Num. xxvii. 21.) It is also possible they may have been bright stones in which was reflected the mind of God as He revealed it to the high priest in a few words. Whatever mode of consulting God it was, we may well be reminded by it, that it is only our High Priest, the Son of God, who can declare to us the mind of God. He is the "Brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." He is the "Word of God," and in Him and through Him on us is reflected the will and mind of God, so that they to whom He gives the "Spirit of truth," who is "Lights and Perfection," can say, "we have the mind of Christ," and that is the mind of God. The more we go to our High Priest and ask to be taught what is the will of the Lord, the more shall we know of that will, and the more we shall be conformed to that will, and that to our own peace and happiness.

But let us mark the use and meaning of the precious stones on the breastplate with the names on them. "They shall be," it was said, "upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord." These names being written on precious stones, and being borne on the high

priest's breast before the Lord, was intended to signify the preciousness of the Lord's people in His eyes. Each of the tribes was thus commended to the Lord. They might not approach in their own persons, but they were thus borne continually as a memorial before the Lord on the high priest's breast. They were fixed to this part of the dress. It was said, "Thou shalt bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the BREASTPLATE BE NOT LOOSED from the ephod." (v. 28.)

Surely here was a shadow of good things to come! Surely we can interpret this for ourselves, and to our own comfort with respect to our greater High Priest!

Are we not taught here that on the heart of Christ is written the names of believers? Are not their names fixed on His breast and borne continually as a memorial before the Lord? For is He not gone into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us? Does He not ever live to make intercession for His people? Are they not precious as jewels in His sight?

Let us remember how our Lord seemed to impress this blessed truth on the minds of His disciples before He left them to go into His Father's presence. Let us think too how they

derived the benefit of this remembrance of them before His Father and their Father. He ever reminded them that He was going to His Father, that He should prepare places for them, and that it was expedient He should thus go. Moreover He reminded them how He prayed to the Father for them. Remember where Peter would have fallen to if Christ had not prayed for him, and we shall see how precious to us should be this remembrance of us before the Father. The Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." (Luke xxii. 31, 32.) We know what weakness was in Simon, we know what strength and subtilty is in the tempter, we see how far he succeeded in entangling Peter in the meshes of iniquity when he was induced thrice to deny his master, and we thereby see how far he would have sunk had not his name been engraven on the heart of his merciful and faithful High Priest. Christ had prayed for him, and therefore no sooner had he sinned than he remembered his sin, repented and turned to the Lord, and was forgiven. Who then of us can stand alone any better than Peter? Who that has not Christ on his side, can hope successfully to resist the devil. The devil is stronger and

more clever than we are. Christ only is stronger than he, and more clever also. Satan still may stand before God and accuse us as he did Job, and then will come forth and draw us into evil, and we have no strength to resist him, but must fall, unless indeed Christ stands also before the Lord remembering us, and praying for us that our faith fail not and that we be not delivered into the hand of our enemy.

But perhaps we are saying, how do I know indeed that I am thus precious in the Lord's eyes, and that my name is engraven on the High Priest's breastplate. If we look into the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, we shall there find an answer to this important enquiry. It is the chapter which contains the Lord's Prayer for His disciples. It is that in which we read of all the precious things Christ asked for His disciples, that they might be kept from evil, be one with Him and the Father, and in the end be with Him to see His eternal glory. And was it only for these few followers He asked such things? Oh no! Let us hear from His own mouth how he includes others then unborn in His prayers, and how He tells us not one of the "little ones" that ever shall believe in Him throughout all generations were forgotten in the blessings of

that prayer. He says (v. 20.) "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." This brings the prayer down to our days, and home to ourselves. It belongs to us who believe as truly as to the disciples in those days. Have we through grace been led to believe in Jesus and like the disciples to show our faith to be a real faith by our dependence on Him, then do we, as it were, see our names in that chapter:—then do we read our names engraven on the precious stones of the High Priest's breastplate,—we are precious in God's eyes, because of the preciousness of His own dear Son,—we are borne as an everlasting memorial on the heart of Him who stands for us before the Father. Our sins are remembered for the time to be eternally forgotten, our wants to be supplied, our sorrows to be sanctified, and in due time removed.

How blessed then thus to be remembered by your High Priest! Is your name written there, Oh! reader? Is He your High Priest? Have you fled to Him for a refuge from the curse of a broken law? Have you "believed in Him unto righteousness?" Are you depending on His sacrifice, trusting to His intercession, and hoping for His return again "without sin unto salvation?"

## PRAYER.

O LORD God, who hast graciously given Thy beloved Son to be a faithful and merciful High Priest ; teach me to value His Priesthood, and to know Him and use Him as my Priest. May I be in Him the "righteousness of God." Look not upon iniquity in me, but upon the perfect righteousness of Thy dear Son. For His sake, may both my person and all my doings be accepted.

Blessed Jesus—pray for me, and let my name be written on Thy heart, that I may never be forgotten. Pray for me, that my faith may not fail, under any temptations or trials. Let me be precious in Thine eyes as Thy servants of old who trusted in Thee, and were holpen. Let not mine enemies prevail against me, but let me be had in everlasting remembrance before Thy Father. May I be kept from the evil that is in the world, being made one with Thee. May I be with Thee hereafter, and behold Thy glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

## THE GOLDEN CALF.

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*“And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:*

*“They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”* EXODUS xxxii. 7, 8.

THE sin of the Israelites on this occasion is a striking proof of the terrible wickedness of the human heart when left to its own inventions. Who would have thought that in the very midst of the appointment of that divine worship and service by which God was to be served by His people, this people should be found making an idol and falling down and worshipping it? Who would have thought that almost before the smoke of the burning mount on which God had appeared had vanished, and ere the noise of the thunders had died away, which had declared the presence of the great and terrible Jehovah, the people should fall into a sin so hateful to God, and should be found provoking Him to wrath by



breaking the very earliest of His commandments? Yet so indeed it was. The history of the appointment of divine worship in the tabernacle is for a while stopped, that we may be told how in the midst of God's talking to Moses, the people for whom He was in mercy providing laws, fell into the sad sin of idolatry.

Let us mark some points in this their sad history, and endeavour to profit by it. It is written for our sakes. St. Paul reminds us of this, and speaks of this very sin, quoting from this chapter, "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them, as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." He says too, "Now these were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." (1 Cor. x. 6, 7.)

David also speaks of this act of idolatry. "They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They forgot God their Saviour, which had done great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea. Therefore he said he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath lest he should destroy them." (Psalm cvi. 19—23.)

We find also a repetition of this sad history written some years after in the book of Deuteronomy by Moses, who there reminds the people of this sin and of his pleading for them. (See Deut. ix. 11—21.)

Let us consider awhile their sin. They appeal to Aaron to help them in this sinful departure from God, “Up, make us gods which shall go before us, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.”

What they wanted was something they could see with their bodily eyes to worship: not exactly in the stead of God, but to represent God. So when the image had been made, it was said by Aaron and those who made it, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” And then too “when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and made a proclamation, and said, to-morrow is a feast to the Lord.” Thus we see what is the sin of idolatry. It is pretending to worship God through the means of some visible objects intended to represent God. No doubt Aaron who sinfully yielded to their wishes, and those who asked him to make the calf would have said they were not wishing to forget God, but that this would help them to worship Him. But God regarded it as total

departure from Himself, and a gross act of idolatry. "They worshipped the molten calf," says David. Just so it is with all idol worship carried on too often in a Christian land. Those who are guilty of it would say they worship God through and by the help of the images, crosses, and pictures, before which they bow themselves. Nevertheless, it is in fact the very same act as is here punished in the Israelites, who said of their image, "This is the God that brought thee up out of Egypt," and who when they adored it, called it "a feast to the Lord."

It seems strange that the holy man Aaron should have been so easily drawn into this sin. Instead of checking the people in their sinful wishes, he yielded, and greatly encouraged their idolatry, he being priest, and for the time chief leader among them. We cannot, nor could he himself justify his conduct. Moses asked him—"What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" He could only reply, "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief." Like Saul on the occasion of his sin in sparing of the Amalekites, when he said, "I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice." (1 Sam. xv. 24.) Just so, now, Aaron was carried away by the voice of the

multitude : he feared to disoblige the people. This is always a strong temptation, even to the best of men. To please the many is more agreeable than to anger them. To deserve well of man is thought better than God's favour. Men are too often found who "love the praise of men more than the praise of God." So true it is, "The fear of man bringeth a snare." Thus, the people corrupted themselves.

But let us next note what makes their guilt appear more surprising and more heinous, was the time they committed it. As David reminds us,—it was after the greatest mercies and the most wondrous works : "They forgot God their Saviour which had done wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea." Yes, it was strange forgetfulness of the mightiest wonders and the most gracious mercies in their behalf. "They turned aside quickly."

Alas ! the greatest judgments and the most signal mercies, what are they to the ungracious soul, but like great waves that dash upon the hard and unchanging rocks ! We soon forget and lose all good impression from both mercies and judgments, unless we are watchful and prayerful when visited by them. We must take heed that they do more than work upon our natural feelings ; we must see that they

affect our hearts and excite in us heavenly affections.

Now Moses goes down with Joshua his servant, and his own ears, and his own eyes are offended by the great sin of the people. The people had been eating and drinking before the idol, and their shouts of unholy merriment were now filling the air. Joshua thought it was the shout of war. Moses knew too well it was not that, he said, "It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear." How must this unholy singing have grated on the ears of one who for forty days had been humbling himself before God, and fasting and praying, and living in the solemn presence of a Holy God! How could he carry to such a multitude the holy words of God, or go among them with the holy feelings he had imbibed in the mount! Holy indignation rose in his breast, "he cast the tables out of his hands, and break them beneath the mount." This act was full of meaning. The people had broken their part of the covenant with God; he showed them their proper deserts from God, had He dealt with them according to their sins.

To punish them, he then made them "eat of the fruit of their doings." The golden calf

is burned and ground to powder, and cast into the brook from whence they were getting their water, and "he made the children of Israel drink of it." But this is not enough. There then followed the slaughter of those who were found offenders, and this was three thousand people.

The whole people had corrupted themselves, and thousands were punished with death. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour; and the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." Again, we read, "The Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf which Aaron made."

We often read of the sword being drawn, and hundreds being slain by it, when the sin of idolatry has been committed. So, Elijah slew the prophets of Baal; so, Ahab himself, slew his worshippers. God hates idolatry. It can never go long unpunished. Although, therefore, thousands died, and many were plagued, the whole nation having "corrupted themselves," were now objects of God's wrath

and righteous indignation. "The Lord said He would destroy them." But Moses stood in the gap. Moses prayed for them. He pleaded God's covenant. He reminded God of His former mercies and promises. His prayers were heard. "The Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do to His people."

Surely we learn from this history, it is a bitter and a hateful thing to depart from the Lord. We see the need of the caution:—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols." We see the need of prayers for grace, to keep us from "following a multitude to do evil," and to make us cleave unto the Lord with steadfastness of heart.

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### PRAYER.

O HOLY and most just and most merciful God! suffer me to draw near to Thee in prayer. Visit not my transgressions as they deserve, but show me mercy for my Redeemer's sake. Bless this history to my own soul. Cause me ever to profit by the examples of those who have gone before. May I avoid their sins, fleeing from idolatry; may I worship Thee, and Thee only, with all my heart and soul. May I escape their punishment. And ever fleeing unto Him whom Thou hast appointed as Mediator, may I obtain both the mercy and grace I stand in need of, for Jesus' sake. Amen.









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