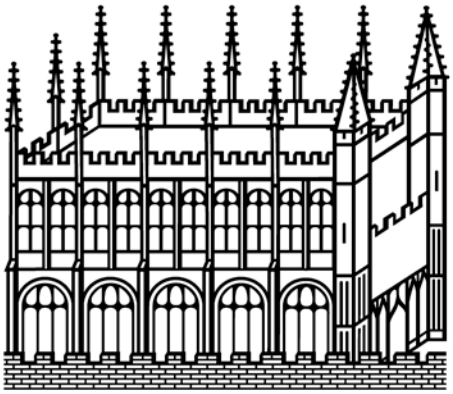

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MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES, &C.

Meditations on the Beatitudes

AND

Christian Devotedness.

MEDITATIONS

ON

THE BEATITUDES

(MATTHEW V.)

AND

CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.

(ROMANS XII.)

AUG 80
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By ANDREW MILLER.

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NOTE.

If the Beatitudes present to us the main features of the Saviour's character, and consequently that which ought to characterize every Christian, the twelfth of Romans presents the same divine life in its many streams of patient, gracious, loving ministry to all around us. The following papers, reprinted from "Things New and Old," are now presented in a more convenient form for the reader. Surely no subjects could more sacredly demand our prayerful study. We are not aware that in our extensive pamphlet or small-book literature there is a single paper on either of these portions of the word of God. We now look for the Lord's blessing to rest on, and accompany, these Meditations for His own glory and the blessing of many, many souls.

A. M.

London,
January, 1878.

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MEDITATIONS ON THE BEATITUDES.

MATTHEW V. 1—16.

INTRODUCTION.

As all our natural thoughts of blessedness—like the earthly expectations of the Jews—are in perfect contrast with the Lord's teaching on this subject, it may be well for our souls to examine carefully, as in His presence, the true principles of real happiness. Surely our hearts would desire perfect blessedness, which means perfect happiness—the happiness of heaven, not the uncertain happiness, or rather the transient excitement, of earth. From observation, habit of thought, general impressions, we have all shared largely in the popular notions of what constitutes a life of happiness here: but now, with the instructions of the Great Teacher before us, we shall do well to take our place at His feet, and learn of Him the sure and safe way to a life of holiness and happiness here, and of unmingled blessedness hereafter.

Mankind in general would say, "Blessed are the *rich*, who can surround themselves with every

comfort; blessed are the joyful, the high-spirited, the independent, who know nothing of hungering and thirsting." But the Lord, who was from heaven, and knew the character that suited the kingdom of heaven, says, "Blessed are the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungering and thirsting ones," &c., &c. This is completely reversing the universal judgment of men, and contradicting the cherished thought of every human heart. But what an unspeakable mercy for all classes that happiness does not depend on our circumstances, nor on how much we possess of this world's goods, but on the state of the mind; or, in one word, on *character*—a character conformed to Christ; for the beatitudes are essentially the character of the blessed Lord Himself. Who so poor in spirit, so meek and lowly in heart, as Jesus? Who so obedient and dependent as man? Who so filled with peace, and uninterrupted in communion with His Father in heaven? He has left us an example, that we should walk in His steps.

But before speaking of the different features of that wonderful character—which ought to be our own—we must notice some of the events in the Lord's public ministry which led to this full and formal proclamation of the kingdom, and the revelation of its fundamental principles. And here, Lord, in studying thy character and teaching, thy miracles, and ways in grace and love, guide us by thy Holy Spirit, reveal thy varied

glories to our souls, and form our characters anew, that we may manifest while on earth the heavenly principles of thy kingdom. And let it be thine, for thyself, my soul, in meditating on these beatitudes—on the different features of the faithful One in Israel—to judge thyself in their light, that thou mayest be a true reflection of Him in this self-seeking world. This is clearly thy place and privilege during thy Lord's absence. But thou wilt say, Are not the disciples who are here addressed the remnant in Israel? Most surely; the Sermon on the Mount was preached to His disciples, but in the hearing of all Israel, and sets forth the principles of the kingdom in connection with that people, and in moral contrast with the ideas they had formed respecting it. The character and conduct of those who are suitable to the kingdom, and the conditions of entering into it, are also proclaimed by the Prophet King.* But, alas! through the unbelief of the people, and the rejection of their King, the establishment of the earthly kingdom has been delayed, and the church, which is heavenly, has been brought in, and Christians are now the bearers of God's testimony, and witnesses for Christ in the world.

This is the Christian's mission; a truly blessed, but solemnly responsible one. "As my Father

* For details on this point, see "Synopsis" of Matthew's Gospel, p. 49. (J. N. D.) Also "Lectures on Matthew's Gospel," p. 71. (W. K.)

hath sent me," says the blessed Lord, "even so send I you." Here we are told by the Lord Himself that our mission in this world is on the same principle, and of the same character, as was His own. And to this end He reveals to His disciples —not to the apostles merely—the great truth, that in virtue of His finished work, they are brought into association with Himself, as they had never been before; for it is only now, for the first time, that He says, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And now, in the full assurance of their pardon and peace with God, and filled with the Holy Spirit, they were to go forth as the bearers of His message, and ever to be characterised by His Spirit.

We will now turn for a moment to the immediate circumstances which led Him to ascend the mountain, and address the multitudes.

More than beautiful on the mountains of Israel were the feet of Him who came as Jehovah's messenger with such healing and blessing to His people. But, wondrous, precious truth! He was Himself Jehovah. The Spirit of God delights to introduce Him to us in Matthew's Gospel as Jehovah Jesus, as Emmanuel, God with us. Oh! mystery of mysteries!—Emmanuel, God manifested in flesh. Not merely as King of glory seated upon a throne in heaven, but as a babe, born of a virgin, and cradled in a manger; yet the Son of David, the beloved of God. As Son

of man He suffered and died, but infinite value was given to His work by the glory of His Person as Emmanuel, God with us. What a resting-place for a troubled soul! For thee, my reader—for all who believe in Him.

"Jesus! Thou King of glory,
I soon shall dwell with Thee,
And sing the wondrous story
Of all Thy love to me.
Meanwhile my soul would enter
By faith before Thy throne,
And all my love would centre
On Thee, and Thee alone."

For purposes suited to our gospel, the whole of our Lord's history, until the commencement of His ministry after the death of John the Baptist, is here passed over. He then comes before us, in fulfilment of the prophecies of Isaiah, as a great light shining in the land of darkness and of death. "In the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Matthew iv. 15, 16; Isaiah ix. 1, 2.

The whole country, even to the extent of the ancient territory of Israel, it is said, was excited and aroused by His mighty deeds. These were the faithful witnesses of His Messiahship. The tribes of Israel were thus summoned to the stan-

dard of their Messiah. Unbelief was left without excuse. He was not only the light of life shining on the darkness of death, but He was the mighty power of God in healing and blessing. The strong man He had bound, and He was now spoiling him of his goods. The need and misery of man, both as to his soul and body, were the great objects of His mission of mercy. He was there to forgive their iniquities, to heal their diseases, to redeem their lives from destruction, and to crown them with loving-kindness and tender mercies. (Ps. ciii.) Thus we read, "And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy: and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people, from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan." Verses 24, 25.

The attention of the whole country being thus attracted, and vast multitudes following Him, eagerly desiring to hear His gracious words, He unfolds the character of the kingdom of heaven, and of the people who would enter into it, in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, which opens with the beatitudes.

THE FIRST BEATITUDE.

Verse 3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* If ever it was needful for thee, my soul, to weigh thy words in the balances of the sanctuary, and to meditate in its sacred light, surely it is at this moment. How deeply important to understand the true meaning of the Lord's own words here, and to enter fully into the true spirit of His teaching. Condition of soul and blessing are inseparable; the one depends on the other. This is what thou must learn. It is also well to remember, that it is not by means of great learning or great opportunities for study —valuable as these are—that we know Jesus, understand His word, or see His glories; but by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit. "He shall glorify me," says the Lord, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xvi. 14.

The first beatitude, observe, lies at the basis of all the others. It is not only a distinct feature in itself, but it should characterise all the others and all who belong to Jesus. Surely nothing can be so necessary to a soul that has to do with God as poverty of spirit. Not poverty in circumstances merely, or poverty in words and ways, but in

spirit—in the heart, the feelings, the inward man, and all before the living God. How often we may have said with reference to one who has injured us, "I freely forgive him, and I will be the same to him as ever, but I can't forget it for all that." This is not being "poor in spirit;" it is being outwardly so, but not "in spirit." It comes from the same root as the spirit of the world which says, "I will have it out with him, I am determined not to be beaten." How different to the state of the blessed man, here described by the Lord—"poor in spirit;" not in outward conduct merely, but in spirit! The outward ways should be the true expression of the inward state. This is God's pleasant sacrifice. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. li. 17.) This was ever the spirit, in all divine perfection, of the lowly, dependent, Son of man. But the grace that has brought down the proud spirit of man, and laid him in the dust, humbled and broken, before God, has laid the foundation of a true christian character, and of the soul's richest blessing. True, alas! he may one day forget his right place, and the old spirit of the natural man may be allowed to appear for a time, but the Lord knows how to bring him back, and how to break him down again. Nothing can be more sad than for one who has been down in this place ever to leave it, even during a moment's temptation. It

is to lose sight of that Christ-like grace which God especially delights to honour in every dispensation.

"Oh to be nothing—nothing,
Only to lie at His feet
A broken, emptied vessel,
Thus for His use made meet!
Emptied, that He may fill me
As to His service I go,
Broken, so that unhindered
Through me *His* life may flow.

Oh to be nothing—nothing,
An arrow hid in His hand,
Be a messenger at His gateway
Waiting for His command:
Only an instrument ready,
For Him to use at His will;
And should He not require me
Willing to wait there still."

Turn again, I pray thee, my soul, and muse a little longer on these mysterious, moral depths. Oh! to fathom them with thine own line, to know them in thine own deep experience! Is it thus? When all is gone from us, when we are nothing —nothing at all, even in thought and feeling, then all comes into us from God—God in Christ Jesus; and we are satisfied? Yes, thank God, this is the condition, this the blessing. The robe, the ring, the fairest mitre, would not be enough; nothing but the fatted calf, could satisfy the famished

prodigal, after he has spent his all. When he was brought down to the husks, and even these kept from him, he thought of his father's house, where only he could find the fatted calf. It must ever be so. When Naomi returned as an emptied one to the land of Israel, she found it was the beginning of barley harvest. When Abram fell on his face before God, then flowed the many streams of grace from the ocean of eternal love. "I will, I will," runs on freely. It is all grace now. "Thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. I will make thee exceeding fruitful . . . I will make nations of thee . . . I will establish my covenant between me and thee . . . . And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Gen. xvii. 1–8.) And so with the leper. When the evil energy of the flesh ceased to work, he was pronounced clean. The priest could now go forth to the unclean place, and bring him into the camp, with the full blessing of death and resurrection, typically seen, and in due time, the eighth day, the consummation of blessing, he comes into his tent. So long as we are seeking to maintain anything of our own, to cherish an unbroken spirit as to some favourite opinion or object, we are resisting God's will and shutting out His grace; but when we are brought down to our real nothingness, and have nothing to

maintain but Christ and His glory, the flood gates are thrown open, and grace flows in.

Some have thought that literal poverty, in its ordinary sense, is connected in the Lord's mind with the blessings of the kingdom, and so have parted with their property at once, and become poor for the kingdom of heaven's sake. In place of distributing their income as the Lord's stewards, and as He might call for it, they have entrusted it to others, and taken the place of dependence themselves. The former is certainly a much easier way than the latter; but which is right? To hold property for Christ and His service in this world, and to give it out as a steward according to His mind, is a christian service that requires much waiting on the Master, and great liberty of soul in His presence. A scrupulous conscience would be in perpetual bondage.

The idea is founded on Luke iv. "And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." The words, "in spirit," are left out. But there is no ground in this text for such an idea. It is the fruit of superstition, not of faith, and savours of monachism. It is a question of the inner man in contrast with the outer. He who is poor as to this world's goods, may be of a proud unbending spirit, while the rich may be truly humble. At the same time we believe that the Lord has oftener used a man's miseries than his comforts to bring him to

Himself, but that is the Lord's doing, and quite another thing. The steward's place is to meet his Master's mind, and not to indulge his own. The difference between Matthew and Luke in presenting the beatitudes, is to be accounted for by the characteristic and divinely arranged differences of the gospels.

"That in Matthew," says one, "gives the discourse on the mount in the abstract, presenting each blessing to such and such a class." "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Luke makes it a more personal address. "Blessed are ye poor." The reason is manifest. In the one case it is the prophet greater than Moses, who lays down the principles of the kingdom of heaven in contrast with all Jewish thought, feeling, and expectation. In the other case, it is the Lord comforting the actually gathered disciples, addressing themselves as so separated to Himself, and not merely legislating, so to speak. It was now the time of sorrow; for as bringing the promises in His Person, man would not have him.

Returning for a moment to our text, we would only further add on this beatitude, that the Lord here says, that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the "poor in spirit." They are the heirs of the kingdom. The riches of the King and the glories of His kingdom have come down to enrich the "poor in spirit." Who would not be poor in spirit? we may well exclaim. Who would not

willingly be self-emptied before the Lord? But oh! the danger of being pre-occupied when the invitation comes. Houses, lands, oxen, the home, the world; and, what is worst of all, deadliest of all—self—self-occupation in a thousand ways! But to the poor in spirit, to those who have reached the end of self, to those who are in the dust before God, yet cling by faith to Jesus and His cross; to those whose reason is silent, whose fair forms of religiousness are laid aside, who can only say, I have nothing now but Christ; all that I sought to maintain is gone—nothing, no, nothing now but Christ. The whole riches of His kingdom, and, better far, He Himself is mine—mine now, mine for ever. Praise His name!

"Enough—give thou the humble heart, and I consent;
Oh, make me nothing, and therewith content.
My gain is loss, my trust is in the cross;
Hold me! I'm weak, I fall; be thou mine All in all.

I will be nothing still,
That Christ alone my heaven of heavens may fill,
Yet set me, Lord, a little glowing gem
Upon His diadem; to shed my tiny ray
Among the splendours of His crowning day;
Though unperceived, I still should like to shine,
A tribute glory on that brow divine."

THE SECOND BEATITUDE.

Verse 4. "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*" In the different beatitudes, we have placed before us in the most interesting way the beautiful varieties and characteristics of grace. This is also most instructive, and ought to go far in forming our own character after this heavenly model. The second beatitude is perfectly distinct from the first, though both features may be found in the same person. The form in which the divine life expresses itself in the second class, is of a broader and more active character than the first. To be poor in spirit is more a condition between the soul and God alone, and might be possessed in perfection though there were none to mourn over. But to be a "mourner" in the sense of our text, is to be deeply and tenderly affected by the condition—especially the moral and spiritual condition—of others around us. For example: The worldliness of true Christians; the manifest delusion of mere professors; the godless ways of those who may be our near neighbours, accompanied with a deep sense of inability to witness for God in such a scene, fills the heart with holy sorrow. At the same time, this holy sorrow, which is so good and wholesome, and which leads to much prayer and

dependence on God, must not be mistaken for a low, complaining, unhappy, discontented, mournful spirit in ourselves, which we may think answers to this beatitude. Not so; such would be little likely to enter into the sorrows of others, or mourn over the dishonour done to God and His truth in this world. They are too much occupied with their own state of mind, and that which immediately concerns themselves.

We may, and ought—if we are poor in spirit and true mourners—to be bright and happy in the divine presence, where all is peace and joy, and yet have fellowship with the deep sympathies of Him who was "a man of sorrows," in our journey through this world. And the more we know of His Spirit, the deeper will be our sense of what is due to Him, and the keener will be our sorrow when we see so many who set themselves against His authority, and use His goodness for the display of their own pride and glory. But, wonderful grace, the Lord submits to be despised and rejected still: and as a tinge of sorrow coloured His path and characterised His sayings in this world, so it must ever be with the godly while the world continues as it is. The Lord patiently waits until His kingdom come in power and glory, and then His will shall be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. *Now* we have the kingdom in *mystery*. (Matt. xiii.) *Then* it will be in full *manifestation*. *Now* demons rule, though God overrules; *then*

Christ and His saints will reign. Could we at any moment, by night or day, unveil the world, what should we see? From the den of poverty to the palace of luxury—one vast scene of human sorrow. This makes the Christian's heart, however bright and cheerful in the Lord's presence, sombre and sad in the presence of such universal misery, knowing as he does its real source.

But pray, my soul, speakest thou thus of thyself, of thine own experience, of what thou hast seen and felt in thy christian course? Could there be this character of feeling without entering, in the Spirit of Christ, into the condition of things around us? It is well never to speak or write beyond our measure: all should be done in the divine presence. Still, it is well to have our hearts challenged. But poor indeed would it be, were it possible to speak of such things unless it be from the depths of the heart's communion with the rejected Lord; and more, from long and varied experience and observation. It can only be tasted when the heart has a true sense of the moral condition of the church and the world. Then we must "mourn" over the fearful effects of sin and apostasy which meet us at every step. We walk in the midst of ruins. Wrecks of every kind lie strewed around us. Blighted hopes, unexpected calamities, with a multitude of little secret sorrows, characterise the land in which we are strangers and pilgrims, so that like captive Israel of old, "by the waters of Baby-

lon," we may "sit down and weep," though we need not hang our harps on the willows; we are privileged to rejoice daily in the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, when we shall be fully and for ever comforted.

But to explain. How many hast thou seen floating down the stream of time as on a calm summer day, dreaming only of worldly ease and prosperity, when, suddenly, the wind of adversity rises, and all is changed in a moment. Death enters—the messenger little thought of, little expected, enters—the head of the family is suddenly struck down; all is desolate; nothing now is heard but the wail of the widow and fatherless. But, come these things within the sphere of the Christian's sympathies? Most surely they do, and must so long as we have human hearts. But they are looked at in connection with the groaning creation, and lead us to pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come." Surely the Lord's heart was touched with such a scene as this, and may not ours? Something like what is occurring daily around us must have been in His mind when He described the rich worldling and his fearful end. "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then, whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Luke xii. 20.

Singularly enough, while writing these lines, a messenger with heavy tidings arrives; a rich man, well known for many years, has died suddenly.

The effect on the mind for the moment is overwhelming. The thoughts run rapidly back over those years; the different times a word was said about the Lord, and the value of the soul are recalled: the confession of their importance, and the promise to think more about them. But who at such a moment can feel satisfied with the measure of his own faithfulness? Did I speak plainly enough, often enough, earnestly enough? conscience will be ready to ask, and it may be to accuse. But all is now of no avail; the scene is closed: the curtain fallen: and we cross not the dark line which separates the two states of being. Still we may heave a sigh and utter a groan over the sad effects of sin, as the Lord Himself did at the grave of Lazarus; yet no uncertainty was there as to the welfare of the precious, immortal soul. Every believer knows something of the value of the soul and salvation, and if both are lost, who would not mourn? Nevertheless, the sphere of thy meditations lies more within the limits of the kingdom, and here thou mayest pause for a little.

Nothing is more fitted to fill the heart with real sorrow than the immense number of mere professors. And surely a responsibility beyond that which attaches to the mere worldling, rests with those who take the name and profess to be the followers of Christ. They will be judged by a different standard. Many foolish virgins now mingle

with the wise, and their lack of oil seems not to be discovered until it is too late to buy. The door shut and the lamps out will leave them in hopeless darkness and despair. This, alas! will be the portion of many who now hold a high place in the professing church. But how difficult it is to reach that class, how difficult to speak to them; how difficult to know which is which! All have lamps, but all have not oil. They are self-deceived and may never be undeceived until, with awful surprise, they open their eyes in hell, being in torment. Still, the spiritual eye can see, that while much is made of mere externals, very little is made of Christ, and of that which is due to Him.

Again, the agony of mind peculiar to the sight of such a state of things, with the painful sense that you can render no help, and can only testify against it by complete separation from it all, seeks relief in sighs and groans before the Lord; you *must* be a mourner with Him, in such a scene. And what may draw forth a yet deeper sigh, you see those there who really belong to the Lord, but who refuse to see separation, either from the natural or the religious world. Thus loneliness in spirit is the inevitable path of a true mourner, his only friends are outside like himself. They mourn together. "Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." And what was it that drew forth the deep sigh from the "man of sorrows" when here, but the sign-seeking unbelief of His

people? "And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily, I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." It is still the same: something like a sign that appeals to the senses is believed in and eagerly run after, while the blessed Lord in rejection, outside the camp, has as little attraction for the sign-seeking multitude now as then. True, Christ and His cross are not left out, that would be equally unpopular; but gather around His name the glory of the world, and multitudes will cry, "Hosannah to the Son of David;" but when the cross with its shame and rejection is presented and the pilgrim staff, it is "Away with him, away with him."

The mourner must now retire into his secret chamber and breathe out his sorrow into the bosom of his Lord. He must stand aloof from all this sad mixture of the church and the world, well knowing that he will be judged as wanting in brotherly love, and uncharitably affected towards other Christians. He will not have his sorrows to seek; but the Lord knows it all, and he *shall be comforted.* The time is coming when he will enter into the joy of his Lord, and reap the fruit of his testimony for Him throughout eternity. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Every tear that has been shed, every sigh that has gone up to God, every groan that has been uttered in sympathy with a rejected Christ, are all treasured by

Him as the memorials of His own grace working in us, and will surely be held in everlasting remembrance.

The Lord grant unto my dear reader, the true knowledge of Jesus, not only as Saviour and Lord, but as the Man of sorrows, who went about doing good, though with the deep abiding sense of rejection in His tender, loving heart. May we enter with our whole heart into the sympathies and hopes of our blessed Lord as to this wide-spread scene of sin and sorrow, until He return to fill it with joy and gladness. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Thy sympathies and hopes are ours;
Dear Lord! we wait to see
Creation, all—below, above,
Redeemed and blessed by Thee.

Our longing eyes would fain behold
That bright and blessed brow,
Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear
Its crown of glory now

THE THIRD BEATITUDE.

Verse 5. *Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.* In our meditations on the third beatitude, we find ourselves in happy company with that blessed One who was "meek and lowly in heart." There is evidently, in this third class, a great advance in the soul's blessedness. The heir of glory has been learning in the school of Christ how to meet the troubles of this life, as *He* met them. This is a great lesson, and greatly needed. Let us see that we master it fully.

In our first lesson we were shewn the true condition of every soul that really knows God, and is conformed to the character of Christ—"poor in spirit." This condition being the result of what the soul sees itself to be in the divine presence, it is chiefly a question between the soul and God. All is blessed and happy there. But in going forth into the world, and attending to the various duties of this life, so many causes of trouble come in our way, that we *groan* in spirit. This is our second lesson. It is one of daily experience. The great advance in the third class seems to be this: the soul has so grown in grace, that now, in place of a questioning, reasoning, self-willed spirit being manifested in this scene of trial, the disciple meekly

bows his head in submission to the Father's will, and learns of Jesus to be meek and lowly in heart; for, after all, in these circumstances it is a question of either self-will or submission.

The lowly in heart begins to see more clearly that, in spite of everything around him, God is accomplishing the counsels of His own will, and making all things work together for good to them that love Him, and are the called according to His purpose. This fuller knowledge of God and His ways produces a deeply chastened state of mind. Though groaning in spirit, and mourning over the wickedness of man, the rejection of Christ by those we love, and the failure of those who bear His name, the man of faith is quiet and humble! he walks with God in the midst of it all, and refers everything to Him. In the lowest murmur of the enemy, or in his loudest roar, he hears his Father's voice; in the smallest injury or in the greatest outrage, he owns His hand; he envies not the world its pleasures, or the wicked their prosperity; all his resources are in the living God; and he can turn to Him, rest in Him, rejoice in Him, and walk with Him, above the conflicts of this troubled scene. But rest assured, my soul, that this state of blessedness is only enjoyed by those who thus know God, and believe that He is accomplishing the hidden purposes of His love, in spite of the abounding evil and wicked purposes of man. A Father's voice, a Father's hand, a Father's

will, a Father's purpose, cannot fail to create and sustain a meek and lowly spirit. Faith has thus forcibly expressed itself in one of our finest songs :—

"Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise ;
When I call on Christ, my Saviour, the host of evil flies.
My friend, the Lord Almighty, and He who loves me, God !
What enemy shall harm me, though coming as a flood ?
I know it, I believe it, I say it fearlessly,
That God, the highest, mightiest, for ever loveth me.
At all times, in all places, He standeth at my side ;
He rules the battle's fury, the tempest, and the tide.
No angel and no heaven, no throne, nor power, nor might,
No love, no tribulation, no danger, fear, nor fight ;
No height, no depth, no creature that has been or can be,
Can drive me from Thy bosom, can sever me from Thee.
My heart in joy upleapeth, grief cannot linger there;
She singeth high in glory, amid the sunshine fair;
The sun that shines upon me is Jesus and His love,
The fountain of my singing is deep in heaven above."

But if thou wouldst see, my soul, in absolute perfection, the meekness of which we speak, thou must turn in thy meditations to Him who knew deeper sorrow here, and deeper communion above, than any of His people can ever know. While discoursing to the people of the kingdom, and answering their questions, He has the sense of the true state of the people, and of His own rejection as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. What sorrow must have filled His heart ! What relief and rest He ever found in His Father's bosom !

We will now turn for a little to Matthew xi. 20–30. Here we have the distinct expression and the perfect combination of these two things in Jesus—groaning in spirit because of surrounding evil, and entire submission to His Father's will, with praise and thanksgiving. Scarcely had "Woe, woe," fallen from His lips, when He looked up to heaven, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." With the growing, deepening sense of the unbelief of the people whom He loved, and their blinded rejection of Himself as Emmanuel in their midst, He meekly bows to His Father's sovereign will, sees only perfection in it here, and the glory that would follow it hereafter. "Thou hast hid those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." As it then was, so has it been ever since, and so is it now. Mark well, my soul, what thou art now writing. Thou hast Jesus before thee as the obedient man, and the Father's ways in grace with the meek and lowly. He shields the Person of His beloved Son from the unholy gaze of unbelief, and hides His glory from the pride of man. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." All who have dared to penetrate, in the pride of intellect, into the deep mysteries of His Person, have but revealed their own blindness and

folly, and exposed themselves to the snares of the enemy. But to the lowly in heart—the worshipping heart—the full blessedness of the knowledge of Jesus and His ways is made known. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. . . . The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Ps. xxv., xxxvii.) These passages no doubt refer to the millennial earth, when the God-fearing remnant shall possess it, in association with Christ as their king of glory. It is not said, observe, that they shall inherit heaven, but the earth. The place of their trial and sorrow will one day be the scene of their rest, their glory, and blessedness. The Christian will possess it in a higher way—as one with Christ, who will then feed the poor with bread, and, like the disciples of old, the heavenly saints may be privileged to distribute it.

But, to return, it may be well for the servant—the Christian, especially tried ones—to look more closely into the nature of the discouragements which led the blessed Lord and Master to turn to His Father as His only resource.

He had come to His own, but His own received Him not. The people He loved, and had come to redeem, had no heart for Him. When John the Baptist came with mournful tidings, they refused to lament; when Jesus came with glad tidings, they refused to rejoice. They would not have Him

on any terms. This is the secret of the comparatively small success of the gospel in all ages. The natural heart prefers the enjoyment of present things to a rejected Christ and a heaven that is thought to be far away. The most solemn warnings by John, and the most gracious invitations by Jesus, were alike unheeded by that generation. Enough to break any preacher's heart. When the attractions of grace, the appeals of love, the threatenings of justice, the miseries of hell, the glories of heaven, fail to arrest or awaken the careless—when the preacher's heart is broken because of the hardness of men's hearts—what is he to do? Retire into the presence of God, and in communion with Him learn his lesson more perfectly, both as to service and submission. This is the only refuge and resting-place for the disappointed workman. Let us now see how the Lord acted.

He knew perfectly the state of the people, and how they had refused the goodness of God, both in His Person and ministry. The inevitable result of such unbelief must be judgment. Accordingly, we read, "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! . . . . And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in

Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." This is most solemn! A more terrible, a more unsparing judgment is denounced against these highly-favoured cities in the land of Israel than on the notorious corruptions of Sodom. But has not this a voice to the highly-privileged gospel-hearer of our own day? Most assuredly it has. No judgment will be so heavy, so unsparing, as that which will ere long fall on apostate Christendom. The higher the place of privilege, the deeper must be the fall of those who are untrue—who have merely the name of Christ, without the reality. And do not such abound now, as in the days of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum? Alas! the answer need not be given; the question rather is, where are the real, the true, witnesses for the glory of His Person and the authority of His word? The thought is overwhelming. What is to be done? What did the Lord do? He turned to His Father.

"At that time Jesus answered, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." In a word, in place of complaining of the treatment He received from others, and vindicating Himself, He meekly bows to the sovereign will of His Father, falls into His hands, as Lord of heaven and earth—the wise disposer of all things; and what is the result? Just what it must ever be—

He receives the blessing. Not merely a promise, but the possession—"All things are delivered unto me of my Father." And this proves to be the occasion, through grace, of a fuller revelation of God, and of a richer blessing to mankind. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How beautiful and precious this is, as an example to us! it is always the way of blessing, both to ourselves and others. When Jesus was despised as a man, rejected as the Messiah, and refused His crown of glory, He did not stand up for His rights, as we would say, but meekly submitted, and looked up to His Father as Lord of heaven and earth. He could leave all in His hands, and wait His sovereign will. In the meantime the blessing flows, like a wave of life, from the ocean of eternal love—it overflows all Jewish limits.

The Gentiles are brought in here. The Father is revealed as the source of all blessing. "Come unto me. . . . I will give you rest." The poor Gentile as well as the Jew; are you weary and heavy laden? "Come unto me." It is pure grace now. No qualification required, save that you are weary and heavy laden. Come, just as you are, just now; "I will give you rest." The blessed Lord does not here say by what means He will give us rest, but we must trust Him. He can no more trust man, man must now trust Him. There is no other way of blessing now. There is

only one question: Is He fit to be trusted? This is all. Trust Him. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Psalm ii. 12.

But this full, flowing tide of grace does not lead to carelessness of walk, as man might say it would. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The difference between the two verses is very distinct, and has been often noticed. In verse 28 it is, "Come unto me . . . . and I will *give* you rest;" in verse 29 it is, "Take my yoke upon you . . . . and ye shall *find* rest to your souls." The one is pure, absolute, unconditional grace to the sinner; the other is the yoke of Christ for the believer. The reason why so few have learnt to meet the troubles of this life as He met them, is, because they are not under His yoke, and learning of Him. They are thinking of their own character; how much they have been misunderstood, how grossly they have been misrepresented, how falsely accused, and how unjustly or unkindly treated. They have not learnt that their own reputation is the last thing they should think about; that now they have only to care for the character of Christ. Those who are under the same yoke must walk side by side, and step by step. True, the strong one may pull the weak one through, when the chariot wheels sink deep in the sand of the desert; but they must walk together.

The Lord give us thus to learn the great truth of our third beatitude, "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."

"Smooth let the waves of life be, Lord, or rough,
Without Thine arm to lean on, I must fail;
But while upheld, by Thy sustaining grace
Calmly I walk, superior to them all.

And as I gaze upon Thee, *where Thou art*—
The vague, wild tumult of life's inner sea,
The feverish throbbings of this restless heart,
Are calmed, as, risen Lord! I walk with Thee.

For since I've seen Thee seated far above,
At God's right hand in yonder glorious sphere,
The light which led me to that place of love
Revealed the wreck of everything down here!"

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE.

VERSE 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* The perfect answer of the Father's love to the various spiritual feelings and conditions of the children is most interesting and instructive. The riches of the kingdom are promised to the poor in spirit—"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Divine comfort is the sure portion, in due time, of those who mourn—"They shall be comforted." And, as saith the prophet: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Isa. lxvi. 13.) The coming possession of the land of Israel is the promise held out to those who meekly bow to the will of God in the land of their strangership, and leave all their interests in His hands—"They shall inherit the earth." And to the fourth class, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, full satisfaction of soul is promised—"They shall be filled."

This is grace, and like the ways of the Lord in grace, from the beginning. His answer meets the felt need of the soul. He creates the desire that He may satisfy it. When the heart desires that which is good, we may be sure that His grace is there. As there is nothing spiritually good in the

natural heart, the first, as every good desire after, must come from God. "I will arise, and go to my father," was the effect of grace working in the heart of the prodigal; and he was then as safe as when he was in his father's arms, though he did not know it. So that a good desire is the fruit of grace, and, in a certain sense, the possession of all that is desired. It is like the earnest of the inheritance.

Surely there is great encouragement in these facts to those who are earnestly seeking the Lord, as they say, but who are fearful and doubting as to whether they have found Him; whereas it is just the opposite; Christ has sought and found them, and is causing the heart to feel that nothing can ever satisfy it but Himself. The world, its pleasures, its riches, its society, are all too small to fill it. Even a Solomon found that all under the sun could not fill his heart. At the same time he is made to tell us, in his beautiful song, that a poor out-door slave finding the Messiah, or rather found of Him, her heart overflows with His love. "Thy love," she says, "is better than wine"—better to me now than all the social joys of earth. This must be the work of His grace. No true desire, we know, for the Christ of God can ever spring from our depraved hearts; and sure we are that neither the world nor Satan has put it there: from whence, then, must it come? From the grace of God alone. And the longing desires and expecta-

tions He has awakened He waits to fulfil. But He would have us to say with the Psalmist, "My soul, wait thou *only* upon God: for my expectation is from him. He *only* is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence: I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." (Ps. lxii.) It is the word "only" in this beautiful psalm that so searches and tries our hearts. The Lord give us to weigh it up in His presence.

We conclude, then, from these reflections—and reflections they are, for very little is said about pardon, salvation, or redemption, in the Beatitudes—that every desire of the heart after Christ shall be satisfied for ever. So far this is true now. May the Lord awaken and draw forth many deep, earnest, longing desires after Himself, in these last and closing days. We will now return to our Beatitude.

As we are all well acquainted with the force of the figure, we ean easily see its spiritual application. To hunger and thirst after righteousness evidently means an earnest desire of the renewed mind to do the will of God in this world; and this desire is increased from finding the world opposed to what is right in the sight of God—to righteousness. Hence the intensified feeling of hungering and thirsting. The effect of thus seeking to maintain that which is according to the will of God is great *blessedness* to the soul. "Blessed are they

which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." But though *blessedness* is the sure reward of righteousness, the righteous path will be one of great trial and many difficulties. The maxim of the world is, not what is *right* before God, but what is convenient, profitable, or suitable to self. What the mind of God may be on the subject is never thought of; and he who would suggest the inquiry would be set down as unfit for the practical realities of this life.

But this looseness of principle is not confined to the world; we find it in the professing church. How many things are introduced and practised there, with all the show of divine authority, and made terms of membership, which have no sanction in the word of God? So that he who would seek to maintain the authority and the glory of God, or, in other words, to walk in the paths of righteousness, either in the church or in the world, must meet with trial at every step. Grace must *mourn* when the will of man is in the place of the righteousness of God. The *meekness*, also, of the divine life will be in exercise, as looking up, and leaving all to God.

But whatever others may do, the maxim of the man of God must ever be, Is it right? Is it in harmony with the revealed will of God? Not merely is it most practical, most likely to gain the end in view, but is it right? "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness: his countenance doth behold

the upright." (Ps. xi. 7.) Righteousness, we admit, had a special place with the Jew who was under law, and who was to see that all things were done according to the letter of the law; but surely in the New Testament we have both deeper and higher principles than in the Old, and which were brought out, not so much in the Sermon on the mount, as after the death and resurrection of Christ; and a broader righteousness is looked for, just because we are to reckon ourselves as dead and risen in Him, and not under law, but under grace. Hence the apostle says, in Romans vi., "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

As a test of the real character of much that we allow and do, it would be impossible to over-estimate the value of this short and simple question, Is it right? Not that we are to expect an express passage of scripture for everything we do or allow; but we may seriously inquire, is this in accordance with the revealed will of God in Christ? Are we sure that it has His approval? If not, what is it worth? It is worse than useless, it is wrong. It may be a religious observance, or an acknowledged principle in the affairs of this life; but if it has not the sanction of God, better give it up. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is the earnest desire

to maintain what is right in the sight of God, though it may expose us to the opposition and oppression of the world, or to that of worldly-minded Christians.

But would not, thou mayest say, my soul—would not this seeking to walk in conformity to a rule or given standard tend to a spirit of legalism? Not in a christian point of view; on the contrary, the word of God is "the perfect law of liberty" to the divine life which we have as Christians. But this leads us to the root of this great subject, on which thou wilt do well to meditate deeply and prayerfully for a little while. Here thou wilt discover the secret of real, holy liberty.

The life of Christ, which is ours, as thou knowest, and in which we are to walk, can never dislike or be opposed to His word. The new nature delights in the words or commandments of Christ; they are but His authority to do what the divine life desires to do. Let us suppose a case. A young Christian, from the purest motives, has an intense desire to go to the prayer-meeting; this would be right—according to the mind of Christ—righteousness. But the way is not clear, he is under another. He quietly waits on God. By-and-by he is told to go—this is what his heart was desiring; he rejoices to obey; it is the law of liberty. The bent of his new life and the word of Christ are one. But take another example. A young Christian is indulging in a worldly state of mind; he is asked to

go to the prayer-meeting, but he dislikes going; the will of his fleshly mind is opposed to the will of Christ; His commandments are not at present joyous, but grievous; they are not the law of liberty, but of bondage, he is most unhappy. Thus it is that obedience, walking in righteousness, is perfect liberty, holy joy, and divine power to the life of Christ in the soul. True, the Holy Spirit is the power, but we cannot separate the power of the Spirit from the authority of the word. The desires of the new life, the authority of the word, and the power of the Spirit, go together.

The first epistle of John, especially the second chapter, is a divine exposition of this great practical principle of Christianity. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." The words of Christ were the expression of His life when here on earth—that life is thine, my soul—that very life—wondrous, precious, blessed truth! And this shall be thy life for ever, and the basis of thy happy fellowship, and of thy divine intimacies, with Christ throughout the countless ages of eternity. "When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." But, in the meantime, suffer His words so to guide and direct thee, that thou mayest walk even as He walked.

Before closing our Meditations on this beatitude

it may be well to turn for a moment to Psalms xvi., xvii. Here we have the same great lines of truth —life and righteousness—but in immediate connection with Christ and the godly remnant in Israel. In the former we have the path of life with God, and that through this world, through death, up to the fulness of joy in His presence. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." In the latter we have the path of righteousness in entire dependence on God. Absolute faithfulness in heart and life, both to God and man, marked the steps of Jesus through this world. "Hear the right, O Lord," was His cry, and this should be the Christian's motto—"Hear the right, O Lord." His one grand object was to meet His Father's mind, to do His Father's will, and mark out a path for us, that we might walk in His steps. And here the heart is proved, and the value of the word. "Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Concerning the works of men; by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." This could only be absolutely true of Christ, and only true of us in so far as we live the life of Christ. Nevertheless, we should be able to appeal to God as to the *purpose* of our hearts and the desire of our lives.

The Lord enable us by His grace thus to walk before Him, with proved hearts and consistent lives, notwithstanding the opposition and persecution we may have to bear. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness—after the whole mind and will of God in Christ Jesus, and practical conformity to the blessed path of the Son of man in this world—we shall surely be filled. This beautiful psalm, observe, begins with, "Hear the right, O Lord," and ends with the grand consummation, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Glorious end! Shall it be thine, my reader? Pause, consider—hast thou faith in Christ? Is His life thine? His practical ways in this world thy delight? Wondrous, blessed hope! What is to be compared with it? To awaken from the long sleep of death, to arise from the ashes of the tomb, and come forth in the radiant beauty and the heavenly glory of the Lord Jesus, is a prospect worthy of thy deepest consideration now. Another, while I write, and a near neighbour, has just passed off the stage of time. His credit at the bank in this world is counted by millions, but, if that be all, many millions, could he take them with him, would not buy a foot of ground in the paradise of God, or one drop of cold water in the regions of hell. How many fall from the lap of luxury to the depths of eternal misery! Nothing can purchase the blessings of heaven, or deliver the

soul from the doom of sin, but the precious blood of Christ. It is the sinner's only passport through the gloomy gates of death, and his only title to the mansions of glory. Prayers, penance, charity, with the devout observance of religious ordinances, may pass current in this life, but without Christ and His cleansing blood they are valueless, and must be rejected as counterfeit coin at the gate of heaven. The work that saves the soul is a finished work.

"See, 'sprinkled with the blood,
The mercy-seat' above;
For justice had withstood
The purposes of love:
But justice now withstands no more,
And mercy yields her boundless store."

Yes, be assured of this, my dear reader, that no good works are acceptable to God that are not the fruit of living union with Christ Himself. The branch that is wild by nature must be grafted into the true olive, and drink of the fatness of its roots, before it can bear fruit to the glory of God the Father. Have faith, then, in the blessed Jesus; trust His precious blood to cleanse thy sins away; trust to His holy word without a misgiving; and patiently wait His return, when He will do more and better far than thou hast either asked or thought of. "We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians iii. 26.

THE FIFTH BEATITUDE.

VERSE 7. *Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.* We now enter on what may be called the *second* section of the Beatitudes. They are evidently divided into four and three—a division not uncommon in scripture. The first four are characterised by righteousness, or that which is due to God: the last three by grace, or the activities of grace towards others. There is great moral beauty, order, and instruction, in these two classes. The division is no doubt divine, and may well engage thy thoughts, O my soul, in happiest meditation. When the sinner is first awakened, brought into the presence of God, sees his true condition there, and learns the vanity of what man is, there must be humbling and breaking down. He will now side with God, and maintain His cause against himself. Repentance is real. He is content to be nothing. Thus we see that the first blessedness is poverty of spirit, and introduces the soul to the other blessings. We will now look at the first of the last three.

"Blessed are the merciful." No word within the compass of our language has a sweeter sound than *mercy*; and no other word could bring the character of God more fully before thy mind. This

leads to thy deepest joy, and thy richest blessing—dwelling on the character of God. He is "the Father of mercies." Mercy is not merely a resource of God, but He is its source—"the Father of mercies." He is the well-spring of all the pity, compassion, tenderness, kindness, and charity, whether temporal or spiritual, which flow through this world of misery. And this mercy, blessed be His name, is *from* everlasting and *to* everlasting—without beginning, before time; and when time is past, without end. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." (Ps. ciii. 17.) But in the meantime, on this "narrow neck of land," this world of sin, between the incomprehensible past and future, mercy flows as a mighty river, and unites, as it were, the ocean of eternity. There is no interruption to His mercy: it is the active principle of His being in this world of sin and misery. "For his mercy endureth for ever." Who can speak of the transcendent blessedness of such a truth in such a scene of sorrow as this world is! But for the ceaseless flow of His mercies, it could only be like that place where His mercies are clean gone, and where He will be favourable no more for ever. When the ear of mercy is closed, and the arm of mercy is withdrawn, nothing remains but the agonies of despair. But now He delights in mercy, and will delight in it.

"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on

whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (Rom. ix. 15.) God only can say, "I will, I will," and He only has a right to say so. No creature can say, "I will"—God only! but His "I wills" are mercy and compasssion, and are all ours in Christ Jesus for ever. Satan may deny it; the poor human heart may doubt it; but the word of the Lord standeth firm and sure, it cannot be broken. "I will sing," says the psalmist, "of the mercies of the Lord for ever. . . . . For I have said, mercy shall be built up for ever." Psalm lxxxix.

"How shall I meet those eyes?
Mine on Himself I cast,
And own myself the Saviour's prize;
Mercy from first to last."

But tell me, my soul, is this rich, tender, everlasting mercy free to all who cry to God for it? Most surely! Are none now who hear of His mercy excluded? Only those who exclude themselves. The door of mercy now stands wide open, and the ear of mercy patiently waits to hear the cry, and quicker far than the electric spark is Heaven's answer. Take a well-known example; and remember that Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

When the poor blind beggar (Luke xviii.) heard that short sermon, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by, he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have

mercy on me!" What was His answer? Could He say, I have no mercy for thee? Impossible! that would have been to deny the character of God, and the whole truth of the Bible. The fulness of divine mercy was his from the moment of his heart's first utterance. The faithless multitude might rebuke the blind man, and seek to drive him back; but not Jesus. The moment the cry for mercy fell upon His ear, He stood still; and the vast procession stood still, and, if it had been necessary, the spheres too would have stood still. All must give place to this service of mercy. "And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him; and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee." Surely this is mercy, full and free; and such mercy is free to all, "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." And these things are written, remember, that thou mayest believe. The same cry will bring the same blessing to-day.

And here learn also, as a believer, how to shew mercy. Give not thy alms to the poor as thou wouldst throw a bone to a dog. With what grace Jesus bends over the poor man, and asks, as if He were his servant, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Far from taking a place of manifest superiority, and causing the poor man to feel as it

in a far distant place, He gave him to know and feel that He was dealing with him in love and grace, and drew the heart of the helpless one entirely to Himself. The Christian must not only be merciful—most merciful, always merciful—but he must learn to shew mercy after the manner of his Lord and Master. The way of the world is to patronise, and to be esteemed as benefactors; and many will give for the sake of this honour. But not so those on whom the Lord lays His hand and pronounces blessed. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Learn, then, I pray thee, from this narrative both the freeness and the style of divine mercy. He who cries to God for mercy, though physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually poor and blind—the weakest or most degraded of mankind—is instantly answered by Him, "who is rich in mercy." God never has said, and never will say to the cry of the dependent heart, I have no mercy for thee. Hence the absolute certainty of God's mercy to every one who feels his need, and looks to Him to meet it. There is nothing either in the heart or in the circumstances of the sinner that can hinder the flowing spring of mercy, if he only bows at the feet of Jesus in dependence on Him. But there is no possibility of salvation to a single soul, save through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, His blessed Son.

"Ho! all ye heavy laden, come!
Here's pardon, comfort, rest, and home,
Ye wanderers from a Father's face,
Return, accept His proffered grace.
Ye tempted ones, there's refuge nigh,
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.'
But if you still His call refuse,
And all His wondrous love abuse,
Soon will He sadly from you turn,
Your bitter prayer for pardon spurn.
'Too late! too late!' will be the cry—
'Jesus of Nazareth *has passed by.*'"

Having thus spoken of mercy in a general way, we shall now notice more particularly its true character, and how it is to be manifested by all who have found mercy of the Lord.

MERCY AND GRACE.

In what way, we may inquire, does mercy differ from grace? Clearly they are not the same thing, though they may come very near to each other. They are carefully distinguished in scripture, and we will best learn their meaning by the use made of them there.

Both words, we find, are prominent in the character of God, as proclaimed to Moses—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." He is merciful to forgive, and gracious to help in every time of need. The distinction is also maintained in the most marked way by the apostolic writers.

When addressing the church, they wish "grace and peace;" but when writing to individual Christians, they say, "Grace, *mercy*, and peace." The reason of this significant change not only marks the essential difference of the two words, but it reveals the peculiar position of the church. It is viewed as raised up in Christ, and in the same place of privilege, blessing, and acceptance as Himself. Hence the word "mercy" is never introduced when she is addressed in this relationship. The blessed Lord Jesus, though in this world as the lowly Son of man, never was, and never could be, the object of divine mercy; but "Grace was poured into his lips," and the richest gifts of heaven surrounded the path of the perfect One. The church is now seen as one with Him. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, *so also is Christ.*" The last clause of this verse is a truly remarkable one—"so also is Christ." It shews the perfect oneness of Christ and the church. But for this unity, the apostle must have said, "so also is the church." He is speaking about the church, not Christ: why then say, in apparent violation of the ordinary rules of language, "so also is Christ?" Because the whole body, Head and members, are here viewed as "one body," and in the same place of privilege and blessing. Surely this should be rest, eternal, perfect rest, for the heart; and also the complete settlement of every

question as to the heavenly character and relationships of the church. The Lord grant it.

But to return.

On the other hand, individual Christians are looked at as men in the body, and as encompassed with infirmities, passing through conflicts, and constantly needing mercy—and grace too, of course. Hence the apostle says to Timothy and Titus, "Grace, mercy, and peace:" and in writing to the Hebrews, he says, "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews iv.

The term grace evidently conveys the idea of *free gift, favour;* without obligation on God's part, without claim on ours: or without raising the question of the condition of the one so favoured; it may be called the indulgence of love. (See John iii. 16; 2 Cor. viii. 9, where we have grace in its divine fulness.) But *mercy* always marks the receiver as a wrong-doer. To be "merciful" is to be ready to overlook or forgive a wrong, at the same time conscious that he to whom mercy is shewn deserves a contrary kind of treatment. It answers to what is called among men a tender, forgiving disposition; only it is to be exercised by believers on the higher ground of having obtained mercy of the Lord themselves, and looking forward to obtain it more fully, they are "merciful" to their fellow men.

But thou mayest yet inquire, my soul, what is the promised reward here assured to the merciful —"They shall obtain mercy?" We cannot need mercy in heaven. Surely not. Nevertheless, the promise is future, whether strictly applied to the Jew, or morally to the Christian. Onesiphorus was no doubt a Christian, and Paul prayed for him, "that he might find mercy of the Lord in that day"—the time of future rewards. So filled with gratitude was the heart of the apostle for the special kindness of Onesiphorus, when he risked his own life in finding him out, and in ministering to him in prison, that he prayed for a reward that would be the reflection of, and that would commemorate for ever, that noble service of love. This, we doubt not, is the way of heaven, but especially during the millennium. Every service of love, from a cup of cold water and upwards, shall not only be rewarded in that day, but the reward will characterise the service, and thus be held in everlasting remembrance.

This is clear from many passages of scripture; we quote one of exquisite beauty. "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, *and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great.*" (Rev. xi. 18.) The small as well as the great will be remembered on that blessed day. What grace! What a day that will

be! May we think of it now in all our service for Him!

But thou mayest say with many, what can I do? If I am only there myself, I shall not think of a reward. Stay, my soul, see that thou venture not on wrong ground here. Many may speak thus as an excuse for spiritual indolence and worldliness. What is the teaching of the Lord in these beatitudes? Surely that the vital principle of each feature here pronounced "blessed," is in every soul that is born of God, though they are not alike prominent in all. We see poverty of spirit in one, and great activity in another. But those who mourn shall be comforted; the meek shall inherit the earth; the merciful shall obtain mercy.

May the Lord lead thee, and all who read this paper, to abound more and more in this heavenly, this God-like, grace of mercy. In the exercise of mercy towards others, thou shalt taste afresh the sweetness of God's mercy to thine own soul. A gracious eye, a tender heart, an open hand, carry with them their divine reward. Who abhors not the character of the steward who was forgiven ten thousand talents by his master, but would not forgive his fellow-servant a hundred pence? On the other hand,who admires not the mercy which shines in the good Samaritan, who did the neighbour's part? This is the mercy of the gospel, seek especially to shine here—in the mercy that would seek to save the lost sinner; but forget not the mercy

that shines in words, looks, and deeds. Mercy is the great need of mankind—sinners need it, saints need it, all need it. God in Christ Jesus is its source. May we be the channels of its many streams, both to the bodies and to the souls of men.

THE SIXTH BEATITUDE.

VERSE 7. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* We now approach the most heavenly and lofty of all the beatitudes, and in some respects the most difficult to make plain to others. Not, surely, that we should be less acquainted with a pure heart than with a merciful heart, but the object of the pure heart, and the effect of seeing that object, is a blessedness which transcends the power of language. This may be understood from the effect of lower objects which come within our own experience. We look on an object of interest or affection—a face, it may be—a mother's face, for example, as sung our christian poet on receiving his mother's picture.

> "Those lips are thine—thine own sweet smile I see,
> The same that oft in childhood solaced me:
> Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
> 'Grieve not my child, chase all thy fears away.'"

Thus we stand, we gaze, absorbed with the tender recollections of the past, the bright anticipations of the future, and the passing over of that "little while" which comes in between. And still we stand in silent meditation; the heart moved to its deepest depths; the eye fixed on that countenance

with melancholy delight, until self and all outward things are forgotten. Such deep emotions may be spoken of to a few—very few—but they must remain for ever undescribed. We must have both the condition of heart and the object to know their full meaning; and so it is with the heart's vision of heavenly things—the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. Let us now endeavour to explain.

The moral condition of the heart or soul, is here the important question. God only being pure absolutely, there must be purity of heart to appreciate Him. There is no thought here, we need scarcely say, of bodily sight, for even Jesus is now hidden from our view. It is only with the eyes of the heart or the moral vision of the soul—which is simply faith—that we can see God or appreciate His excellency and glory; and this blessedness is made to depend on the condition of the heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The purer the heart is, the more clearly it will see God, and the more clearly it sees God, the purer it must become. Thus the one acts and re-acts upon the other.

The purity of heart which is here pronounced "blessed" may be the result of faithfully following in the line of the earlier beatitudes, especially the first of this class, which leads to the contemplation of God in one of the most attractive aspects of His character—divine mercy. From the commence-

ment to the close of scripture, mercy is spoken of as the grand prerogative and glory of God. The Psalms especially speak much of His "mercy and his truth." To Him "belongeth mercy;" "He is plenteous in mercy;" it is "above the heavens;" and "the earth is full of his mercy." Now the simple or normal effect of drinking at this fountain of mercy is to become "merciful," and this grace immediately precedes and leads the way to that moral perception of God, which results in purity of heart.

It may be well to notice here, that we cannot make or keep the heart pure by trying to do so. Were we to look within and make the condition of the heart our study and our object, we should sink down, as many have done, into a state of mere mystical, self-occupation. To be merciful, the heart must have an object that is the perfect expression of the divine mercy; to be pure, it must have an object that is absolute in purity. As the heart is not inherently pure, it can only be accounted so by reflecting a pure object; and that object being Christ, we find in Him the true explanation of a pure heart and seeing God. The heart is purified by faith in Christ, who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His Person. (See Acts xv. 9; 1 Peter i. 22; Heb. i. 3.) What relief, what rest, the heart finds in finding Him! No theories, no analogies, no efforts, no experience can solve the question or give rest to the mind, but

Himself—Himself known as the once lowly but now exalted Man in glory.

Now then, my soul, let thine eye rest on Him—the eye of faith, the eye of thy heart. Meditate long, meditate deeply on Him. Gaze now on that "countenance transcendent." Blended there are the rays of all divine perfection, and of every beatific vision. Majesty divine as "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God," mingling its many glories with the sweet and lowly graces of godly sorrow, meekness, righteousness, mercy, holiness, and peace, together with all goodness, wisdom, and love, is the God whom the pure heart sees; but not only sees, its privilege is to bask in the beams of that moral glory now and for evermore.

But see, I pray thee, that Christ is thy one object; a pure heart must be an undivided heart—a whole heart. Thus and thus only shall thy whole body be full of light. All other objects but dim thy spiritual vision. "They looked unto him," says the psalmist, "and were lightened." When darkness is loved rather than light, there can be no perception or appreciation of moral beauty. Such was Israel's blindness, and such it is now, but the day is coming when they shall look on Him whom they rejected, and see in Him the glories and perfection of the Godhead. Then, truly, shall they see God, and know the blessedness of being "pure in heart."

"In Thee most perfectly expressed,
The Father's self doth shine;
Fulness of Godhead, too, the blest—
Eternally divine.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow."

With the people of Israel, we know, this is future; but what of thine own purity of heart, O my soul? Is it a present, deep, divine, blessed reality? Is *thy* heart pure? Seest *thou* God? These are solemn questions, but proper ones; and God forbid that any of us should speak of these things without knowing them personally in the divine presence. But surely we know Him in whom the holiness of God is perfectly reflected. There only we can see God and have communion with Him.

Throughout the New Testament there is much said about *purity of heart.* It is looked for as the true condition of all Christians, though, alas, all are not "pure in heart." So much is said, and said truly, about the deceitfulness of the human heart in our discourses and papers, that the expression "pure in heart" is supposed, even by most Christians, to be a figure which is not intended to mean what it says, and thus it is passed over. But scripture means a great deal that is most definite by *pureness of heart.* The apostle in writing to his son Timothy, says, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a *pure heart.*" This passage

clearly teaches what we are to look for and expect in all who come to the Lord's table. Only such will suit Him who says, I am "he that is holy, he that is true." The apostle Peter in his address to the council (Acts xv.) speaks of the Gentiles as "*purifying their hearts by faith*," and therefore as entitled to christian fellowship as the Jewish believers. And in his epistle he says, "seeing ye have *purified your souls* in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a *pure* heart fervently." The apostle James in his exhortations uses a similar form of expression: "and *purify your hearts*, ye double minded." John, also, in speaking of the Lord's coming, says, "And every one that hath this hope in him *purifieth himself*, even as he"—that is, Christ—"is pure." Here the Lord Jesus is brought before us, not only as being in Himself essentially pure, but as the measure and standard of purity for us. "Every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure."

The hope of the Lord's coming has thus a *transforming* power. In looking for Him and waiting for Him now, we seek to purify ourselves even as He is pure. But when we see Him as He is in the glory, we shall be like Him—perfectly *conformed* to Him in all things. Now we are *transformed* by degrees, then we shall be *conformed* completely and for ever.

This is also the teaching of 2 Corinthians iii. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The meaning is plain and most important; we behold the glory of the Lord in the unveiled face of Jesus——the exalted Man in the glory—and are transformed according to the same image from one degree of glory to another, by the Lord the Spirit. But we are not only transformed into His likeness morally, we are the reflectors of His glory. Now the believer is the glass in whom the image of the Lord should be seen.

Forget not this great truth, O my soul; what can be more important? Oh that this one thought may take possession of thy whole being! What! mirrored on thy spirit and ways should be the moral image of thy absent Lord: oh see that nothing comes between thy heart and Him, that the likeness be not marred! The purer the mirror, the more distinct will each feature appear. O wondrous theme! O mystery divine! O blessing infinite! Language fails to express the heart's joyous wonder in meditating on this highest expression of sovereign grace. To be maintained in outward purity as men reckon, is a great mercy, and one for which we never can be too thankful. Who sees not that Joseph had a purer heart, practically viewed, than Reuben and Judah, and on which have mankind set the seal of their approval?

But to be brought so near to the Lord, and to be so purified by faith as to become like a polished mirror, on which may be reflected His glory, transcends all power to express the praise and thanksgiving due to His most blessed name.

But the day is near when thou wilt see thy Lord face to face, and as He is—in all the deep realities of His love and glory. Then no forgetfulness, no failure, no defilements by the way, shall ever dim the lustre of thy mirror, or mar the reflection of His glory. The great promise of the New Jerusalem shall be fulfilled; "they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their forehead." The likeness will then be complete and manifest to all. Higher than this we can never rise; richer in blessing we can never be; and for this consummation of all blessedness, not we only, but our Jesus prays—"that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." John xvii.

And now, in parting with thee, my dear reader, for another month, as we may never meet again, allow me to ask, Is this to be thy eternity of celestial blessedness? Or art thou still undecided in thy soul about the Lord Jesus as thy Saviour? Why hesitate? Why be in doubt? The work required has been done by Jesus; done for thee, if thou wilt only believe; done for the chief of sinners. Thou hast nothing to trust to but His

finished work. Oh then, believe in Him, put thy trust in Him, wait for Him, never doubt Him, and thy celestial blessing is secure for ever. But remember, I pray thee, that without faith—faith in Jesus—there is no blessing, no purity, as we have been seeing, and without purity there can be no heaven for thee. The city of our God is a pure city, and over its pearly gates these words are written, "There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth." Whatever its inhabitants once were, they are all pure now; and their robes of unsullied white can meet with no defilement there. The confusing mixtures of time—law and grace, faith and works, Christ and the world, flesh and Spirit, are unknown there—purity characterises everything. The streets are of pure gold, as it were transparent glass; the walls are jasper, and "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Revelation xxi.

The Lord give thee, my dear reader, to come to Jesus *now;* give thy heart undividedly to Him: this is the first grand step towards purity of heart. Oh at once bow at His blessed feet. The dark regions of hell, where the lurid glare of its fire unquenchable will only make the darkness more visible, contrasts awfully with the city of glories. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did

lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Which of those two places, my dear reader, is to be thine—thine for ever? With both before thee, couldst thou hesitate another moment? Surely not. I must now leave thee with the Lord. May thy motto henceforth be "All for Jesus."

THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE.

VERSE 9. *Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.* The mission of the children of God in this world, has a character which far exceeds, we fear, the measure of our intelligence, faith, and practice. There is a dignity —a moral beauty and glory connected with it, which we too often fail to appreciate. It emanates from God the Father; it partakes of His own moral attributes; it is the reflection, however feeble, of the blessed Lord, who was the perfect reflection of the divine glory. Every thought, every feeling, of His heart breathed the perfect rest, and rose to the height of the absolute purity and peace of the Godhead. The seven beatitudes shine in all their divine perfectness in the lowly path of the Son of man—Emmanuel, God with us. And He being our life, the features of His character should be produced in us, by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is the believer's mission whether of Jewish or of christian faith. In our meditations we muse on both; but chiefly on the application of truth to the latter; though we rejoice in the assurance that Israel will manifest the character and be crowned with the benedictions of all the beatitudes, in the

latter day. However valuable they may be to the Christian now, they look forward to the setting up of the kingdom in power and glory, and will have their complete fulfilment in that future day. But in the meantime, the Christian should seek to shine in all the graces which are here pronounced "blessed." They ought all to be found in every Christian, though some will be more manifest in one than in another.

Mark then, my soul, and weigh well, what thy mission is, and how it should be characterised. And see that thou beginnest well. Let thy first step be a right one; this is always important. Thou must begin with God, and work out from Him. There is no such thing as working up to God, thou must work from Him. This only is the right way. First learn thy own nothingness in His presence; be weighed and measured there. Thou wilt find a just balance for self nowhere else. Oh, how many things, unworthy of the Christian, this would save him from! In place of being characterised by humility, dependence, and obedience, as the blessed Lord was, we are, from lacking these graces, self-willed and self-sufficient. But having learnt thy lesson well at the Master's feet, thou wilt be fitted to go forth and bear testimony for Him, according to the portrait here given of the believer. Because of the dishonour done to His name, thou wilt mourn; and like Him, thou wilt meekly bow to that which may be personally trying, and calmly leave things in

His hands. Thou wilt also seek to do the will of God, to be merciful to those around thee, and to walk before God with a pure heart. And this brings us to the last of the seven beatitudes.

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." It is not, observe, they who live in peace, walk in peace, or keep peace, that are crowned with the divine blessing, but they who *make peace*—"peace-makers."

The distinction is important, as many who have a peaceable nature are the least qualified to make peace, and are in danger of being unfaithful for the sake of peace. But peace-making is quite another thing. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus in blessed activity, pouring oil on the troubled waters—on the tumultuous passions of men. And this, mark, without compromising the holiness of God, or saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. It may occasion much self-denial, much anxiety, much waiting on God, much disquiet to one's own mind. The most opposite feelings, convictions, interests, affecting character and happiness for life, may have to be dealt with and weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. But the peace-maker must be impartial; he must see that "mercy and truth meet together, that righteousness and peace kiss each other." There must be truth as well as grace, purity as well as peace. Time must be given for God to work: peace cannot be forced. But wherever there is the smallest possibility, con-

sistently with the holiness and truth of God, of bringing peace into a scene of trouble and sorrow, the Christian should remember his privilege and calling, and if in the scene, should reckon upon God for guidance and blessing. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

But is every Christian, it may be asked, called to be a peace-maker? Every one has the grace and the privilege of the grace in Christ Jesus for this blessed work, but all have not used it alike. The quality or measure of grace necessary in a peace-maker, depends upon his own state of soul in the presence of God. Are the other features of the Lord's character manifest, we would inquire? Is he enjoying, for example, the blessedness of the last beatitude? "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." This is the divine preparation for a peace-maker. He must be right with God Himself, and breathe the sweet peace of communion with Him.

The pure in heart are at peace with God through the precious blood of Christ. Cleansed from all sin—whiter than snow—they see God, and have learnt much in the divine presence that fits them for peace-making. He who walks with God must live in the spirit of self-judgment—must judge all that belongs to himself naturally, and thereby gain complete control over his own spirit, temper, words and ways. The pure heart is a peaceful heart, loves

peace, and earnestly desires the peace and happiness of others. Love rules in such hearts, and overflows in truest charity to all who are in a condition to need the peace-maker. But sound spiritual judgment is necessary, it will be said, in cases of dispute and discipline. Most true ; but who so fit to judge spiritually as those who judge themselves, and walk in the light as God is in the light? The sixth beatitude, we have no doubt, is the true preparation for the exercise of the God-like grace of the seventh ; or as James says, "First pure, then peaceable." Chapter iii. 17.

But what shall we say of those who forget their heavenly mission of peace, and often cause trouble? who, in place of being well shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and carrying peace with them at every step, carry a spirit of fault-finding and contention? Few such there are, we humbly trust ; but troubles do arise, and the elements of discord must be at work. Yet this may be done by a mistaken zeal for what is called truth and righteousness. With some minds, a mistake is magnified into an offence ; an inaccuracy of statement, into a deliberate falsehood ; and different things being put together, a grave charge is constructed and made against one who is unconscious of his guilt. And both up to a certain point may be right, but who is to judge between them?

Oh, for a son of peace at such a moment! A little wisdom, a little patience, a little charity, a

little consideration of human infirmity, a little waiting on the Lord, might save the weak, and satisfy the scruples of the strong. There is no moral or doctrinal evil in the case, it is only a question of apparent inconsistencies, which some minds are too quick in censuring, and others too slow in detecting. But less than we have just described, has sometimes caused trouble and heart-burnings, which time itself has failed to heal. Thank God, they extend not beyond our present condition of infirmity; all is peace in the paradise above. But a little of that sweet peace brought down by the hand of faith into our present imperfect state, would only be Christ-like, and would save us from many a sorrowful heart and bitter tear. "Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God."

But there is another class less excusable, who forget so far their peaceful mission as to manifest no small disappointment if they suppose that their services are not appreciated. Displeased and unhappy in themselves, they draw others into their sympathies. A party spirit is apt to spring up, and sorrow must be the result. Wounded vanity, ministerial jealousy, will be found at the root of all such troubles. What could be more sad than for a servant of the Lord to be more concerned for his own importance, than for the peace of his brethren? But self in some of its ten thousand forms is the prolific source of all our troubles, both spiritual

and social. Could we but sink self, and care only for the Lord's glory in walking worthy of that sweetest of all titles—"They shall be called the children of God"—all would be peace and love.

How unspeakably important then it must be for every believer to consider well this expression of his character. What can make up for its absence? What can excuse its opposite? Nothing. He who sows discord from whatever motive, in place of keeping and making peace, has missed his way as a child of God. True, a Christian may be the *occasion* of much dispeace in certain circles through his faithfulness to Christ; but that is quite a different thing. Satan may stir up many against him because of his whole-heartedness for Christ. Indeed he may expect this, as our Lord says in Matthew x. 34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Still, he will study to give no offence, and, if possible, take none. He will keep clear of strife and contention, meekly suffer for Christ's sake, and pray for the unbelieving and careless around him. The assemblage of the seven beatitudes with which God has enriched him, should now shine forth according to the position in which he finds himself. A little prudence, a little patience and waiting on God may go far to silence the strife of tongues, to calm the ruffled temper, to remove opposition, and to win hearts for Christ. None of the Christian graces so distinctly reveals

God in His children as this peace-making spirit. "They shall be called the children of God."

That which God is, and delights in, is seen in them. The moral resemblance is manifest, and their sonship is declared. So let *thy* sonship be verified, O my soul, always, earnestly, fervently pray!

God is the great Peace-maker. This is what He *has* been doing, what He *is* doing, and what He *will* do until peace is established for ever in the new heavens and the new earth. He delights in the title "God of peace;" which occurs seven times in the Epistles. He loves peace: strife and contention cannot dwell with Him. When the demon of strife enters, the God of peace retires. Without peace there can be no edification.

When the birth of Jesus was heralded by the heavenly host, they proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." And during His lowly path of peace-making, God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. He is the great Reconciler; and hath committed to His ambassadors the word of reconciliation. And thus the blessed work should go on.

"Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." The true ground of peace between God and man was laid in the great work of the cross. There God was glorified, and

there His good pleasure in men was manifested. Christ made peace by the blood of His cross: and when His blessed work was finished, He returned to His Father, leaving behind Him the full blessing of peace for His disciples; "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The peace which He made on the cross, and His own personal peace which He enjoyed with His Father while passing through the sorrows of this world, He leaves as the rich legacy of His love for all who believe in Him.

What a legacy! thou mayest well exclaim, O my soul; and what a legacy for thee, and for ever! Peace with God for ever! and nothing less than the sweet peace of thy Lord's own mind in His Father's presence. Such is thy peace, thy portion; and see that thou goest forth as filled and clothed with peace; and that all thy paths may indeed be paths of peace.

Oh! that all who read this paper may know in their sweet experience what this blessedness is! Surely it is to be in the presence of God, cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus—reconciled to God through the death of His Son. He has no charge against us now. Christ has answered for all. Peace is established on the solid ground of accomplished righteousness. And this is the immediate, sure, everlasting portion of all who believe in Him. He has bequeathed it as the birthright of

all who are born of God. Read it for thyself, my fellow-sinner, in John xiv., and believe it for thyself, and trust in Him for thyself; and make good use of thy legacy, it can never grow less by the most extravagant indulgence, or the most liberal distribution. Seek to share it with all who will accept it—to scatter it freely in the cottages of the poor and in the mansions of the rich.

Yes, thou canst afford to be liberal, if thou art an heir of peace! Thy portion can never fail. Its spring, the heart of God; its channel, the cross of Jesus; its power, the Holy Spirit; the instrument by which it becomes thine, the word of God. But, remember, I pray thee, unbelief heirs nothing but the righteous judgment of insulted goodness. Unbelief rejects everything that divine goodness has provided—peace, and the God of peace; salvation and the Saviour; heaven and its happiness. And this is what so many think of as a mere passive or negative evil. But in God's account, it is the active energy of all evil. It rejects the truth, it believes a lie; it refuses peace, it cherishes hostility; it shuts the door of heaven, it opens the gates of hell; its every breath is defiance, its every act is suicidal.

This is unbelief—the fatal sin of unbelief. But faith, even as a grain of mustard seed, will put thee in possession of the sevenfold blessedness of these beatitudes now, and fit thee for the endless blessedness, and unfading glories of thy Father's house.

on high. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts xvi. 31.

Peace with our holy God,
Peace from the fear of death,
Peace through our Saviour's precious blood,
Sweet peace, the fruit of faith,

We worship at Thy feet,
We wonder and adore,
The coming glory scarce more sweet
Than sweet the peace before.

THE BEATITUDE OF POSITION.

VERSE 10–12. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.* Were it not that we leave the children of the kingdom in a hostile world, we might here conclude our "Meditations," in the full assurance of their perfect blessedness. Seven times blessed is divine completeness. But however blessed, however happy in the divine presence, however fit to inherit the earth in its bright millennial day, however fit to reign with Christ in the higher regions of glory, they still stand in this world just where they stood before they were born of God, and surrounded it may be with the same persons and circumstances as they ever were.

This we may see every day. The home that was once cheerful and happy is now a cheerless wilderness. How often the young convert has found himself an alien and a stranger in his father's house—the very house in which he lived all his unconverted days! But now, he being completely

changed, the family not, he has no fellowship with their ways, and they have none with his. All changed; opposition is inevitable, and persecution in some way or other, especially if he reaches the sevenfold blessedness of his Master's image. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) "Hold thy peace, art thou wiser than thy father and thy mother, than thy brothers and thy sisters, must w eall give in to thee?" may be the lightest form of persecution experienced. Still it is resistance to the grace of God and the Spirit of Christ, as manifested by the young convert. He must now pursue his path alone.

So far, it will be observed, we have spoken chiefly of the *character* of God's children, now we turn to meditate for a little on their *position* in an evil world. The moral character of those who belong to Christ, rising in grace to the seventh beatitude, must necessarily arouse the spirit of persecution, and expose them to trial, until the kingdom of heaven is set up in power and glory. Had no special blessing been pronounced on this condition of things, the disciples might have been ready to say that their state was anything but blessed; that the benediction of heaven on their character only brought down upon themselves the hatred and oppression of mankind. True, this would have been natural, not spiritual, walking by sight, not by faith; but what will unbelief not say

and do? much unbelief still lurks in the hearts of believers. But oh, the grace, the rich, the abounding grace, of our Lord Jesus! He pronounces those twice blessed who are exposed to persecution from the world. This completes the beautiful picture of His people's character and condition, and adds great interest and fulness to every circumstance of their position while the kingdom is in abeyance.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This must have been a strange language to those who were looking for outward glory, or a reign of peace, a paradise on earth. But the Lord plainly sets before His disciples what their new position would be in this world, and the more distinct their likeness to Himself, the heavier would be their persecutions. But He especially refers in this first blessedness of position, to the first group of beatitudes, which are characterised by righteousness; as the last three are by grace. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Every new-born soul must have the sense, more or less, of its own nothingness, and a sincere and earnest desire to be found in obedience to the will of God. This is righteousness, and the righteousness which brings persecution in this life. For example, a Christian who is walking with the Lord, fears to do what is wrong, he desires to do what is right; he seeks to main-

tain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. This is the breastplate of righteousness. But he is offered, it may be, certain preferment in his position if he will agree to do something which he fears not to be right. The offer may be a tempting one and he is needy; but no; he waits on the Lord; he brings the matter before Him; light shines, the tempter's object is seen, he positively refuses; righteousness prevails, but he suffers for it. He is misunderstood, is called foolish, or it may be fanatic and madman. He not only loses what was offered, but what he had; he is no use, he is turned out. Still he can say, My present loss, under the righteous government of God, will prove my eternal gain. He has a clear conscience, a happy heart: he is drawn closer to the Lord in dependence on Him. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." When the king returns from the far country, and calls His own servants around Him, what will it be to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" Matthew xxv. 21.

Here, O my soul, pause a little. Let thy meditations be deep, patient, and prayerful, on this most practical subject. Consider, weigh well, I pray thee, the many ways in which thou mayest be

faithful or unfaithful! Are there not many shades of practical unrighteousness in the affairs of this life? But they must all be brought up again and measured by a righteous standard. How solemn, though how blessed the thought, of being manifested before the tribunal of Christ—of having every thought, word, and act, brought into the light, examined and estimated there. Dost thou expect to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?" I press not for an answer, but let thy heart answer to Him. Be manifested before Him now: seek to do the whole will of God in all things, and during all thy earthly days. After what the Lord has said of blessedness here, what must it be hereafter, when He will have everything His own way, and when every blessedness shall have its full and everlasting reflection in us! Now, may we fear to sin, though we may have to suffer for it.

We have now come to the closing beatitude of the kingdom of heaven. It goes back and takes up the last three of the seven, which are characterised by grace—the graces of mercy, pureness, and peace. Thus the different graces of the divine life which ought to shine in all the children of God, are here assembled under the heads of righteousness and grace—that which is right before God, and that which is grace towards man. "Blessed are *ye*, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, *for my sake*."

The promised blessing to the sufferers for Christ's sake has some sweet and precious peculiarities in it. Nor need we wonder at this ; what name like His? There is nothing higher, nothing better ; they who have His name have all that God can give ; they have every blessedness that will ever be possessed throughout the endless ages of eternity. The promise, observe, is directly personal. "Blessed are *ye*"—not in the abstract, "Blessed are *they*." He is looking at the disciples around Him, and knowing what they would have to pass through, He speaks direct to their hearts, and gives them to feel His personal interest in them, and their personal nearness to Himself. This must always be the case when we suffer for His name's sake. This is a much higher thing than suffering for righteousness' sake, though the two may often go together. Many an upright mind has suffered for righteousness' sake, who knew not the Saviour's love or His saving grace. Naturally upright, they would not stoop to deceive, and suffered for it. Even natural uprightness is too straight for the crooked ways of this sad, deceitful world. Oh, how difficult and trying is the path of the Christian in the midst of it all! He must live and walk by the word of the Lord and in communion with Him, if he would be preserved from a defiled conscience and a feeble testimony.

Suffering for Christ's sake is the result of speaking about Him to others. Not merely a

decided *no*, when we are asked or enticed to do what is wrong, but an earnest heart that watches every opportunity to speak about the blessed Lord and salvation ; and if possible to those who would put difficulties in our way. There are always plenty of worldly-wise Christians near us to check zeal and hinder faithfulness, by what passes under the fair name of *prudence*.

There is a time and place for everything, it may be suggested, and there is no use in offending others, losing your influence, and throwing away your prospects for life. Surely we are not called upon to be always speaking about Christ and the gospel ; you may cause your good to be evil spoken of. Such fair speeches and plausible reasons may come from the lips of some lukewarm Christian or mere professor, and so far, at least for a time, may do the enemy's work. The voice is his, from whose lips soever the words may come, and ought to be treated as such. Certain we are it is not the voice of Jesus; and His sheep hear His voice and follow Him.

When Christ is precious to our hearts, such reasonings have no power. We see Him to be worth infinitely more than all that the world can do or give. The fair words of prudence fall to the ground ; grace triumphs. Christ is before the soul ; He commands all its energy ; His love inspires the tongue ; the lips cannot be refrained ; His name burns in our hearts, it burns in our

words, and we long for it to burn in the hearts and on the lips of others.

Speakest thou thus, my soul, of thyself, of thine own ways, or of what thou oughtest to be? My answer is plain and ready. I speak of myself and of all others. The rule is one. In the proportion that Christ is before the soul; in the proportion that He commands it; in that proportion will be our faithfulness and our sufferings. It may not be bodily suffering, or even worldly loss; but a very narrow path will be left for such to walk in, and a wide path of rejection. Save for those who are in the same narrow way, such an one would be alone and despised in the world. You may speak of religion in a general way, of preachers, of churches, of missions to the heathen, of societies for doing good, and be popular; but speak of the Lord Himself, of His precious blood, of the full assurance of salvation, of oneness with Him in heaven, of separation from the world, of standing apart from all its shows and entertainments, and you will rapidly reduce the number of your friends. And as far as the enemy can gain power, you will be reviled and persecuted for His name's sake. It may be nothing more than cold rejection, a contemptuous sneer, but the same spirit would lay the faggots and silence the witness in the flames of martyrdom. Who were the most implacable enemies of the Lord and His servant Paul? The most religious men in Israel. Is

the world or human nature changed? We believe not.

But here thou art anxious to inquire, O my soul, and I wonder not, why there is so little persecution for Jesus' sake now? There may be more than thou art aware of. The Christianity that is positive and aggressive, and pursues its path outside the camp where Jesus suffered, must taste the bitterness, or rather the sweetness, of persecution. Such Christians will be avoided, if not despised, by those in favour with the world. The outside place, the unworldly life, is a stinging rebuke to the time-serving, or merely professing Christian.

Such witnesses are everywhere spoken against, and frequently by those in high places who know little or nothing about them; they are unjustly characterised as the secret propagators of heresy, as seeking to draw away and deceive the simple; and held up under the grossest misrepresentation to the scorn and derision of all Christendom. So far this may be harmless, thou wilt say; true, it opens no dungeons, it breaks no bones, it kindles no fires, it sharpens no swords; but how much further would the spirit of persecution go if let loose? Let the history of the church say. He who stoops to defame his fellow Christians because they differ from him on certain points of doctrine and practice, is not far from the spirit of Rome, which was the first to persecute for a difference of opinion.

But all this was anticipated by the blessed Lord,

and graciously provided for. He thinks of everything. The saints are never dearer to His heart than when despised and suffering for His sake. "Blessed are *ye*," is His own sweet word of comfort to their hearts, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Should they suffer unto death, heaven will be their immediate home. "Great is your reward in heaven." And they will also have the honour of following in the footsteps of those who suffered as the heralds of His coming—who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. As this was true of the prophets, and is true of Christians in all ages, so will it be true of the Jewish remnant who shall be slain for their Messiah's sake in the last days. Revelation vi. 9–11.

In rising from these meditations, O my soul, see that thou hast learnt this lesson well. Be careful what thou sayest of the Lord's redeemed, and how thou actest towards them. They are not only dear to His heart; He delights in them. Grieve Him not by any unkindness to them. If plain speaking or faithful dealing with some be needful, let all be done in love and tenderness. "Let brotherly love continue." That must never be in-

terrupted, though brotherly kindness may, with the Lord's sanction.

The Lord grant that our meditations on these beautiful beatitudes may leave an indelible impression of the Saviour's character, not only on the whole life of the writer, but also of the reader. So shall we answer to the divine emblems here spoken of; "salt" and "light"—the preservative principle or energy in the place where light has already come, where truth is already professed: and the blessed activities of love that go out in the light of grace and truth to a dark benighted world. Be this thy mission, O my soul, unweariedly, unchangeably, that many may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Acts xxvi. 16–18.

"We welcome still Thy faithful word—
'The cross shall meet its sure reward:'
For soon must pass the 'little while'
Then joy shall crown Thy servant's toil:
And we shall hear Thee, Saviour, say,
'Arise, my love, and come away;
Look up, for thou shalt weep no more,
But rest on heaven's eternal shore.'"

"I WOULD—BUT YE WOULD NOT."

Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xix. 41.

'Tis evening—over Salem's towers
A golden lustre gleams,
And lovingly and lingeringly
The sun prolongs his beams;
He looks, as on some work undone,
For which the time has past;
So tender is his glance and mild,
It seems to be his last.

But a brighter Sun is looking on,
More earnest is *His* eye,
For thunder-clouds will veil Him soon,
And darken all the sky;
O'er Zion still He bends, as loath
His presence to remove,
And on her walls there lingers yet
The sunshine of His love.

'Tis *Jesus*—with an anguish'd heart,
A parting glance He throws;
For mercy's day she has sinn'd away
For a night of dreadful woes;
"Would that thou hadst known," he said
While down roll'd many a tear,
"My words of peace, in this thy day;
But now thine end is near;

Alas ! for thee, Jerusalem,
  How cold thy heart to me !
How often in these arms of love,
  Would I have gathered thee !
My sheltering wing had been your shield,
  My love your happy lot :
I would it had been thus with thee—
  I would, but *ye* would not."

He wept alone, and men passed on,
  The men whose sins he bore ;
They saw the Man of sorrows weep,
  They had seen Him weep before ;
They ask'd not whom those tears were for,
  They ask'd not whence they flowed ;
Those tears were for rebellious man ;
  Their source, the heart of God :

They fell upon this desert earth,
  Like drops from heaven on high,
Struck from an ocean-tide of love
  That fills eternity.
With love and tenderness divine,
  Those crystal cells o'erflow,
'Tis God that weeps, through human eyes,
  For human guilt and woe.

That hour has fled, those tears are told ;
  The agony is past ;
The Lord has wept, the Lord has bled,
  But has not *loved* His last.

His eye of love is downward bent,
Still ranging to and fro,
Where'er in this wide wilderness
There roams the child of woe ;

Nor *His* alone—the Three in One,
Who looked through Jesu's eye,
Could still the harps of angel bands,
To hear the suppliant sigh ;
And when the rebel *chooses* wrath,
God mourns his hapless lot,
Deep breathing from His heart of love,
"*I* would, but *ye* would not."

GETHSEMANE.

'Twas eve in Juda's land !
Slowly the shadows had longer grown,
Till the last faint ray of the setting sun
Had faded and fled from the western sky ;
Then on they came, with a sweeping train,
Noiseless, yet sure and swift !
Down from the mountain, and over the plain,
Flinging around their shroud of gloom
And locking in silence deep as the tomb
The daylight hum of man—and clouds arose,
Dark sombre clouds, in strange wild groups,
Now hiding from sight the moonbeams light,

Then swiftly hurrying—struggling on—
E'en the lights in the city grew pale and dim
As the midnight hour drew near;
And only the sound of the watchman's round
Fell sharp and clear on the listening ear,
And echoing rose to the silent sky—

When, list, 'twas the voice of music!
A low sweet burst of song,
Coming floating through the midnight,
Borne by the winds along;
'Twas the sound of many voices,
And the strain was soft and deep,
For it came from hearts of sadness—
Strange mingling of praise and grief.
It ceased—and forth from an upper room
A band of watchers came.
Sadly they wound through the gloomy streets
Towards the city's eastern wall;
Passed through the gate, and o'er Kedron's brook,
Till they came to Olivet's hillside lone,
And the deep dark shade of Gethsemane.

In their midst there was One whose weary frame
Knew little of earth's repose—a lonely man—
Lone in His heart's deep sympathy,
Lone in His hour of agony;
Lone and yet not alone, if human woe
Or human want had need of Him—
Then every wayside sufferer urged his claim,
And none was e'er denied. Then thronging multitudes
In crowds around Him prest—for Jesus
Came to heal, to seek and save the lost.

No crowd was with Him now—but a lowly band
Whom He had chosen out from humble life :
Not earth's nobility, but sons of toil.
They owed Him much—yet little gave
Which met His soul's deep yearning.

On them He lavished all His love,
And in return got lukewarm wavering faith.
One day they knew Him and adored. The next
Would ask again, "Who art thou, Lord ?"—
Once, as He told them of His hour of agony,
And spoke of coming shame and death,
They listened—heard—and heeded not ; their hearts
Were filled with other thoughts, with envious strife
Disputing—who should be the greatest !
And now they sorrow, scarcely knowing why,
Save that His farewell words are sounding in their ears,
And they see His heart is wrung—
He chooses three among them—who of old
Have known and loved Him best,
And bids the others tarry there, while they move on.
Deeper and deeper yet within the gloomy shade—
All may not see the anguish of His heart,
All in that sorrow may not bear a part—
Then turning unto them He saith,
"Tarry ye here awhile and watch :
My soul is sorrowful exceedingly,
Yea, e'en to death !"—He leaves them there
And passes on.
Ah ! earth and sky, what saw ye then ?
And you, ye angel hosts before the throne,
In that dread hour what witnessed ye ?

Bowed down to earth heaven's highest Majesty,
Fulness of Godhead, the Eternal One,
Firstborn of all creation! He, Jehovah's Son
Arrayed in human garb, and bending low
In untold agony!
Ah! words—poor human words,
Vainly ye seek to tell of grief like this:
Ye may not—One alone has known it,
One whose agony of love no floods could drown,
And He, the One who knows it, tells it not!
But thou, O ransom'd soul, with unveiled sight
Gaze on that mystery—
Gaze, and, with rapture filled,
Bow down and worship Him, who died for thee!

E. C. L.

AS THOU WILT.

Go not far from me, O my strength,
Whom all my times obey.
Take from me—anything Thou wilt,
But go not Thou away.
So let the storm that bears me home,
Deal with me as it may.

On Thy compassion I repose,
In weakness and distress;
I will not ask for greater ease,
Lest I should love Thee less.
Oh! 'tis a blessed thing for me,
To NEED Thy tenderness.

Thy love hath many a hidden path,
No outward eye can trace;
And, through the darkest night, my heart
Leaps to behold Thy face;
And communes with Thee 'mid the storm,
As in a *quiet* place.

O Comforter of God's redeemed,
Whom the world does not see,
I wish not to avoid the flood
That casts my soul on Thee.
Who *would* not suffer pain like mine,
To be consoled like me?

When I am feeble, as a child,
And flesh and heart give way,
Then, on Thine everlasting strength,
With passive trust I stay;
And the rough wind becomes a song,
The darkness shines like day.

It is *not* hard to bear, in faith,
In Thine own bosom laid,
The trial of a soul redeemed,
For thy rejoicing made.
Well may the heart in patience rest,
That none can make afraid,

"Deep unto deep" may call, but I
With peaceful heart will say,
Thy lovingkindness has a charge
No wave can take away.
So let the storm that speeds me *home*,
Deal with me as it may.

A. L. W.

MY JOY.

Thou art my joy, Lord Jesus! Thou art my glorious sun!
In the light that shineth from Thee, I gladly journey on,
There is a hidden beauty, a healing, holy light,
In Thy countenance, uplifted, upon the inward sight.

Oh! purer than the morning, and brighter than the noon
And sweeter than the evening, a thousand joys in one—
Thou brightness of God's glory, and Lord of all above,
Son of the Father's bosom, and image of His love!

O Jesus! let me *ever* behold my joy, my friend,
And let my deep communion be with Thee to the end.
In secret let me see Thee—let all, that Thou hast been,
And all Thou art, in heaven, outshine before me then.

And let my memory treasure each little word and way,
Expressing, in its measure, the deeps that in Thee lay.
Oh! there are joys unspoken, and mounts of sacred light,
And visions of Thy glory, to bless the seeker's sight.

Then why be like a stranger, or like a passer by,
When I might hold Thee ever in blissful company?
O lift Thy face upon me, and keep me by Thy side;
And fill me with Thy presence, and in my heart *abide*.

"THE VOICE OF MY BELOVED."

Canticles viii. 13, 14.

MINE own Beloved's voice!
'Tis this I wait to hear!
No earthborn music half so choice,
No other tones so dear.

He soon will come again!
I shall His glory see!
He came long since, in grief and pain,
To seek and ransom me.

He left His royal throne
To free the captive slave;
He found me—mark'd me for His own;
Oh, what a price He gave!

The costly price of blood
Deliver'd me from hell;
And made my title clear and good
With Him on high to dwell—

His love as death is strong,
No floods can drown its tide;
And loving Him, I pant and long
To shelter at His side.

Far more His heart doth yearn
To call His exile home;
A few short hours, He will return,
And I no more shall roam.

Within His garden fair
The milkwhite lilies grow;
"A little while" He tarries where
Yon living waters flow.

Make haste, Beloved, make haste,
Desire my spirit thrills:
Apart from Thee, the world's a waste;
Come quickly o'er the hills!

H. K. B.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE.

"Ye turned to God from idols to *serve* the living and true God, and to *wait* for his Son from heaven."

"To serve Him!" Do we think it hard
To hear that word of old,
Which tells us of the place on earth
Our Lord would have us hold?

The place where we can work and serve,
While waiting for Him here,
While rays of glory breaking down
Sustain our hearts from fear.

"To serve Him!" Does it mean some work
That history's page will hold,
And thousand grateful hearts and tongues
Will to the world unfold?

"To serve Him!" Nay, 'tis but to go
To those *His* heart holds dear;
To soothe the orphan's bitter wail—
To dry the widow's tear!"

"To serve Him!" 'Tis within your home
To shed that sunshine round,
Which tells, with louder voice than words
The treasures you have found!

"To serve Him!" 'Tis the angry word,
Check'd, ere it well began;
It is to make a stream of bliss,
Where once but discord ran!

"To serve Him!" 'Tis to bow our hearts,
Though He our cup should fill
With deepest sorrow—and, through all,
Have faith to *trust* Him still!

"To serve Him!" 'Tis with little deeds
No other eye can see.
But His, whose voice will one day say,
Ye did it unto me!

"To wait!" These hearts too often ask—
How long, O Lord, how long
Must we amid the world's rude scorn
Do battle with the wrong?

"To wait:" Oh, is it to look on,
Through heavy clouds and gloom,
To that bright light whose rays e'en now
Shine out beyond the *tomb?*

"To wait for Him!" Nay, 'tis to watch
With faithful hearts and true
For His *return*, while all around
Grows darker to our view.

"To wait for Him!" 'Tis just to find
His absence such a loss,
That pained, we turn from earth's gay scenes
And gladly clasp His cross!

"To wait!" 'Tis like some brilliant light
Through darkness shining clear;
The "day-star rising in our hearts"—
The Lord will soon appear.

"To wait!" 'Tis day by day to cry,
And in our hearts to be
Ready to go or stay, dear Lord,
As best may seem to Thee.

Be this our one desire, O Lord,
Whate'er our earthly state;
And sweeter may it prove each day
To *serve* Thee, and to *wait!*

A. S. O.

"BEHOLD, HOW HE LOVED HIM."

Say, was it sorrow for the dead
  That stirred those fountains deep?
Say, was it grief for Lazarus
  That bade the Saviour weep?

Was it that He would fain have caught
  The last expiring breath;
Or on those much-loved features gazed
  Ere they were closed in death?

No, for He knew, 'twas His to speak
  And bid death's shadow flee;
Was He not Lord of life and death,
  The Resurrection He?

What then could move the Lord to grief,
  And grief's external sign?
Why should He weep o'er Lazarus
  When His was power divine?

Ah! 'twas that tender sympathy—
  That love, so deep, so true,
That groaned for Mary's agony
  And Martha's sorrow knew.

And silent friends had gathered there,
  And sorrowing round Him crept,
He knew their hearts were full of grief,
  And therefore "Jesus wept."

His soul, in one short moment, passed
Long ages in review:
Glanced at the peace of Eden's bowers
And felt the curse was true.

Forward He looked, the coming scene
Might well His Spirit move:
Shall He go on to Calvary,
Oh, deep, mysterious love!

The cross adown the narrow path
In deepening shadow lay;
The darkness there—the Father's wrath
Foreclosing life's short day.

This side, the powers of earth and hell
Beset the narrow road,
Beyond, the choirs of heaven swell
Around the throne of God.

'Tis done, and should that burning love
Be e'er forgot by thee?
Think on the tears that Jesus shed
In dark Gethsemane.

Think how the Lord and Master wept
To see His people's pain;
Think how He shed His precious blood
A rest for us to gain.

Then say, should it not teach us too,
To do as He has done;
And shed our tears for others' woe,
Like God's beloved Son?

HE IS MINE.

"My beloved is mine and I am his."—Cant. ii. 16.
"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."—Cant. vi. 3.

Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest;
Far did I rove, and found no certain home:
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,
Who opes His arms and bids the weary come.
With Him I found a home, a rest divine;
And I *since then am His*, and He is mine.

Yes, *He* is Mine! and nought of earthly things—
Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings—
Could tempt *me to forego His love* an hour.
Go, worthless world, I cry, with all that's thine!
Go! I my Saviour's am, and He is mine.

The good I have is from His store supplied;
The ill is only what *He* deems *the best*:
He for my Friend, I'm rich with nought beside;
And poor without Him, though of all possessed.
Changes may come—I take or I resign—
Content to *know* I'm His, and He is mine.

Whate'er may change, in Him no change is seen;
A glorious Sun that wanes not nor declines;
Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,
And sweetly on His people's darkness shines.
All may depart—I fret not nor repine,
I *know* that I am His, that He is mine.

He stays me falling, lifts me up when down ;
  Reclaims me wandering ; guards from every foe ;
Plants on my worthless brow the victor's crown,
  Which, in return, before His feet I throw :
Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine,
  Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine.

While, here, alas ! I know *but half* His love,
  But half discern Him, and *but half* adore ;
But when I meet Him in the realms above,
  I then shall love Him better, praise Him more ;
And feel, and tell, amid the choir divine,
  How fully I am His, and He is mine !

ABOVE IT ALL.

I SEE the crowds of earth go by,
  I hear the world's loud trumpet call ;
Though through its midst my path should lie,
  Yet I must live above it all.

The sorrows of the daily life,
  The shadows o'er my path which fall,
Too oft obscure the glory's light,
  Until I rise above them all.

Until upon the mountain height,
I stand, my God! with Thee alone,
Bathed in the fullest, clearest Light—
The glory which surrounds the Throne.

Here hushed are all the sounds of earth—
The laugh of pleasure, moan of pain;
The vain deluding shouts of mirth
Here fall upon my ear in vain.

Calm in Thy secret presence, Lord,
I rest this weary soul of mine;
Feed on the fulness of Thy word,
And die to all the things of time,

Learning that word, so wondrous deep—
To live in joy and grief the same—
Weeping, as though we did not weep—
Gaining as though we did not gain.

Learning to live, through doubt and fear,
Far above every scene below,
With the one thought—"*He is not here*,"
Throwing a shade on all below.

Oh! take my fevered hands in Thine,
And keep me, Master, nearer Thee,
Walking above the things of time,
In closest fellowship with Thee.

With Thee, above the clouds and gloom
That shade and dim this lower life;
Walking with Thee—with Thee alone—
Above the storm, above the strife.

The child of God *must* walk alone,
If he would live and walk with Thee;
And only to such hearts are known
The joys of Thy blest company.

Alone with Thee, O Master! where
The light of *earthly* glory dies;
Misunderstood by all, I dare
To do what *Thine* own heart will prize.

Such be my path through life down here—
One long, close, lonely walk with Thee;
Until, past every doubt and fear,
Thy face in light above I see.

A. S. O.

"THE MORNING COMETH."

O HARK! I have news, glad news for thee,
It has thrilled my soul with joy,
And to sound it abroad henceforth shall be
My life-long sweet employ.
The morning cometh! The radiant time
We have long'd for, draweth nigh;
O publish the tidings in every clime,
Proclaim them from earth to sky!

Hast thou watch'd in the gray dim light of dawn,
Ere the sunbeam shineth forth,
When all is still, save the fluttering breeze
Which stirreth and whispereth 'mid the trees,
And seemeth to call on their myriad leaves
To wake and to welcome the coming morn ?
So methinks I have seen earth's stars grow dim
And her moonlight fade away ;
And all around, I have heard the sound
Of *His* Spirit's breath, in this realm of death,
Bidding us wake and watch for Him !

And then as the sunbeam breaketh forth
And lighteth with glory the waking earth,
Hast thou heard the sweet burst of joyous praise
Which seemeth to rise in the morning lays
Of the wild birds to the sun ?
Thus soon shall a song, a wondrous song,
Triumphant, glorious, free,
Hail the first ray of that endless day
And praise *Him* eternally !
For the morning cometh ! The radiant time
We have longed for, draweth nigh.
O publish the tidings in every clime,
Proclaim them from earth to sky !

E. C. L.

THE VESSEL.

Oh! is it come—the sweet and blessed calm,
Foreseen and hoped-for through those darksome years
Of anguish and of dread? Here, here at last,
I, a deep vessel in the shoreless sea
Of thine own fulness, O eternal God!
Filled in that fulness, find my prayer, my hopes,
All, all fulfilled, and nothing more to crave.
The bright reality, the thing itself,
Transcends all thought, eclipses every hope;
Dwelling in God, by God indwelt I know
Love in its fulness, life to me is bliss.
All, all within, beneath, around, above,
Speak but of Thee, and tell me what I am,
The happiest of the happy! O thou peerless One!
Great God revealed in flesh, the living link
'Twixt Godhead and my soul! be thine the praise,
The loving worship of a loving heart,
Rich in Thyself, for oh, however filled,
Howe'er exalted, holy, undefiled,
Whatever wealth of blessedness is mine,
What am I, Lord! an emptiness, a nothing;
Thou art my boast, in whom all fulness dwells
Of the great Godhead. Thou whose name I bear,
Whose life is mine, whose glory and whose bliss,
All, all are mine.

E. D.

"THE SEA BIRD."

I've watch'd the sea bird calmly glide
Unruffled o'er the ocean tide;
Unscared she heard the waters roar
In foaming breakers on the shore.
Fearless of ill, herself she gave
To rise upon the lifting wave,
Or sink, to be awhile unseen—
The undulating swells between—
Till, as the evening shadows grew,
Noiseless, unheard, aloft she flew;
While, soaring to her rock-built nest,
A sunbeam lighted on her breast,
A moment glitter'd in mine eye,
Then quickly vanished through the sky.

While by the pebbly beach I stood,
That sea bird, on the waving flood,
Pictured to my enraptured eye,
A soul at peace with God:—Now high,
Now low, upon the gulf of life,
Raised or depress'd, in peace or strife,
Calmly she kens the changeful wave,
She dreads no storm—she fears no grave:
To her, the world's tumultuous roar
Dies like the echo on the shore.
"Father," she cries, "Thy pleasure all fulfil,
"I gladly yield me to Thy sovereign will;
"Let earthly joys, let comforts ebb or rise,
"Tranquil on Thee, my God, my soul relies."

Then, as advance the shades of night,
Long-plumed, she takes her heavenward flight:
But as she mounts, I see her fling
A beam of glory from her wing—
A moment—to my aching sight
Lost in the boundless fields of light!

MY WAY AND GOD'S WAY.

"He that believeth shall not make haste."

My Father! I was hastening on my way,
And now a hand has stopp'd me. Is it Thine?
Must I my spirit's ardent hopes resign,
To seek my task of love complete to-day?

To labour through the daylight I had planned;
But one short hour, and I had finish'd all;
Now the grey shadows of the evening fall,
The night, when none can work, is nigh at hand.

Was not my thought according to Thy will?
Could hopes so bright be all of earthly guise?
I trusted they were perfect in Thine eyes,
And now Thy answer seems, "Wait, and be still."

'Tis hard to bid my busy labours cease,
But I have promised hardness to endure;
And if Thou bid me linger, I am sure
The chamber that I wait in will be peace.

Perhaps if all the night I lie at rest,
And yield myself in stillness unto Thee,
Thou, in the silent hours, wilt work for me;
And oh, full well I know Thy work is best.

If on the altar I had thought to raise,
Thou willest not this sacrifice should lie,
Obedience is most precious in Thine eye,
Submission is Thy sweetest song of praise.

In quietness my soul may grow more strong,
Another day, perhaps, to serve Thee more,
With greater wisdom than I did before,
With greater patience when the hours seem long.

Let me leave all to Thee—Thou knowest best,
Thus praying, all my bitter thoughts grow sweet;
Thus standing still, my eager hurrying feet,
As in a holy temple seem to rest.

I will not look beyond with vain alarm;
The morning may have work, or restful joy.
Only be with me, Lord! my heart employ:
Be Thy pure will my guide, my strength Thy arm.

MEDITATIONS
ON
CHRISTIAN DEVOTEDNESS.

ROMANS XII.

WHILE many in the present day are teaching and writing much on the important subjects of consecration, devotedness, and holiness of heart and life: and while many are more or less affected by the general interest which these inquiries are creating; it may be well for thee, my soul, to retire for a little into the sanctuary of thy Lord's presence, and there learn what has been long written on these and kindred subjects. Be assured there is nothing new under the sun. These various aspects of christian character, with the motives and objects by which they are created and sustained, are fully revealed in the word of God. The true ground also on which they rest, thou wilt find there. Oneness with Christ as the last Adam, the exalted Man in the glory, must be thy standpoint, otherwise thou wilt "see men as trees walking"—thou wilt be confounding that which has its roots in nature with that which is of the grace of God in truth.

Know then, and assuredly believe, O my soul, that thou art one with Him who bore thy sins on the cross, who is now on the throne, and who is coming again to take thee up to be with Himself in His home of love and glory. Wrong ground—a mistaken point of view—leads to great confusion and self-contradiction, to the mixing up of law and gospel, faith and experience, self and Christ. No matter how good our eyesight may be, we cannot see without light. Thou must be in the sunlight of thy Lord's presence to see the true foundation and the divine course of all things. And there, O wondrous truth! O privilege infinite! O blessedness unspeakable! thou art at home—at home, as thou art nowhere else—in the concentrated light of heaven's noonday brightness. He is thy righteousness, absolute and complete, in the presence of God; He is thy eternal life, thy peace, thy joy, thy rest, thy glory. Thus arrayed in the moral glories of thy Lord, and basking in the beams of His complaisant love, what hast thou to fear? And know also, O my soul, that all this is true now—true to faith, though not to experience, and always true in the sight of God.

In proof of this, take the two highest notes in the New Testament as to the Christian's position. One is sounded by the apostle Paul and the other by the apostle John. 1. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quick-

ened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Here pause for a moment and meditate, not only on thy place in Christ, but on the "rich mercy" and the "great love" of God, which set thee there. What can be sweeter to thy thoughts than this precious truth? And there it is, believe it fully. 2. "Herein is our love [or love with us] made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world." This is a plain statement and must be received in the simplicity of faith. It surely means, that as He—Christ—is, in God's sight, so are we, though still in this world and encompassed with many infirmities. And this should teach thee never to look to self or experience if thou wouldst know thy place and acceptance in the presence of God; but always to Christ as the measure and expression of thy portion there. There is only one other passage that I will bring before thee at present, and this we will call, *the dowry of the bride.* "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Here thou wilt see, that by the will and wondrous grace of God, Christ Jesus is made unto the Christian—every Christian—*wisdom*, *righteousness*, *sanctification*, and *redemption.*

Surely this is a rich inheritance for the individual Christian, the church of God, the bride of

the Lamb! And forget not, I pray thee, that these blessings are thine now in Christ Jesus, Head of the new creation, and of the church, which is His body and His bride. Ephesians ii. 4–6; 1 John iv. 17; 1 Corinthians i. 30.

We will now turn to our beautiful chapter, where we shall meet with similar truths, though not in the character of a distinct subject, but as the native result of our union with Christ, and of looking to Him as our one and only object in our journey through this world.

Verse 1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.* The first lesson here to be learnt is a very important one—the apostle's style of address. How graciously and tenderly he entreats the saints at Rome as brethren! Great apostle as he was, he places them all on the same level with himself. This, of course, is true of all Christians as regards their pardon and acceptance in Christ, however varied their condition may be as to the manifestation of the divine nature. "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." (Matt. xxiii. 8.) But how endearing is the apostle's manner, compared with the high, imperious style of many who profess to be His successors, or at least to be ministers of Christ! "I beseech you therefore, brethren;" this is true humility

though accompanied with divine authority. Only nearness to the Lord can give both. But what an example for all Christians, for thee, my soul, when having to do with the poorest of the flock!

We will now notice the foundation on which the exhortation rests—

"*The mercies of God.*" True christian devotedness evidently flows from the devout consideration of the mercies or compassions of God to the poor outcast sinner. The apostle appeals to the hearts of the brethren as being happily acquainted with the riches of divine mercy to lost and ruined souls. The effect of meditating on this aspect of God's character is transformation to His image, and devotedness to His glory, as our holy, acceptable, and reasonable service. Most blessed, precious privilege! And this holy imitation of the divine character, be it observed, is not the result of our own efforts, but flows naturally from the blessed truth that we are made partakers of the divine nature, as taught more fully by the apostle elsewhere. "Be ye therefore followers of God," or, literally, imitators 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." Here pause for a moment and meditate deeply; the subject is vast and most practical. Talking of devotedness, of holiness, of consecration, what is thy standard? Is

it thine own possible attainments by unwearied watchings, fastings, diligence, or what? Self in a thousand ways may be thy governing object, but wrong in all. Could God present a lesser or lower object to His children than Himself, as morally displayed in the Person and work of His beloved Son? Impossible! "It would dishonour Himself and the grace He has shewn us: and it would be the most grievous loss to His children beloved, whom He would train and bless yet more and more even in this scene of evil and sorrow, turning the most adverse circumstances into an occasion of teaching us what He is in the depths of His grace, and filling ourselves with the sense of it, so as to form our hearts and fashion our ways. . . . Neither law nor even promise ever opened such a field as this. The very call so to imitate God supposes the perfect grace in which we stand: indeed it would be insupportable otherwise."*

But one word of inspired authority settles the whole question to faith for ever: "Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children." This is thy standard and the measure of thy devotedness. Being the children of God we are partakers of His nature, and ought never to admit a standard lower than the nature of which we are partakers. God was manifested in Christ Jesus, the express image of His Person. It is in Him that we see our new

* Lectures on Ephesians, W. Kelly, page 240.

nature, presented in all its perfection, and in all its fulness, but in Him as man, and as it ought to be developed in us here below, in the circumstances through which we are passing. It is indeed humbling to think that we have answered so little to the call of God to be imitators of Himself as His children. But he has given us an object in which He manifests Himself that He may lead and attract our hearts to follow Him: and this object we know as the one who loves us and gave Himself for us, and the only object the Christian should ever have. "There is a sense," says one, "in which God is, morally, the measure of other beings —a consideration which brings out the immense privilege of the child of God. It is the effect of grace, in that being born of Him, and partaking of His nature, the child of God is called to be an imitator of God, to be perfect as his Father is perfect. He makes us partakers of His holiness; consequently we are called to be imitators of God, as His dear children. This shews the immense privilege of grace. It is the love of God in the midst of evil, and which, superior to all evil, walks in holiness, and rejoices, also, together in a divine way, in the unity of the same joys, and the same sentiments."*

We now return for a moment to the subject of mercy after this rather long digression, but the one

* Synopsis, vol. iv., page 439.

passage throws much light on the other and gives greater breadth of truth to the mind.

The word "mercies" is here used in the plural, because it signifies, not mercy as an attribute of God simply, but the compassions of God which have been fully developed in the different instances already enumerated. At the same time, it may have a special reference to verse 31 of the previous chapter, where we find Jews as well as Gentiles concluded in unbelief that God may have mercy upon all. "Even so these [the Jews] have now been unbelieving with regard to your mercy [the Gentiles] in order that they should receive mercy." Thus the Jews having forfeited all right to the promises through unbelief, must be brought in at the end on the ground of mercy. And this God will do when He has brought in the fulness of the Gentiles. But it is the privilege of the Christian to meditate on the mercies of God as displayed in redemption, as well as in His dispensational ways. It was pure mercy that thought of him in the counsels of eternity, that gave him a place in the purposes of God, that wrote his name in the Lamb's book of life, that watched over him in the days of his unbelief, that called him by His gospel, that gave him deliverance from sin and condemnation; that gave him the Holy Spirit, union with Christ, and the hope of His coming; and thereby communion with God the Father, and the enjoyment of all the unspeakable blessings of His grace and love.

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My ransomed soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise."

This is a great subject. Hasten not over it in thy meditations, O my soul. It is highly practical and may go far to form and consolidate thy thoughts of practical Christianity. Strange to say, the interests of religion are supposed by some Christians to be better secured when the soul is under law and occupied with its feelings and doings, than when it is under grace and feeding on the truth of the divine compassions towards it from first to last. But heed not this false alarm, it is the old cry of this world's wisdom, "The grace of the gospel leads to licentiousness;" but what is it that the fleshly mind will not pervert? Even "the mercies of God" are used as a refuge for living in sin. "God is merciful," we hear people say, "and if we do our best, and live a good, moral, sober life, and shew kindness to our neighbour, He will not condemn us with the openly wicked." After this style many speak, but it is always the language of those who are careless about their souls, and who have no heart for Jesus.

True, most true, God is indeed merciful and gracious, but the boundless mercies of God are no refuge to the soul apart from the work of Christ. God has shewn His mercy to the guilty in giving the precious blood of His own Son as a safe refuge

for the chief of sinners. But if this shelter be neglected the whole universe cannot provide another. The testimony of God Himself is, that "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." The blood is the sure token of judgment passed, of holiness, righteousness, and justice satisfied; of the forgiveness, cleansing, and complete salvation of the sinner. But we must now turn to the latter half of our verse.

"*That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*" The apostle leaves no room here for the liberty of the flesh, or for going back to the law as a rule of life. The believer is to be formed morally by the knowledge of God, and consecrated to Him as his reasonable service. It is of the body, or outer man, that the apostle expressly speaks. "That ye present your bodies." The body is here viewed as the sacrifice, and the believer as presenting it; so that the whole man is to be yielded up as an offering to the Lord.

But if thou wouldest well understand this character of devotedness, thou must study and master chapter vi. There we learn that Christians are, first of all, to reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They are brought into this position by death and resurrection, as set forth in baptism, in virtue of the finished work of Christ. "Therefore

we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Baptism is the symbol of Christians having part with Christ in death. He died for sin, they died to sin in His death. This is the grand fundamental truth of entire devotedness and practical holiness. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Such is the reasoning of the Spirit of God. All true Christians believe that Christ died *for* our sins, but comparatively few believe or enter into the truth that *we died to sin in His death.*

But the consequences of not apprehending this plain truth, which the youngest confessor of Christ is supposed by the apostle to know, are immense and innumerable. From the first struggles with self in the newly awakened soul, to the highest efforts of the pietists and the mystics, the root is the same; it is occupation with self in all. Whether it be the young believer longing after peace with God, or the advanced believer straining after holiness and perfection, they are looking for it within. The eye is turned inwardly in search after feelings, or a consciousness of having arrived at a higher state of christian life. But this is not all. When death to sin is not seen, there can be no real separation from the world, especially what is called the religious world. Hence we may often be surprised to see godly men mixing with the world and help-

ing on its plans and improvements. But the whole system of self-occupation, of seeking to improve the first Adam condition of man, of seeking to attain complete sanctification in the flesh, is judged by the simple truth, that the Christian died to sin in Christ's death, and that in his baptism he owns this, and is bound to walk as one already and always dead to sin. In a tone of disappointment the apostle appeals to his brethren at Rome, and asks the question, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized unto his death?" As much as to say, Have you forgotten the meaning of your baptism, are you ignorant of so elementary a truth?*

In the latter part of the chapter we have this great principle applied in detail, which shews that the body and every member of the body is to be employed in the service of God. It is not enough to say of any one, "He is very true at heart, but fails in his personal attendance at the various meetings of his brethren, and otherwise in using his tongue, his hands, or his feet, in the Lord's service, and thinks he may be excused because of circumstances." Many too are ready to say, who have found a reason for remaining at home, "I was with you in spirit, I was helping by prayer." While this may be true and good in some cases, in others, we fear,

* For a fuller unfolding of this weighty truth, see Synopsis, vol. iv., pp. 145–151; Lectures on Romans, W. K., pp. 83–91.

it may be self-delusion. The service of the body is as fairly required of the Lord as the prayer of the heart. It is well to know the Lord's claims on the body—on our personal service and presence. "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments unto God." The idea of a sacrifice is surely that of entire consecration—of body, soul, and spirit. The devoted victim under the law was slain and laid on God's altar. The act was complete—a complete surrender. Christians are to present their own "bodies" as a "living sacrifice" in contrast with the sacrifices of the law which were put to death. It is a self-sacrifice; but "with such sacrifices God is well pleased;" and the only sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to Him now. All others are profane. The sacrifice of the mass, so-called, and the whole system of ritualism, are a practical denial of the finished work of Christ, and most offensive in the sight of God. "It is finished," was the shout of victory; all was accomplished. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Hebrews x. 14.

Since the one sacrifice of Christ was offered, sacrificial and ceremonial worship, with the long ritual of the Jews' religion, has passed away. These were types and shadows which came to their end by the coming of the Messiah. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." God looks for intelligence in His servants according to

the true light. The sacrifices of old had no conscience, no intelligence, no self-judgment, but the "living sacrifice" of Christians is called—"*your reasonable service.*"

But some may still be ready to inquire, "In what sense can it be said that we died to sin in Christ's death, for I feel that sin is as really in me now as it was before my conversion?"

Most surely it is there, and seeks to rule as formerly; this is just what the apostle refers to and warns against. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." So long as we are in the "mortal body," sin will be there and will seek to reign, but we are to reject its claims and refuse obedience to its desires. Our new place of blessing in Him who died and rose again, takes us far beyond its dominion. "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

Now mark what follows; all believe this verse to be quite true of the blessed Lord. None believe that He died to the love or the practice of sin, but to sin itself. But what does verse 11 say? "Likewise reckon," not, observe, *realise*, that we could never do, but, "*reckon*"—account, "ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Surely nothing could possibly be plainer than this in the reckoning of faith. "Likewise"—in like manner, plainly means, that the believer is to reckon himself

dead to sin and alive unto God in the same sense that Christ is. He who denies this, does violence to the word, casts an indignity on the work of Christ, and reaps, as the fruit of his unbelief, a harvest of doubts and fears.

Know then, O my soul, and be well assured of this great truth;—that *death is thy only deliverer from sin, and resurrection thy only way to the new creation.* We die out of the old state in His death, and rise into the new in His resurrection. This is deliverance. True, happy, heavenly deliverance! Within the gates of glory, in the reckoning of faith, thou mayest breathe freely and sing thy song of victory. No enemy can ever cross the grave of Christ. It is the grand terminus of sin, Satan, death, judgment, the world and the flesh. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Oh, glorious liberty! Oh, blessed reality! To be within the gates of thy glorious land, O Emmanuel! To know that no enemy can ever invade thy peaceful borders; that no evil can ever enter there; that no serpent will ever lurk in thy Eden —the blooming paradise of God; that no tree of the knowledge of good and evil shall ever grow there; is our unmingled blessedness, our eternal security.

And there we stand with Thee, even now, by faith, O Jesus, Saviour and Lord; we only await Thy coming to take us there actually. "A little

while," and faith and hope must give place to the grand reality, the heavenly promise. "And they shall see His face." Faith's deepest hold of truth, and hope's highest expectations, are all fulfilled; we have seen his face. This will be thy heaven of heavens, O my soul; to see Him as He is. But what of thy faith and hope now, tell me? All is well; all is well; every wish is met, every desire is satisfied. I stand with Him who is Head of the new creation. One with Him in whom I died as a child of Adam; one with Him who bore my sins that I might be forgiven and have peace with God. Yes, I say it in the integrity of faith, on the authority of the Lord's own word—"in Christ Jesus." And my place and portion there are measured and expressed by Him. This I know, that I am one with Him in life, righteousness, privilege, blessing, glory; and where He is, there I shall be; and what He is, that I shall be for ever. John xiv., xvii.; Romans viii.

Oh, happy soul, richly endowed and blessed, thou needest nothing more, only to feed on what thou hast and delight thyself in Him. But thinkest thou ever of those who have missed their way in this dark world, and know nothing of thy happiness? O seek to win such hapless souls to thy Saviour. Every soul that thou winnest, will be as another precious stone in His diadem of glory. This is the happy work of the lover of souls—to gather precious stones from the rubbish

of this world for His crown; they can be found nowhere else. And are there not many lost souls around thee to whom thou mayest speak, if thou canst not take a public place in testimony? Jesus says, "Come," to the weary and heavy laden; and thou mayest say, "Come;" and even to the chief of sinners Jesus said, "*Make haste*, and Come." O wondrous words of purest grace, from the living lips of the blessed Jesus! "*Make haste*, and Come." This could not mean to-morrow, but just at once. A child knows what "make haste" means, and why should sinners doubt and linger?

Hearest thou these encouraging words, my dear reader? Wilt thou come — come just now? Happily for Zaccheus, he made haste and came. And what did he receive? *Salvation!* But suppose for a moment he had lingered, doubted, reasoned, delayed, until it was too late, as many did then, and do now? What would the consequences have been? Salvation lost, the soul lost, Christ lost, heaven lost, and all the blessedness we have been describing. But what would be the sharpest sting of the undying worm?—self-reproach. The awful sentence would recall the past, justify the Judge, and fill the condemned soul with speechless agony. "Because I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your

fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when darkness and anguish cometh upon you." Proverbs i. 24–27.

Oh, then, my dear reader, as thou wouldest not have this fearful sentence read to thee, with heaven's gates closed and hell's gates open,—come now to Jesus, "make haste and come." Nothing could more express the Lord's earnestness with lost sinners; nothing could more ensure thy sweet welcome to Him: but alas, alas, nothing could more deepen thy agonies, nothing could more fill thee with unmitigated misery, if thou refusest, than thy reflections on that gracious word, "make haste and come." The work of redemption is finished, all is done, thou hast only to yield thy heart to His love, believe His word, and trust the blood that can make thee whiter than snow. But on no consideration delay. O haste thee, haste thee, while the door is open, to-morrow may be too late, the door may be shut, and thy precious soul lost, lost for ever and for ever. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation xxii. 17.

Having so far cleared the ground, and shewn the foundations of christian devotedness in service, we will now go on with verse 2.

Verse 2. "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that*

ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The connection between the first and second verses is manifest and beautiful. We have the body in the one and the mind in the other; the whole man is brought in. We are also reminded thereby, that mere bodily exercise, though consisting in the diligent observance of rites and ceremonies, would profit nothing without the renewal of the mind. The inner as well as the outer man must be formed morally for God, and His service. Hence the one grand end for the Christian to gain is the discernment of the will of God; and the highest expression of christian life in this world, is the life that is most perfectly subject to the divine will. We have to prove—though we may be long in doing so—that this and this only is good, acceptable, perfect, and well pleasing in His sight.

This then is thy life lesson, O my soul; and thou wilt do well to study these two verses carefully and together. Meditate deeply on each member of each verse, they are peculiarly full of the most practical truth for the Christian. Obedience, devotedness, subjection to the Master's will, are the truest features of the life of Christ in thee. This is to be thy one grand object—thy constant care—to be like Him! Lord grant a growing transformation to Thine own image both within and without! And now, observe, that the first thing thou hast to learn is how to guard against the evil course of this world.

"*And be not conformed to this world.*" This is a hard lesson to learn. To be personally in a place where the habits and opinions of men rule, and yet to be outside of it morally—in heart and spirit—where the will of God rules is thy lesson. Nothing but the grace of God and a close walk with Him could make thee triumph here. Imagine for a moment, a young Christian fresh in his first love and in the bloom of his new eternal life, actively engaged from morning till night in the city of London, where gold is worshipped, and where everything else is sacrificed to the idol. Nevertheless, non-conformity to the spirits around him must be maintained; and when the hour of closing comes, non-conformity to their ways. Evenings reveal whose we are and whom we love and serve. The happy Christian is ready, with all his heart, for the prayer, the worship, or the instruction meeting, And many such there are, the Lord be praised!

The secret of our strength is the knowledge of Christ and the heart's occupation with Him. We learn to say in such circumstances, Christ is this to me, Christ is that to me, Christ is everything to me, thus it is all and only Christ. And no better school can there be to teach us watchfulness and dependence on Him. The experience is good, we learn our own weakness and folly in the midst of those who would rejoice in the smallest compromise, and become more and more cast upon Christ, and learn more and more of the depths of His grace,

the value of His word, and the glory of His Person. Or, as the apostle John puts it, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." 1 John ii. 14.

THE CAUSE OF WEAKNESS THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH.

There are some Christians who think it very humble to be doubting at times their own salvation: but such are always weak Christians, and constantly in danger of being conformed to the spirit, the conduct, and the customs of this present evil age. So long as there is uncertainty as to our own salvation, there will be occupation with self in place of Christ. This is ruinous as to testimony and consistency. When we are looking to ourselves—our feelings, doings, experience—the old nature is active. When we are looking to Christ, His love, His finished work, His place in the glory, the new nature, is active. And this makes all the difference between the two Christians. The former is fighting with his own heart that loves the things he is to strive against, but his difficulties increase, and because there is no joy, there is no strength. The latter being set free from self, and looking to Jesus, finds in Him a positive power for conflict and service. When the eye is fixed on Him all other objects are shut out. The new nature and the new object acting thus upon each other, our joy abounds, our

strength increases; all useless weights are laid aside and the sin that easily besets us, and we run with patience the race that is set before us. This is the only true principle of the transformation here spoken of.

"*But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" We have briefly glanced at the negative side of the second verse—non-conformity to the world, separateness from its maxims and its ways. We now come to the positive side—the renewing of the mind. This is all important. It is the renewal of the whole inner man; the deep springs of the heart which only the eye of God can see. He looks for the renewal of the understanding, affections, and will. Our old ideas which ruled the mind before we knew God and His Christ must all be given up, and new thoughts, new motives, new objects, new feelings, new intentions, as springing from our one new object—Christ in the glory—must have full sway over all the faculties of the mind, as well as over all the members of the body. There must be a complete transformation within and without, by the renewing of the mind. The Christian is a new man in Christ, "which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Colossians i. 10.

Most mysterious, but blessed indeed is the

Christian's position as here viewed! He must live, and think, and judge, in his new nature, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. At the same time he knows that the old nature is encompassing the new on every side, and which, though dead in the reckoning of faith, and according to the judgment of God on the cross, is still alive in fact, and will never fail to strive for its old seat of government in the mind and ways of the believer. This keeps him on his watch tower; from thence he discovers the movements of his enemies, and the mode of their attack. But he remembers the word, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." He is no longer in the flesh—though the flesh be in him—but in Christ as risen and exalted, and he knows it. This is the strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe. Thy strength, remember, O my soul, lies not in the number of thy privileges and blessings, but in the Person of thy Lord. Could the enemy beguile thee to count up thy many blessings as a believer, and meditate on these as thy riches apart from the Person of Christ, thou wouldst be little better than David when he numbered his men; or like John and James who were thinking about a good place in the kingdom. Paul desired Christ—"That I may win him." Oh! think of Himself—the blessed Lord! think of the place He has in the favour of God; oh! think with what perfect complacency the Father's eye rests

on His well-beloved! and then think of thy place in Him, thy acceptance in Him, thy home, thy rest, thy peace, thy happy welcome in Him, for ever and for ever. This sums up all blessedness and sets the heart at rest for ever—*oneness with Christ.*

"Jesus, my all in all Thou art,
My rest in toil, my ease in pain;
The medicine of my broken heart;
'Mid storms, my peace; in loss, my gain;
My smile beneath the tyrant's frown;
In shame, my glory and my crown."

We must now return for a moment to the practical working of this great principle in every-day life. Without the inward renewal which the apostle here insists upon, there could be no discernment of the mind of God, and no real separation from the world. The outward difference between the believer and the man of the world, must flow from the condition of the mind as renewed and strengthened by grace. Otherwise, it would be the merest formality. The path of separation is too narrow for the natural eye to discern. No broad lines are laid down in the word of God to mark the Christian's way through this world; the spiritual eye alone can see the way out of it. "There is a path," says Job, "which no fowl knoweth, and which no vulture's eye hath seen." Chapter xxviii. 7.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY.

The calling and responsibility of the Christian, then, is to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." This is to be his one grand object as to the whole path of his service in this world. But how, it may be asked, is this end to be gained? The truest answer would be—like-mindedness to Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." And again, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Paul says positively, "But we have the mind of Christ." And if we are to walk so as to please God, we must walk even as Christ walked. And this, according to John, is what we *ought* to do. "He that saith he abideth in him *ought* himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Philippians ii. 5; Hebrews x. 9; 1 Corinthians ii. 16; 1 John ii. 6.

The measure of the soul's obedience to the will of God is Christ; He must be the alone object before the mind. But to prove that will *practically*, we must be whole-hearted for Him, and be strengthened by the power of His grace acting on the renewed mind. The Holy Spirit, who only can shew us the mind of God, must be ungrieved. We must be continually on the watch against the inroads of the world—the spirit of the age—and gradually growing in grace and in the knowledge of the divine will in all things.

Christian devotedness is thus complete in truth;

the whole man is consecrated to the Lord, and laid upon His altar. The body is yielded up, the mind is transformed, and the will of God discerned; the man as a whole is devoted to God.

Elsewhere the apostle prays for the complete *sanctification* of the entire man, which we must just glance at in passing. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." In this remarkable passage, it is the expressed will of God, that those who have been saved through grace, and brought into relationship with himself, should be entirely consecrated to Him. This, surely, is devotedness without limit. It is the will of our God, that the Christian, in every part of his being should be wholly sanctified, or consecrated, to Himself as "the very God of peace." What grace, what love, what goodness, thou mayest well exclaim, O my soul! It is overwhelming! As water rises to its level, so God would have thee, in every thought of thy mind, in every part of thy being, rise to Himself as thy proper object, resource, and rest.

The *soul* is usually spoken of as the *individual*; as, "The souls that came with Jacob into Egypt." The *body* is the instrument of the soul's expression and action; and the *spirit*, of its capacity and power. John the Baptist came in "the spirit and power of

Elias," not in the *soul* of Elias. Such is man in all the parts of his being; and the apostle prays that each part may "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He does not say, observe, unto the day of death, but, "unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This may shew thee what an important place the coming of the Lord had in the mind of the apostle, or rather in the mind of the Holy Spirit, and what an important place it ought to have in the minds of all Christians. It is an essential, or at least, a most influential part of christian life. Its place in this passage is perfectly beautiful. The believer, who is now but in part sanctified, shall be wholly then, and in every part of his being—body, soul, and spirit. What a wonderful thought this gives us of what we may now call, poor humanity. Then it will be perfected in each part, ennobled by grace, conformed to the glorious image of Christ Himself, who is the Head and Source of this new life in the glory.

Who would not heave a sigh and drop a tear over the blind indifference of those who are pursuing a course that must lead to the utter ruin, and the eternal degradation, of humanity in the depths of hell! How exalted in heaven, how lowered in hell! Stop, dear reader, stop, and think! Where wouldst thou be for ever? Hurled down the deep descent into the fiery gulf of the burning lake, or carried on the wings of love to the bright regions of glory?

It must be the one or the other. There is no middle path here, there is no middle place hereafter. What is thy governing object now? Christ or the world? This determines thy future state. If the world be chosen in place of Christ, and its pleasures preferred to His cross in following Him, thy condemnation will be just, and thy deep debasement but the natural consequence of thy inexcusable folly. But, oh, what a wreck! that fair and stately vessel—humanity—body, soul, and spirit, which might have entered the port of life under the banner of a Saviour's love, and amidst the joyous welcomes of many a well-known voice on that shining shore, now lies a hapless wreck on that dark, distant, dreary shore, the lake of fire. Think, oh think, dear reader! Would tears of blood be too much to shed over such a melancholy wreck of our common humanity? But think also, I pray thee, of a resurrection body, characterised by four things—"incorruption, glory, power, spiritual." This is the noble vessel by which the saint in glory will express himself; the soul, the proper seat of affection, now purified and all its capacities enlarged, what love will it take in and give out! The mind, elevated and dignified by union with Christ, walks above the myriad hosts of shining ones who had never sinned, and in intelligent relationship with God, meditates on His glory. And what must the noble workings of that mind be, when moved, guided, and sustained by the Holy

Spirit? This is the sure and happy portion of all who believe in Jesus now, and give their hearts to Him. Blessed privilege, precious opportunity; there is no time like the present! Let Him have thy heart now, my dear reader, thy whole heart, and for ever!

Oh! happy Christian, thou mayest well give up the tinselled vanities of time for the glories of eternity! But even now thou knowest thy place in the glory. Christ, in His Person, and in His present position in the presence of God, is the expression of thy place there. Every believer has his place before God in Christ, and in the righteousness of God, which He accomplished in Christ, having glorified Himself in that obedient, blessed One. And now, God would have all who are brought into this relationship with Himself, to have no object before their minds but Christ in the glory, so that we may do His will, and be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Oh! who upon earth can conceive
What in heaven we are called to share!
Or who this dark world would not leave,
And earnestly long to be there!
There Christ is the light and the sun,
His glories unhinderedly shine;
Already our joy is begun,
Our rest is the glory divine.

'Tis good, at His word, to be here,
Yet better by far to be gone,
And there in His presence appear,
And rest where He rests on the throne;
Yet, oh! it will triumph afford
When Him we shall see in the air;
When we enter the joy of the Lord,
For ever abide with Him there."

Verse 3. "*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*" The Christian's walk, according to the first two verses, should be characterised by devotedness and obedience; and according to the verse before us, by humility and dependence.

These four graces, watchfully maintained in the presence of God, would certainly produce a very complete Christian; one very like his Lord and Master, who, though entirely devoted to the glory of God, was meek and lowly in heart. We should naturally suppose, that when there is such devotedness to God, both in body and soul, there would also be great sobriety of judgment and lowliness of mind. But, alas! it is not always so. The one is far from being a necessary consequence of the other. On the contrary, there is always a danger of the flesh coming in and availing itself of the power which such devotedness gives, either to as-

sume a tone of superiority and high-mindedness, or to affect a false humility and speak contemptuously of self. This is manifest on every hand at the present hour, and it is written on every page of church history. Of this tendency the apostle was fully aware, and warns against it, as we learn from the peculiar tone and energy of his style in this verse.

The words, "For I say, through the grace given unto me," have more the tone of apostolic authority, than the affectionate entreaties of a brother, as in the first verse, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren." But we must not suppose that the style of the one verse is less perfect, less consistent, less affectionate, than the other, but that the character of the exhortation, in the wisdom of God, required a different tone and style! Firmness is perfectly consistent with humility, and faithfulness with the strongest affection.

The apostle stands, as it were, at the centre of practical Christianity. He sees its bearings on every side. His mind is filled with the higher principles of entire devotedness to the will of God, and also with the humbler gifts, which were to find their expression in the gracious ministries of love among the saints. He writes with decision and energy to secure both. The former he had faithfully enjoined in the first two verses; and now he is about to expatiate with great minuteness on the latter. The third verse is his stand-point. He

clearly sees and feels as one standing in the light of God, that high-mindedness would be ruinous to the first, and an effectual hindrance to the second. The will of God being the object of christian service, whether in the higher or humbler sphere, real devotedness must consist in the denial of self, and in humbly waiting on God to know His good and perfect will in all things. The human will must be set aside, if we are to enter into the meaning, importance, and application of this condensed treasury of practical Christianity.

Thou wilt now see, O my soul, a divine reason for the changed style of the great apostle; and thou wilt also see that he is most personal in his application of this weighty truth. He does not merely address the church as a body, but he appeals to every one among the saints at Rome; the least as well as the greatest. This will shew thee how prone all are to over-value themselves, even in the church of God and in their service to His saints. Oh, what deceitful hearts we have! What need for watchfulness!—for constant communion with the truly humble and blessed Lord, who "loved us, and gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour."

But there is an opposite error into which many fall, and which must be as carefully avoided by the Christian. This is an affectation of humility by speaking of oneself in a depreciating manner. When a man speaks of "his small measure; of

being the most unfit person for the important work he has in hand;" we feel that he is either insincere or unwise. God never requires the exercise of a gift which He has not bestowed. This species of false humility must be watched against by all who would walk with God in integrity of heart. God is real and He must have reality in us; He is true and He must have truth in the inward parts. Nevertheless, there are those who honestly, but unduly, depreciate their gift and fail to act for God and His people. This is a false modesty, and also a serious evil, and one which the Lord must judge sooner or later. But now, mark well, my soul, the wisdom of holy scripture. This alone, by God's grace, can give thee a well-balanced, a well-adjusted mind.

"Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The first thing is to find thy true place in the presence of God according to thy faith in Christ, and then thy own place amongst thy fellow-servants. The measure of faith with which each believer is blest, in the sovereign grace of God, becomes the proper limit, within which he is to occupy himself according to the will of God. Surely the man who has the greatest faith, who is a father in Christ, and who knows most of the word of God, will rise to his own level among his fellow Christians, where the Holy Spirit rules. The Lord give us to know the measure and character of our gift, what He has

prepared us for; that we may be preserved from all extremes. In this as in all things the Christian's path is a narrow one, and requires spiritual discernment. Nothing short of constant communion with Him who closed His life of perfect obedience on the cross, will keep us in the place of true humility, obedience, and dependence. O Lord, lead Thy servants over Thine own path, preserve them from the indolence that falls asleep, from the energy of nature that would go too fast, from a false modesty that refuses to do Thy bidding, and from the want of modesty that would yield to the impulse of the natural will. May we never forget, that "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of Christ."* Ephesians iv. 7.

"I would not work, my soul to save,
That work my Lord hath done:
But I would work like any slave
For love to God's dear Son."

Verses 4, 5. "*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*" The apostle having laid down the great principles of individual christian devotedness, now descends to all the forms

* Haldane's Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, vol. iii. p. 80; Lectures on the Romans, by W. K., p. 241.

which the ministry of love assumes in the Christian, according to the various positions in which he stands, and to the spirit in which he ought to walk in every relationship. The theme before thee now, O my soul, is christian service.

Thou wilt do well to pause here for a little, and meditate on the foundation of this service and its peculiar character. It is by no means generally or well understood. Still it is always well to ascertain, when revealed, the divine reason of things, the spring from whence they flow. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." The Christian's relation to the body of Christ, and to all other Christians as members of that one body, forms the true basis, and the wide sphere, of christian duties as detailed in chapter xii. This was an entirely new thing in the ways of God with men. We have nothing corresponding to it in the Old Testament, nor even during the life of the blessed Lord on the earth. There were saints of God from the beginning, souls born of God, but they were never formed into one body till after the cross and ascension of Christ. When He was glorified at God's right hand in heaven, the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, and united Jew and Gentile into one body on the earth. The body was then formed in union with the exalted Head. This is the church. It is something more than merely believing, they are members of Christ's body, and

of one another on the earth. See especially, 1 Corinthians xii. 12–27; Ephesians ii. 13–16.

The doctrine of the unity of the church as the body of Christ is most fully unfolded in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. Here it is only referred to in a practical point of view, and that, in connection with the duties of the members individually—duties that flow from their position in the one body, being severally members one of another. This is the new platform laid down by the apostle for the new order of christian ministry, which has its immediate sphere of exercise within the limits of the church as the one body. In illustration of this union and responsibility, he refers to the wonderful structure of the human body. "For we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office." Every member has its proper place, and its proper function to perform in the human body; and every member is valuable according to its healthful activity and usefulness. Though all the members are not of equal importance, yet none are useless. The smallest and least honourable is necessary to the others, and should be treated with even more consideration, as the apostle elsewhere teaches. "And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour." The foot may be less comely than the eye, but the eye could not perform the peculiar function of the foot, therefore the eye

must honour the foot for the valuable services it renders to the body, though it may be covered with dust by the way.

But enough as to the figure, its completeness will more fully appear as we proceed with our chapter.

In the meantime, let me invite thee, O my soul, to a closer acquaintance with thy Lord, as Head of the church, before looking at the various gifts in the members. They all flow from Him who provides for the spiritual supply of His people's wants. He is the source of their blessing in virtue of their union with Him. Oh, wondrous truth! Oh, blessed reality! Oh, happiness complete! Christ as the exalted Man in the glory, the measure and fulness of thy blessing! Thou art one with Him! Having glorified God on the earth, having blotted out sin, abolished death, vanquished Satan, risen again from the dead, He ascended up on high as the Head of His body the church. He entered heaven, not on the ground of His own essential righteousness, not as God, nor simply as man, but "by his own blood." This was His title to the throne; His own shed blood. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." And this is thy title; He goes in on the ground of His people's title. We are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." This is the great truth that goes to the very depths of the heart of faith. Only think, and still think;

meditate, and still meditate; until thou art far beyond thy depth in that ocean of love which flows around that cross and around that throne. What seest thou? The Man Christ Jesus on the throne. What is His title to be there? The putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. What, then, is He to thy heart as the Man in the glory? He is the witness that my sins were all put away on the cross; that God's righteous judgment against my sins has been borne and vindicated; that I am before God in Christ, in the righteousness of God Himself; that Christ, in His person, and in His present position, is the expression of my place and portion there! To know Him, is to know my own place in the glory. But what more can I say? It is an ocean without a shore. And it is true of all believers—of every member of His body, the feeblest as well as the strongest. The apostle John sets his seal to this, "As he is, so are we in this world."

But grace has no evil eye. We forget not the Christless soul, the portionless, the godless, the homeless soul. This wealthy portion may be thine, my dear reader, even though thou art the chief of sinners. It was for sinners, and for sinners the chief, that Jesus died. All, all, is thine if thou wilt only believe. The gospel is preached to faith. In the finished work of Christ and His exaltation, thou hast a solid ground for the immediate pardon of thy sins, and the complete salvation

of thy soul. God has glorified Himself in Christ, and He is waiting to glorify Himself again, in the full remission of all thy sins through faith in His well-beloved Son. This is all; honour the Son; embrace the Son! honour Him as the one that suffered to save thee from everlasting suffering in the lake of fire. Yes, this is all; honour Him with thy faith, thy confidence, thy worshipful adoration. Is it difficult to love one who so loves? to trust one who was faithful unto death? who is God as well as man?

But be assured, if thou art still careless, that great and wonderful as the work of Christ is, it is of no value to thee without faith. But its full value is thine the moment thou hast faith in Him. He has borne the judgment due to sin, He has done all that is needed for the glory of God and for the salvation of the sinner; the work is absolutely complete. He who knew best, said, "It is finished." Believe it, it is true; believe it now, and thou art saved, saved for ever. Oh! turn not, I pray thee, a deaf or a careless ear to the joyful sound. Oh! hear the joyful sound of heaven in that one word, *Come!* COME! COME! Love waits, love lingers; sin and Satan are also here! The awful judgment of God is hanging over this doomed world; hanging over thee; flee, then, oh! flee, to the only shelter from the impending storm, from wrath to the uttermost, the sure shelter of the Saviour's blood. Rest on this word whatever

thy frames and feelings may be, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John i. 7.

"The ever blessèd Son of God
Went up to Calvary for me:
There paid my debt, there bore my load,
In His own body on the tree.

Jesus, whose dwelling is the skies,
Went down into the grave for me;
There overcame my enemies,
There won the glorious victory.

In love the whole dark path He trod,
To consecrate a way for me;
Each bitter footstep marked with blood,
From Bethlehem to Calvary."

Verse 6. "*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.*" The subject of "gifts," as brought before us in 1 Corinthians xii., Ephesians iv., and Romans xii., is of the deepest importance to the student of the New Testament, and to all who would understand the constitution of the church of God, and who would be found acting therein according to His mind. But it would be quite out of place to attempt even a brief sketch of so great a subject here; we will merely notice the difference between the gifts in Corinthians and Ephesians, before proceeding with our chapter.

In Corinthians, they may be regarded, for the most part, as the manifestation of divine power, and as signs and wonders for the unbelieving. "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." The Corinthians being unspiritual and fond of display, over-valued the sign-gifts because they were a manifestation of power before the world, and gave themselves a certain importance. It was no doubt thought a very grand thing to be able to speak in tongues without having learnt them, and to work miracles. But this vanity is not peculiar to the Corinthians, though eloquence and intellectual attainments had always a great charm for them. The servant of the Lord now, as well as then, has to watch against investing himself with the importance of his gift and thereby attracting attention to his person. And this may be even when there is true devotedness, and when the Lord may be using his gift for blessing to others. Riches, time, influence, learning, and natural eloquence, are gifts, as well as miraculous power to speak in languages not previously learned, and ought to be used for the glory of God and the good of others, remembering that we are accountable to Him for every gift He has bestowed upon us.* The servant who misapplies any gift or talent which the Master

* Not that money can be said to be amongst the gifts which Christ bestows upon His church. Still the possession of it is a very weighty responsibility indeed.

has conferred upon him, is unfaithful to his trust; he may be mis-spending, or using for his own importance and advantage, that which has been entrusted to him for the glory of the Lord and the welfare of His people.

The apostle evidently mourns over the Corinthians because of their failure as to the gifts of God. Their love of display before the world, rather than the enjoyment of God Himself in His word, and the edification of His saints, was a grief to him. He therefore endeavours to convince them of their mistake, by shewing them that tongues are one of the lowest forms of the Spirit's operations, and prophesyings one of the highest. After contrasting the two at great length, he half reproachfully says, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." The refreshment, comfort, uplifting of the heart—the edification of the saints, should be the one grand object of the christian teacher. He who ministers Christ and His work to the soul, out of the fulness of his own heart, is the minister who always edifies and never disappoints. The sign gifts in the early church were for a distinct purpose and ceased when that object was accomplished. "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Hebrews ii. 4.

In Ephesians the character of the gifts is very different. The blessed Lord, as Head of the church at the right hand of God, is seen as the giver. In Corinthians the Holy Spirit is the dispenser of the gifts. This marks the difference; the former is affection, the latter is power, ecclesiastically viewed. Besides, the gifts of Ephesians abide with the church, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." In Corinthians the gifts may be regarded as spiritual powers; in Ephesians as spiritual persons. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers." The two aspects of gifts, however—the power of the Spirit and the affections of Christ—are perfectly harmonious. Power is needed, but a *Person*, not a power, is the true object of the affections of the church in all ages.*

In Romans, the character and application of the gifts are somewhat different from both Ephesians and Corinthians. Here it is more the question of ministry in connection with the membership of the body. Responsibility flows from being members of the body of Christ, and every one members one of another. This is a truth of such vital, practical

* See Lectures on 1 Corinthians xii., xiv., by W. K.

importance, that I would have thee, O my soul, give it thy best and thy most prayerful attention. The connection is so intimate both with the Head and the many members, that all are affected either favourably or unfavourably by thy service. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

And forget not, I pray thee, that though the outward manifestation of the church's unity be broken up, and in this respect a ruin, thy responsibility is the same. The standard of divine truth remains unchanged, and couldst thou admit a lower standard than the good and perfect will of thy God and Father? The "one body" is not in ruins. None but real Christians have the privilege of membership here; but as all such *are* members of that body, whether they be externally united in christian fellowship or not, our love ought to be cultivated and cherished towards them, simply on the ground of their union with Christ. This is the only truth that will deliver thee from the strange principle of independence in a unity, and from all sectarian partiality. We ought to add our hearty "amen" to the prayer, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."*

The apostle's comparison of the human body to

* Haldane on the Romans, vol. iii. p. 83.

believers as one body in Christ is beautiful and appropriate, and also illustrates the character of christian ministry within the limits of the known members of that body. This truth, however, be it observed, does not touch the Christian's individuality as a man in Christ, or as a man of God amongst men, or as an evangelist to the regions beyond, or in any way as to his personal responsibility and blessing. We are now speaking of the nature and sphere of christian service as defined in the chapter before us. And here the apostle shews that it would be as unreasonable for all Christians to have the same gifts, as for all the members of the human body to have the same office; that the diversities of gifts and offices are necessary to the perfection and usefulness of the body of Christ. "There are diversities of gifts," says the apostle to the Corinthians, "but the same Spirit." This weighty truth was much needed at Corinth and everywhere. Like them we are disposed to talk a great deal about the greater gifts, and leave very little room for the exercise of the lesser. But we must remember that although the gifts differ in measure and character, they all come from the same source. And wherever there is such a state of things, either from pre-arrangement, or from strong partialities, as to shut out the lesser gifts, the Spirit is quenched, the assembly loses the benefit of the diversity of gifts, and ceases to act in accordance with the mind of God.

Hast thou a gift, my soul? Remember then, that the sphere of its exercise is the church of God, without reference to locality; but see that it is a gift—a positive gift of God—not an imitation of others, lest thou shouldst become a troubler of the saints of God, a hinderer, not a help to their worship.

We will now take a brief glance at the various gifts here enumerated by the apostle, and may the Lord give thee spiritual discernment to see which, or how many, are thine.

"*Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.*" The general idea of prophesying is the foretelling of future events, though not limited to that office. We accordingly find the term *prophet* applied in a more general way in the Old Testament. The bearer of the message from God, whether relating to things present or things to come, is called a prophet; and so is the interpreter of the divine message. Of Abraham it is said, "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." (Gen. xx. 7.) Moses, as the great interpreter of the mind of God to the Jews, is frequently spoken of as a prophet.

In the New Testament, those called "prophets," and classed with apostles, had a perfectly distinct mission from Old Testament prophets, and must carefully be distinguished when studying the word of God. "And he gave some, apostles; and some,

prophets." These were the two classes of workmen whom God especially used at the very beginning, when laying the foundation of the church; hence they are sometimes called "foundation gifts;" but there is no reason to believe that they were long continued to the church, though at different periods in her history there have been men raised up to do something like the work of apostles and prophets; such as the different periods of great revivals, and the Reformation. The apostles were the inspired, infallible, authoritative messengers of Christ; the prophets were only occasionally so, but explained to others with great clearness, what they themselves had learnt from the holy scriptures, or from inspired men. "Though I have the *gift* of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . ." "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Thus we see they had a special gift for the proper expounding of all scripture, and for the proper application of it to their hearers.

The New Testament prophet was also as the mouth of God, delivering the particular communication he had received, whether designed for instruction or exhortation. No form of ministration gave the hearer such a sense of the immediateness of the divine presence as prophesying, or such a certainty that the mind of God was being expressed. Thus it was the most intimate and direct dealing of God with the soul through man

as His messenger. As an illustration of the peculiar power of this gift, nothing can be clearer than the case of the woman of Samaria. "Go, call thy husband," was the voice of God to her guilty conscience. She felt she was in the searching light of His presence, and at once confessed her sin. All was reality now, she concealed nothing. "The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." These words brought the conviction home to her heart that she stood revealed before God Himself, and that He who spoke to her was His prophet. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." John iv. 16–19.

And now, after thy careful and repeated meditations on this precious gift, what are thy thoughts as to its value? Only one deep, earnest, fervent desire to possess it. Lord, give me this power, is my constant, heart-felt prayer. A thousand times I have mourned my feebleness here. Highest in character, and most desirable of all the gifts, as it gives the anxious inquirer to feel that God is speaking to him, not the servant; that it is the voice of God he hears, not man's; that it is the authority of God he must bow to, not the conclusions of the preacher. There may be many teachers and preachers, whose ministrations may be a

comfort and blessing to others, but who are strangers to this divine art—this power of putting the soul in direct contact with God Himself, and setting the soul in the light of the divine presence.

Only one other thought, and we pass on. Whatever gift, or gifts, we may have from the Lord, all must be used in subjection to Him, and regulated by His word. Even prophecy must be "*according to the proportion of faith.*" We must never go beyond our measure; if we do, we shall end in the flesh, though we commenced in the spirit. Unless a man's teaching is in full accordance with scripture, he has no right to consider himself entitled to the confidence of others, however great his gift. So says the apostle, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." This is authoritative and unchangeable. The Lord give us to judge all by His own word; whether speaker or hearer, teacher or taught, we have no other standard.

Verse 7. "*Or ministry, let us wait on our ministry; or he that teacheth, on teaching.*" The terms *minister* and *ministry* are sometimes employed in reference to the apostles, to teachers, and to all who serve in the gospel; and sometimes in a more restricted sense, as to the office of deacon

and the deaconship. The latter seems to be the appropriate application of the word "ministry" here. The deacons were a class of officers who were to attend to the poor and the sick, and the external affairs of the church generally. (See Acts vi. 1–3 ; Phil. i. 1 ; 1 Tim. iii. 8–13.) And if a man's gift lay in ministering thus to the saints, he was to attend to it. "Or ministry, let us wait on our ministry." This is a real service of love, and one most acceptable to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His poor saints, and he who is thus privileged, will shew his wisdom by occupying himself in his own gift, and not be attempting that which he is neither called to nor qualified for. Great wisdom and spiritual discernment are required, in order to "use the office of a deacon well ;" and distribute wisely that which may be called one's own money, or money entrusted to us by others. We must look at "the poor of the flock" from the Master's point of view, and love them through His affection.

"*Or he that teacheth, on teaching.*" The teacher is one who not only knows and enjoys the truth himself, but has the gift of so unfolding it as to lead others to see it, enjoy it, own its weight and importance ; at the same time, the teacher must not be confounded with the prophet, nor teaching with prophesying. The apostle is particularly energetic in keeping every one to his own work in the unity of the body, and from engaging

in a service for which he has no divinely given fitness.

The first thing to be ascertained is the *character* of our gift, and secondly its *measure*. And he who serves diligently according to its nature and measure, will be recognised and esteemed by his brethren, and owned of God for help and blessing in His assembly: but on the other hand, if a brother is vain of his gift, mistakes its nature, or pushes it beyond its measure, he is not led of the Spirit, he is acting in the flesh, and when this is felt, his ministry must be unacceptable. And what follows? He complains that his gift is not appreciated—for he has a real gift—whereas, it was the forwardness of nature that was rejected, not the godly exercise of his gift, "according to the proportion of faith." This is one of the bitter roots which sometimes spring up and trouble the assembly of God. The Lord give us all to watch against this with a godly jealousy, so that there may be no ungracious criticisms, unworthy partialities, hard judging, on the one hand, or vain assumption on the other. Lord, give us to be only too happy to serve Thee however small our gift, if it be only to hand a hymn-book to a stranger, or conduct him to a seat. The thought, oh! the wondrous thought—*Jesus died for me!* is enough to gird thee for the humblest work. Never forget this, my soul, and it will always keep thee humble and always girded to serve.

Teachers, though in some respects resembling the prophets, are expressly distinguished from them. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." The apostles were the inspired communicators of God's mind to man, and invested with power to govern in the name of the Lord. The prophets were not only occasionally connected with the revelation of truth before unknown, but used of God in the important work of so expounding and applying scripture, as to set the soul in the light of His presence. Teachers are distinguished from apostles and prophets, inasmuch as they were not necessarily inspired, and are classed with the regular and permanent gifts of Christ to His church. The word of God is the standard by which all teachers must be tried, however great their gift or acceptance. And He gave some, "evangelists, pastors, and teachers." These we have still with us, thank the Lord, and many of them working for Him, notwithstanding the general confusion and broken state of the professing church. Fitness to teach is a gift of the ascended Lord, and which all ought to possess who take the place of teachers. No mere human appointment or education can make a man a minister of Christ. How truly happy to be able to say with the apostle, "Our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not

of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." 2 Corinthians iii. 5, 6.

Verse 8. "*Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.*" The teacher has chiefly to do with the understanding, the exhorter with the conscience. It requires great grace to be an exhorter, and equally great grace to receive the word of exhortation. The gift is now rare in the church of God. Few have grace to bring the keen edge of the word down upon the conscience, and at the same time make the person feel that love rules, and that his good is the only object in view. Exhortation includes admonition, consolation; urging to practical duties, dissuading from the neglect of duty, pointing out shortcomings, applying the promises or the threatenings of scripture as the case may be. But we need not dwell on the difficulties of the exhorter, and the still greater difficulty of submitting to the exhortation. They must be apparent to all. Personal feelings are apt to arise and false motives to be imputed; still, the apostle presses the exercise of the gift as needed and wholesome for the members of the body of Christ. The Lord grant that in this day of high-mindedness, of insubjection to the word of God, our lives may be a constant testimony to the will of Christ, and our diligent attention to the things of the Lord both publicly and privately,

a constant exhortation to our fellow-Christians. Then it will be not only, Do as I say, but do as I do.

"*He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.*" The apostle is here speaking of *gifts*, not of *office;* and of the manner in which the various duties of Christians, as members of one body, ought to be performed. He whose gift is riches, and who giveth of his substance for the wants of the poor, or the work of the Lord, is to do it with *simplicity.* Here pause a moment, my soul; allow thyself to be arrested by this weighty caution. Nothing is more difficult than to distribute money according to this word of the Lord. "Simplicity" here means "singleness of heart, fearing God;" and again, "In singleness of your heart, as unto Christ." (Col. iii. 24; Eph. vi. 5; 2 Cor. i. 12.) How searching is the word of God! It guards against ostentation, love of praise, wrong motives, improper objects; and on the other hand, it warns us against all evasive pretexts, such as, "Not convenient, I have so many calls, I am not able to give." At the same time, the Christian is but a steward, whether he distributes what may be called his own, or the bounty of the church, and he is entitled to look for "simplicity and godly sincerity" in the applicant as well as in himself. There are many plausible appeals made for money, which, when carefully examined, are found to be

neither simple nor sincere. He must also watch against the artful pleader putting his soul in bondage, and making him unhappy. There is only one remedy for all the difficulties connected with giving, as for all other things. The giver must walk before the Lord with purity of motive, free from all improper designs, and waiting to do His will with an honest, impartial simplicity. When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light; perplexity with darkness flees away, the mind of God is discerned, and the clear light of heaven shines on the steward's way.

"*He that ruleth, with diligence.*" Those who are called to exercise the gift of ruler or leader in the assembly of God, are required to do so with the closest attention and zeal. Much sorrow, alienation of feeling, coldness, irregularity in attendance, might be prevented by the watchful and faithful discharge of the ruler's duties. Prevention is better than cure; and in nothing more so than in a community of free, intelligent, but sensitive minds and encompassed with many infirmities. He needs a skilful eye to watch the countenance, to mark the movements, and to notice the first change in conduct. One may be observed hurrying off rather quickly at the close of a meeting, so as to avoid speaking or being spoken to. Why is this? It was not so lately. On inquiry, it is found that offence has been taken from supposed neglect, or

the heart has been wounded by the apparent partiality of the ruler himself. Misunderstanding prevails.

Such a state of things calls for immediate, faithful, wise, and tender dealing. There may be faults on both sides ; grace must reign ; still, that which is right must not be overlooked. But carelessness, indolence, on the part of the ruler at such a moment, might be ruinous to the peace and the prosperity of the assembly. The strong must bear with the weak, and everything like partiality, especially on the part of those who have influence in a meeting, must be carefully avoided. Though we cannot love all alike, we must not manifest our love to some to the grief and wounding of others. Vigilance and fidelity must be the watchword of the ruler, but he must not forget to cherish and manifest the love of Him who died for the flock, and rose again to fold in His everlasting embrace His blood-bought sheep and lambs.

"*He that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*" This is a fine gift, and one much to be coveted by all who visit the poor and the afflicted. We are not only to shew mercy, but to shew it with such a cheerful spirit, as to manifest that, if it be a consolation to them, it is a pleasure to us. The value of any service of love rendered to the children of sorrow, mainly depends on the spirit in which it is done. It should be our watchful study

to spare the feelings of the poor in our acts of benevolence, to soothe the sorrows of the sick, to shed a bright radiance in the chamber of suffering or death, and always to leave behind us the sweet fragrance of the name of Jesus.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE "ONE BODY."

Before passing on to verse 9, may I ask, When, and by what means, we actually become members of the body of Christ? This vital and important truth which has been frequently referred to in the foregoing papers, still lingers in my thoughts, and I should like to master it more fully. Most surely, O my soul, it is well for thee to linger over it, to meditate on that which is not only of present, but of eternal, importance. It is living union with Christ—the expression of thy closest relationship to Him, and to all Christians. Let us begin at the beginning.

The evangelist is first in the field; pastors and teachers follow. His gift is the expression of divine love to the lost. He is to arrest, to awaken, to move souls powerfully by the word preached. He thinks of their state as lost sinners; of their misery, of their danger and distance from God, and his love rises to a burning passion. Their salvation is his one object as a workman. He pleads, he appeals, he warns, he entreats, as if all depended on the words

that burn in his heart and on his lips; yet in faith he looks to God alone for blessing. There is a perfect understanding between his heart and the Lord. He walks with Him. The passionless preacher may find fault with his more zealous brother, and suggest that there is too much of the human element, and fear that it will end in the mere excitement of nature. But though this may look wise and prudent, it lacks the true element of success—the love that sends words that burn into the heart of the sinner.

The truth, through grace, is believed. The love of Christ has prevailed; the value of the blood is seen, the sinner bows at Jesus' feet in the meltings of godly sorrow for sin, yet confides in the thrice holy One. "Jesus loved me as I am, and died for me just as I am," is now his confession. This is faith. The blessed work is done; God is glorified as in nothing else here below; and angels sweep their harps with an ecstasy peculiar to the joys of salvation. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. . . . Which things the angels desire to look into." Luke xv. 10; 1 Peter i. 12.

Individual blessings are the first that follow faith; corporate blessings come afterwards. A man becomes a child of God by faith; he is justified by faith. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into

this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 1, 2.) These may be called the *great individual blessings of faith;* wherever there is faith in Christ, these must follow. They are the four, grand, immediate consequences of faith—being justified, having peace, standing in grace, waiting for glory. But these are not all. In Ephesians i. the long list of individual blessings as the children's portion, is given before the church is referred to. The believer's first position is to be brought to the Father in all the acceptancy of Christ; his second, is to be united to the glorified Man in heaven, and share the blessings and the responsibilities of the membership of the "One body."

When the truth of God is thus believed, and the soul resting on the finished work of Christ, the believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit, and thus made a member of the body of Christ. He is brought into union with Christ in heaven, and with all believers throughout the world, in virtue of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as a divine Person, *making all one.* He who dwells in Christ dwells in us and thereby makes us "One spirit with the Lord;" and one with all that are the Lord's. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." They are joined together by the one Spirit. Many speak and pray about the Holy Spirit as if He were only an "*influence.*" This is very common, but very suggestive. Wherever this state of mind

exists, there can be no proper thoughts of the church as the body of Christ, and very confused thoughts of Christianity, for He is the formative and sustaining power of the body, and dwells in the Christian. The existence and personality of the Holy Ghost, we know, is not denied: but the all-important truth of His presence in the church as a divine Person, and as the bond of its unity, is not apprehended. This is the serious mistake, if not error, of nearly all Christendom, and the source of its darkness and confusion. The present period may be called the *dispensation of the Spirit*, and to speak about Him as an "influence" in place of a divine Person, is to misunderstand His mission and His work. "He shall glorify me," says the blessed Lord, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John xvi. 14.

But know thou, O my soul, and know in all the verities of faith, that the Holy Ghost does two things—first, He works in the saints of God individually: second, He works in the assembly. Whether it be our individual or our corporate blessing, both are made good to us by the presence of the Holy Ghost. As individuals, He gives us to taste the sweetness of joy and peace in believing, of happy liberty and power in service; and also, of living union with the exalted Head, and with all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth. He never took a body like the Lord Jesus, therefore the world knows Him not; He being there-

fore equally in all the assemblies of God throughout the world, necessarily unites them all into one body. In this way, thou wilt see, that all who believe on the Lord Jesus, of every clime and every colour, are baptised by the Holy Spirit, and made to belong to the "one body."

It need scarcely be added, that the truth of the Holy Ghost's presence in the assembly is of much deeper importance than the presence of gifts—of talented servants. Their presence or absence touches not the great truth that the Holy Ghost is there, and that He is still sovereign, and acting as He will to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Surely this should lead us to have greater faith in Him as a divine Person, and less in the presence of gifts great or small. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Matthew xviii. 20.

We will now very briefly glance at the remainder of our most instructive chapter.

Verse 9. "*Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*" The apostle now enters a wider field, and looks at the Christian's path more generally. Hitherto we have been meditating on the position of the Christian as a member of the body of Christ, and the ministries of love which flow from that blessed relationship; but the apostle does not stop here; Christianity must have a broader range; and now his exhor-

tations bear not so much on the church collectively, as on the Christian individually. This we may call *practical Christianity*. In all places, under all circumstances, and in every sphere of life, he is exhorted to the discharge of all christian duties, and that not merely in outward form, but according to the spirit and truth of the divine precept.

"*Let love be without dissimulation.*" This is the first of the apostle's general admonitions, and may be considered the foundation and summary of all the others. He who shines in this grace will abound in every good work. But here, on the threshold of this fresh line of truth, thou mayest well pause for a little, O my soul, and meditate on a love that is free from all dissimulation and guile. Wondrous sight in a world of hollow pretence! But where is it to be found in practical exercise, thou wilt inquire? God only is its source; "for love is of God." It is Himself; God is love; not merely *loving*, but *love*. And should not His children be the expression of His nature—of His moral character? "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." And faith goes on to say, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." Here, mark well, my soul, the true character of communion, and the power of walking in love. "*He that*

dwelleth in love dwelleth in God; and God in him." This is christian communion, but who could explain it? Still, the Christian should be a genuine expression of the real spirit and character of that love in which he dwells. He is formed, sustained and perfected in love. 1 John iv. 7–19.

In this portion of the word, we have divine love manifested in the conversion of the sinner, the communion of the saint, and in his complete conformity to Christ for ever. Love meets him as a lost sinner, makes him like Christ, fits him for communion with God while here, and perfects him for the coming day of judgment, so that he has nothing to fear. He sees his way clear into the glory beyond the tribunal of Christ, where love alone remains, for heaven is its home.

Surely then, thou wilt say, the exhortation of the apostle is a most reasonable one. "Let love be without dissimulation." What else could a Christian be but pure-hearted in his love? He dwells at the fountain of eternal love, feeds upon it, delights in it, and ought to be its full and fair reflection. What could excuse him for allowing a feigned, dissembling love to take the place and usurp the name of christian affection? A love so high in its source, so divine in its nature, so pure in its character, should be guarded by us with all holy jealousy. It is surely of the very deepest moment, that every Christian should be true before God, in the expression and the assertion of his love towards

others, whether within or outside the church. To mislead, or gain an advantage over others, by a fair but false profession of love, has a character of iniquity peculiarly its own. The corruption of that which is so pure in its source, is an evil which we should constantly and diligently watch against.

But was there need for such an exhortation in the apostle's day, and is there need in ours ? Alas, alas, what is it that Christians so fail in as the truthful expression in words of the inmost state of the heart? So few speak or write exactly what they are. Only one could say in answer to the question, "Who art thou ? . . . . Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." He could appeal to His words and say, "I am what I speak." There never was in His words the appearance of what He was not; He was absolutely, and in every particular, what He said. (John viii. 25.) But of none, save the blessed Jesus, could this be said. So deceitful is the human heart, and so false is the world, that nothing but the Holy Spirit, revealing Christ to our souls through the word, and enabling us to walk in the light as God is in the light, keeps us even as believers from departing from the truth, from slipping into misrepresentation, from saying what we are not, and what we mean not.*

Know then, O my soul, and fail not to remember,

* See "Introductory Lectures to the Gospels," p. 517, by W. K.

that the apostle declares that only to be genuine love which is sincere and free from all guile. Nothing is more common in society generally than the manifestation of love where even an opposite disposition exists. But the Christian is to be far, far above all such hollow pretensions. Jesus is the truth, and so should His disciples also be. Self-judgment is especially called for here. Naturally we are unreal. But every one can best judge for himself whether he entertains any feeling in his heart contrary to the outward manifestation of affection. It is quite true that habit may mislead without any intention to deceive: such as the common amenities of life, the inscriptions, the contents and the signatures of our letters. Still, we must have respect to truth in the heart even when so much form prevails. It is only in the light that we are free from selfishness and dissimulation. May the Lord ever keep us there for His own name's sake!

"*Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*" There is an intimate connection between the first and the last two members of this verse—unfeigned love, hating evil, cleaving to good. Where love is real, there must be the abhorrence of evil—especially if that evil touches the object of our affections—and the most persevering devotion to the injured one. To reach the full meaning of this verse, we must rise to Christ. He is before the mind of the Spirit, and of faith. In the Old Testa-

ment (Isa. i. 16, 17) we read, "Cease to do evil: learn to do well." The language in the New is much stronger; Christ is in question. The words *to abhor* and *to cleave to*, express the highest degree of hatred on the one hand, and the most devoted attachment on the other.

Every doctrine or movement, in what is called the religious world, which tends to set aside the claims, or in any way to obscure the glory of Christ, is to be avoided by us as an evil that we abhor. So says the word of God; but what says the religious world? Any person daring so to speak, would be denounced as uncharitable, narrow, and bigoted. Scarcely any term of reproach would be strong enough to express their abhorrence of his views. The one sanctions and encourages what the other abhors, and both are Christians. Which is right? Who is to judge? The word of God. Let the reader examine and decide in the light of that word alone.

The plausible sentiment that proposes to sink all outward differences amongst Christians, to love as brethren, and to work together for the advancement of the gospel, is latitudinarian in its character, and really means a spirit of indifference towards unsound doctrine, and false views of the Person of Christ. Nothing can be worse in principle; but we are told that the end justifies the means. So have the Catholics said for more than a thousand years. "Good, in the eyes of the Papacy, meant

what was good for the church: Evil, whatever was bad for the church." The difference between modern Laodiceanism and ancient Catholicism is small in principle. Neither has Christ as its one, grand, exclusive object.

May the Lord give us grace to make Himself our standard and centre, and neither the church nor the gospel, blessed as they are, and dear to our hearts, in their own subordinate place to Him.

Verse 10. "*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.*" The love spoken of in the previous verse is probably love to all men; here brotherly love is particularly specified. The teaching of the Spirit in this verse seems to be, that Christians should cherish for each other, as brethren in Christ, a love as sincere and tender as if they were the nearest relatives. And this love is to be manifested, not merely in repaying the attentions of others, but in anticipating them in acts of respect and kindness. All Christians are brethren, but as they belong to different families in this life, and called by different names, there is nothing to distinguish them but brotherly love. If this fails, what is left? Our Father is in heaven. He who loves the Father, loves the brethren also. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth him that

begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." 1 John v. 1.

But here, on a point of such practical importance, and one so difficult to practise, it may be well for thee, my soul, to pause, and inquire what the difference is between brotherly *love* and brotherly *kindness*. The apostle says, in writing to the Hebrews, "Let brotherly love continue." But he nowhere says, Let brotherly *kindness* continue. "Love never faileth." Kindness must in some cases. A brother, through the power of Satan, may be walking disorderly, or he may fall into error, and so become a proper subject of discipline; towards such an one our conduct must be changed, though our love remains the same, or even stronger. The mind of the Lord on this point is plainly given: "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. . . . . For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. . . . If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed, yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (Rom. xvi.; 2 Thess. iii.) The persons here spoken of are still in communion; hence the difficulty in cherishing brotherly love, and at the same time exercising a wholesome discipline towards them. When it comes to a case of excommunication, the perplexity

is less, but our love should be none the less. See Second Epistle of St. John.

"*In honour preferring one another.*" Instead of waiting, as we often do, for others to notice us, before we notice them, we should strive to be beforehand with them in the manifestation of our christian respect, or "honour." There is in some a false modesty, in others a secret pride, which leads them to slip quickly out of a meeting, thereby preventing those from speaking to them who gladly would. And this having been continued for some time, the brethren are complained of as cold, and as shewing no love to strangers. But, pray, who is at fault? Let the word of the Lord decide. In honour preferring one another simply means, *to go before, to lead, to set an example.* The meaning is not exactly to esteem others better than ourselves, as in Philippians ii. 3, important as such lowliness of mind is, the mind that was in Christ Jesus; but rather that we should seek to take the lead in these comely ways of our Father's house. And the heart that meditates most deeply on the love of Christ to usward, will be the first to feel that our love to the brethren is not to be governed by cold formalities, but by the measure and pattern of His love to us. Acts of kindness, the expression of sympathy, fellowship, whether in joy or in sorrow, forbearance, long-suffering, charity, are to be among the many fruits of the Spirit which should

abound for the refreshment and blessing of our brethren in Christ.*

Verse 11. "*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.* The apostle, unwearied, continues his favourite theme of love. Now it is love in activity, in earnestness. Not merely love to all men, or love to the brethren, but the energy of love, as service to the Lord. The exhortation refers to *religious* activity, not to the active performance of our *secular* vocations, as many have supposed, and as the word, "business," in our text naturally suggests. At the same time, whatever the Christian does, whether it be as to things temporal or spiritual, he should not be slothful, or indulge in indolence, but in every duty manifest a spirit of zeal and devotedness. "In spirit fervent" is the Lord's word; as it was said of Apollos—"This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." Acts xviii. 25.

"*Serving the Lord.*" Here we are supplied with the blessed motive to both diligence and zeal. And this is a motive which is easily carried about with us, and easily applied. Is this I propose to do—is the place I propose to go to—service to my

* See "Commentary on the Romans," page 394. Hodge. "Lectures on the Romans," page 245. W. K.

Lord and Master? Is He saying, *Do—go?* Must I do this, must I go there, because the Lord would have me? This is a test, as well as a motive. "Is it service to the Lord?" We are expected to walk by faith with Him, to refer everything to Him, to consider ourselves as wholly and at all times His servants. Nothing is too great or too small for Him. We may confer with Him, not only as to our christian service, but as to our worldly employments, engagements, and difficulties.

Speakest thou thus, my soul, of thine own experience, or writest thou as from a book? Valueless, and worse, a mockery, and soon over, would all such writing and speaking be, were it not the living experience of one who is at home with the Lord as with none else. What heart in the universe has been so revealed unto us as the heart that willingly shed its blood to fit us for His holy presence, and that God, in us and by us, might be glorified? He loved me, He gave Himself for me, entitles me to the full benefit of His love, to the full benefit of His death. Yes, the believer is entitled in grace to claim the full benefit of His love, of His death. What a privilege! What a portion! Happy they who know it, believe it, enjoy it, and draw from it day by day light and strength for their path and service. And now the precept is the law of liberty—"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of

the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ." Colossians iii. 23, 24.

Verse 12. *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*" The beautiful moral connection of the three members of this verse is very apparent. In hope rejoicing, in suffering patient, in prayer persevering. The hope of the Lord's coming is the most effectual means of producing patience under present trials. The contemplation of the coming One, of His adorable Person, of our union with Him, of meeting Him in the air, of being introduced by Him into the house of many mansions, of seeing Him face to face, of hearing His voice, of beholding His glory, of knowing more fully the realities of His love and grace. Surely such contemplations are divinely fitted to soothe the troubled mind, and to sweeten the bitterness of sorrow. If we reckon, as the apostle did, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, we shall not be wanting in patience.

O bright, celestial morn, hasten thy coming, when the dim glass shall be removed, and when we shall see Him as He is. Now the cup of sorrow goes round. It is passed from lip to lip, from heart to heart, from family to family, and many of the children of *that* day are *now* passing through the valley of the shadow of death. Days and nights

of weary watching, the loving, tender heart suspended between hope and fear; but the parting comes. All is silent. The last sigh has been heaved, and the last tear shed. Another saint has been welcomed to the paradise of God.

"Then, as advance the shades of night,
Long-plumed, she takes her homeward flight;
But as she mounts, I saw her fling
A beam of glory from her wing—
A moment—to my aching sight
Lost in the boundless fields of light."

Hope has received a fresh inspiration. The dear departed is on before; we shall meet again. The grave must yield up its prey; the sea must give up its dead; and all be caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so shall we ever be with the Lord. O morning of reunions! The circle to be broken no more for ever. The morning song begins; all catch the flying joy, and roll round the rapturous hosanna, worthy the Lamb that was slain!

"Oh! 'tis all brightness yonder, no clouds nor din,
But joy, and peace, and gladness, and rest from sin;
Oh! 'tis all glory yonder, for Christ is there,
In blest effulgence shining beyond compare."

"*Continuing instant in prayer.*" Meanwhile, come what may, we fall back upon the great resource of the soul—communion with God, in prayer persevering. We have spoken of a love

that makes all service easy, of a hope that sheds its bright radiance over the gloomy day; and now we are exhorted to live near to God, and draw all needed support from Him, while waiting for His Son from heaven. Hope and patience, and all other virtues, can only be nourished by that character of intercourse with God which is here described as "continuing instant in prayer." It is directly the opposite of every element of formality. To be continual, fervent, persevering, alone answers to the divine injunction. No duty can be well done, and no service rightly performed, without this kind of prayer.

The apostle, of course, cannot mean by this that we are always to be in the attitude of prayer. This would be impossible. Many of God's praying ones have to spend the greater part of their time in the company of the prayerless: and sometimes we may be on a journey, where we have no opportunity for private or secret prayer. Still, if we are living and walking with God in the true spirit of prayer, the lifting up of the heart to Him may not be less frequent, though less orderly.

But here, my soul, thou seemest inclined to ask a question. If the believer is already pardoned, accepted, and has all things in Christ, what is it that he has to pray for so constantly? Should not praise and thanksgiving rather fill his heart? Prayer will seldom be offered without being mingled with praise. "Prayer and supplication, with

thanksgiving," will generally be combined; but praise and prayer are quite distinct. Praise is that which we offer to God; prayer is the expression of our dependence upon Him for the supply of all our need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Praise is the re-ascending to God of the grace that has come down to us in answer to prayer; so that the more we abound in prayer, the richer and higher will be our note of praise.

But there is nothing, let me assure thee, in the whole life and ways of a Christian that can be safely separated from prayer. It thus becomes a test of what he may or may not do. That which he cannot do prayerfully, that on which he cannot ask the divine blessing, should be left undone. Were this test more faithfully applied, Christians would make fewer mistakes, to say nothing of error and evil. The grand end and object of prayer is to keep the soul in constant communion with God, by cultivating the habit of referring everything to Him. In this way our knowledge of God is daily increased, so that we can count on Him for the answers to our prayers, without either signs or tokens of the answer. We reckon upon Himself; confidence is created by the knowledge which He has given us of His grace and love. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" What an answer, what a rebuke, to all our doubts and fears is in this noble text! Who

could doubt the reality, the extent, of God's love to us, and the deep and tender interest of His heart in all that concerns us, with this grand truth before the mind, beaming with a divine effulgence under our own eyes? Dear and precious to God, above all other objects, as His own Son ever was, He spared Him not, but for us delivered Him up for three-and-thirty long years, to humiliation, suffering, and death. What must the heart be made of that could doubt the goodness of God, after such an expression of His love for us all—the whole family of faith?

But all goes with Him. Apart from Him there is no blessing. Every lesser is included in the greater blessing. Had Rebekah refused to be the wife of Isaac, she could not have been a fellow-heir with him of the large fortunes of Abraham. When united to Christ by faith, we are fellow-heirs with Him of every blessing which divine love can give, and every blessing is measured by God's gift of His own Son. What a privilege to know Christ! Who could count the number and the greatness of the Christian's blessings in Him? May the Lord, in His sweet mercy, lead every one who reads these pages to lay hold on Christ by faith as the unspeakable gift of God, and the Saviour of mankind. Without an interest in Christ all is lost. Every man and woman born must either have Christ's place in heaven, or their own in hell. Let the reader decide now; which is it to be—

thine or His? His will be the best in heaven, thine the worst in hell. Decide, then, O my reader, decide now, at once and for ever. The Lord grant it.

But to return to our subject.

The Christian should have a large heart. He has more than himself to think of and pray for. He has the ear and the arm of the living God; and he is to use them for the help and blessing of his household, his surroundings, and belongings, the church, and the workmen of God, the gospel, the poor and needy, the whole family of affliction, and all mankind. Many are the directions and promises in God's word connected with prayer, which we cannot here enumerate; but the principal attributes of all acceptable prayer are confidence, fervour, and perseverance; always remembering that it must be in accordance with the word, and by the Spirit of God. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. . . . And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him. . . . Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. . . . All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, be-

lieving, ye shall receive." Ephesians vi. 18; 1 John v. 14, 15; Matthew xxi. 22; John xiv. 13, 14.

"There is a power which man can wield,
When mortal aid is vain;
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,
That listening ear to gain.
That power is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus to the throne,
And moves the hand which moves the world
To bring deliverance down."

Verse 13. "*Distributing to the necessity of saints: given to hospitality.*" Communicating to the necessity of saints; and the duty of hospitality, are subjects on which we have little to say. In almost every case, circumstances must govern, as to the exercise of these virtues; and such circumstances are best known to the individual himself: we have not to judge. But whatever we do, either in communicating or in hospitality, should be done before the Lord and for His sake. The poor are a part of His legacy to the church. "For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always." Much might be said as to the highly artificial state of modern life, as throwing many difficulties in the way of carrying out the apostolic precept; still, it is always good to ascertain the mind of the Lord: and follow the wisdom of scripture, rather than the conventionalities of men.

The truth of God hangs beautifully and perfectly together. A link cannot be removed without being missed. The understanding of one truth makes another plain. Unless we have entered into the truth of the "one body," the exhortation before us must be a burden and not a privilege. Hence the murmurings and complainings of the numerous poor. All Christians are saints, and all are members of the body of Christ: and we all know that the members of the same body have the same interests, sympathies, feelings, and destinies. On this principle we take part in the necessities of saints, or should do, regarding them as our own. The poor brethren are thus made joint partakers of the substance of their richer brethren. On this text one of the commentators observes: "The apostle thus intimates that we ought to supply the wants of poor brethren with as much care as if we were assisting ourselves."* And this, we may add, would be nothing more than the fragrant fruits of the love enjoined in verses 9, 10.

Reflections.—We may learn from this passage. 1. That from the nature of the precept to communicate to the poor, it is perfectly clear that there was no general custom among the first Christians of a community of goods. 2. That it is only to the *necessities* of the saints that the rich are *commanded* to communicate of their substance. What love

* Commentary on the Romans, p. 396; Hodge.

may delight to do in distributing its riches, great or small, is left to the hearts and consciences of those who have the means. While the Lord makes the most just and tender appeals for the poor, He guards the rich. The indolent, in strongest terms, He condemns. Such is the fulness and wisdom of scripture. "This we command you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." While it is one of our most sacred christian privileges to communicate to those who have need, according to our ability, it would be a violation of the word of God to support the idle. (2 Thess. iii. 6–15.) 3. the management of money from the earliest times has been surrounded with difficulties. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations." (Acts vi. 1.) The Lord give grace to those who have, and to those who have not. The Lord was rich and the Lord was poor, and unless we have Him before us as our divine model, we shall do nothing rightly.

"*Given to hospitality.*" The value which the early Christians set upon this virtue is plain, from Paul's mentioning it as among the requisite qualifications of a bishop. "Given to hospitality"—following after hospitality. In Titus it is, "A lover of hospitality." Not only are we to practise it, but to seek opportunities of thus manifesting our love

to the brethren. And that, not only to those we know and love, but to strangers, brethren coming from a distance. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." 1 Timothy iii. 2; Titus i. 8; Hebrews xiii. 2.

According to our modern notions, and the habits of our English homes, we limit the meaning of the word to social, convivial, intercourse among neighbours. In the days of the apostles it had a much wider and even an opposite meaning. It was one of the most sacred duties of the Christian, but often one of extreme danger. In times of persecution it was a high crime to entertain the excommunicated. And, as many of the faithful were banished from their own country for the Lord's sake, it became a special privilege to receive them, and a service to the Lord never to be forgotten. (Matt. xxv.) It was also a duty of necessity in those early times as places of public entertainment were unusual. In the East, such houses are still rarely to be met with, and the ancient custom of hospitality continues to be there regarded as one of the most sacred institutions of the country.

But notwithstanding the change of times and customs, it is still our duty and our privilege, to entertain strangers, and to assist them in their business, like Phœbe of old. No change in the habits of men, the customs of nations, or the edicts of tyrants, can ever set aside or weaken the authority

of the word of the Lord, or of any one of His precepts for the ordering of the ways of His people. May we walk by faith, not by sight or habit. And may the Lord's own light shine more and more from the living pages of His holy word, for our faith and guidance in all things!

Verse 14. "*Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not.*" The apostle now introduces the Christian into an entirely new line of practical Christianity. His whole life and ways are to be characterised by blessing, not cursing. This precept carries us far beyond the power of nature. And it is only in proportion to the Christian's conformity to the good and perfect will of God, that he is enabled to manifest this practical grace towards his enemies. He has been exhorted to the exercise of love and benevolence among his brethren in Christ; but now he must go a step further, and bless, but never curse, even his enemies who are persecuting him. To possess this spirit, and to practise this precept, is to be a heaven-born child of God. "But I say unto you, 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; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew v. 44, 45.

This is surely a noble calling, and most ennobling to the Christian. He is a child of the ever blessed God ; he is blessed with all spiritual blessings ; his present and future is unmingled blessing, and he is called while here to imitate his heavenly Father, in returning blessing for cursing. The whole history of popery flashes across the mind while meditating on these few words ; but that evil system meets its utter condemnation here. "Bless your enemies," says God. "No," says popery ; "anathematise them both in this life and for evermore." It was by cursing, not blessing, that it reached such heights of power during the middle ages. But, on the other hand, thousands of God's martyred saints have spent their last breath in the flames in praying for their persecutors.

Speaking of the papacy as distinct from the true saints of God in the Catholic church, it must be manifest to all that notwithstanding its high pretensions to piety, it is essentially infidel. For example, "Marriage is honourable in all," says the word of God. "No," says Rome ; "it is not only *dishonourable,* but a soul-damning sin for a priest to marry." Still, the word of God is there : "*honourable,*" not in some, but "*in all* ;" priest as well as people. Again, "Let the tares grow with the wheat until the harvest," says the Lord. "No," says Rome ; "the tares of heresy must be rooted out by fire and sword." And so in many other things, which it would be out of place

to pursue here. We return to our meditations on the truth of God before us, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."

The repetition of the precept adds greatly to its divine energy and importance. We must look at it fairly, however difficult to obey in its true sense. It is the peculiar privilege of the Christian to pray for all men; friends and enemies. God has given him this place of honour here—to bless others by means of his prayers. He should be like a vessel from which flow the precious blessings of Christ to the enriching of many around him. So far from wishing or praying that evil may overtake our persecutors, we must sincerely pray to the Lord to pardon and bless them. Nature would return evil for evil, and cherish vindictive feelings; but grace says, following the example of the blessed Lord and His martyr Stephen, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Verse 15. "*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*" We have been exhorted to the exercise of love, the discharge of the duties of benevolence, the forgiveness of enemies, and now we are admonished to sympathise in the joys and sorrows of our fellow-men, but especially of our fellow-Christians. These are the comely ways of the household of faith. Being rooted and grounded in love, these graces naturally flow forth as from their native fountain. What could possibly

be more unlike the spirit of Christianity than a selfish indifference to all interests but our own! How much more like the blessed Master is the Christian who enters into the joys and sorrows of others as if they were his own! This is the true expression of the communion of saints—the unselfishness of those who are walking in the light of God's own presence—the only place where we lose our selfishness. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Outside of His presence we are selfish; in His presence we feel and act in the divine nature.

There is nothing so much to be deplored, so much to be guarded against, as the disposition that keeps a watchful eye over its own interests, but is blind and unbelieving to the interests of others. The Christian is saved by grace, he stands by grace, and ought to be the witness of grace in his spirit, words, and ways, at all times, and in all things, from the least to the greatest. His speech is to be always with grace, seasoned with salt. Grace is never to be absent; the whole bearing of the Christian is to be in *grace*, and "always." Salt to be introduced occasionally. The needed faithful word must not be withheld; but even then grace must shine. (Col. iv. 6.) If we would faithfully express the spirit of the blessed Master, we must be gracious and generous in word and deed, and that, as far as possible, without partiality. But we shall soon find out that in nothing are we so feeble as in

sympathy. The blessed One of John xi. only can fully meet the need in sympathy.

These are homely thoughts for thy meditation, O my soul. Could they not be more accurately defined? thou sayest. No, nothing can define thy path in grace but the eye and the heart of Christ ever with thee. He must be before thee as thy pattern. Thy work can never be correct if thy model is not perfect. Hast thou learnt to feel the joys and sorrows of others, as though they were thine own? Look again at thy Model: read, study, meditate on the unselfish love, the boundless grace, and the tender sympathy of thy Lord and Master in the Gospels. See Him there, in the majesty of divine goodness, yet meek and lowly in heart, supplying the poor with bread, and stooping in perfect grace to the fallen, the friendless, and the outcast. In all this He hath left us an example that we should walk in His steps. May the Lord give thee, my soul, and all of us, to know more of that true christian fellowship, which weeps with them that weep, and rejoices with them that do rejoice. There is really nothing more Christ-like, because there is nothing more unselfish, than genuine sympathy. Does the welfare and happiness of others inspire us with joy? Do their afflictions and necessities affect us with sorrow—with a sympathetic sorrow that can only find relief in relieving the necessities, and in filling the heart with gladness that was bowed down with sorrow? May it

ever be ours, to heighten the joy and to lessen the sorrows of others!

Verse 16. "*Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*" The apostle now presses and amplifies the important question of harmony among Christians, but especially among those who are locally united as the assembly of God. "Be of the same mind one toward another." This plainly means that in the things of God there ought to be oneness of mind amongst His children. But we are here addressed as the children of faith, as those whose thoughts and affections, whose motives and objects are formed and governed by the word of God. When this is the case, there must be concord; the word of God being one; but whenever it is a question of human opinions, there must be discord, for each one will have his own opinion.

Oh, how shall we bewail the absence of unity even among the children of faith, who profess to own no authority in divine things but the word of God! We may indeed take up a sore lamentation, for even in the most scriptural communities, the wretched will of man, not content with the word of God, broaches new thoughts, and ere long presses with vehement zeal its fully formed theories. Personal influence must then take the place of the word of God, and as each mind must necessarily give the new idea its own complexion, the original

thought will be multiplied into as many forms as the minds that have received it. Such are the fearful, but unavoidable consequences of departure from the word of God. If the Master held fast by what was plainly written, surely so should the disciple. "It is written—it is written," was the silencing reply to the tempter. "God says—God says," should preface all we advance on divine subjects. Nothing is easier than to quote scripture when we have it, but nothing is more difficult when it is not there.

We are aware that many speak of *essentials and non-essentials;* but there are no such distinctions in the word of God. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and what He has written for us can never be non-essential. But all theories and observances springing from the human mind, however garnished with scripture, are not only non-essential but dishonouring to the word of God and ruinous to faith. Our ancestors, the reformers, clung tenaciously to many of the traditions of the old religion; but seeing it was wrong to hold them as traditions, and not willing to give them up, they searched for scriptures to justify their holding these loved relics. They found them in Rome, and then sought scripture to sanction them. In this way many things were imported into the christian church from the worship of pagans in the third and fourth centuries; and into the reformed churches from popery in the sixteenth. And even

those Christians who have left all human for divine ground, may have brought more loved relics with them than they are aware of.

The Spirit's unity is "One body;" but human opinions have formed bodies innumerable. Scripture assumes that Christians are endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit—the unity of the Spirit's forming; and so presses unity of feelings, objects, and interests. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . ." "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind . . . ." "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Romans xv. 5, 6; Philippians ii. 2; 2 Corinthians xiii. 11.

What meaneth—thou mayest well inquire, my soul—what meaneth this often-repeated precept, with so many of a kindred nature? "Be of the same mind one toward another." Rather, far, would we not answer. The heart sinks in shame, that a precept so becoming the children of one family, one hope, one destiny, should have been in all ages so utterly disregarded. And why? Pray why? Certainly not from zeal in pressing home the plain, simple word of God; that will stand on

its own integrity and authority; but the self-importance which our own conceptions when promulgated give us, leads us on to a character of zeal which overlooks all other questions. Hast thou ever seen a man rise into a great heat from earnestly pressing the word of God home to the conscience? Possibly not. But how often hast thou seen the disciple of some supposed new light when closely questioned give way to anger, and, it may be, wind up in fierce contention? But the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of the Lord.

Return, O my soul, to the word of God. Reverently bow to that holy word; receive nothing into the chambers of thy heart that thou findest not there. Have nothing to care for or contend for but Christ and His will, so far as thou knowest it. When that which is beyond thy comprehension is pressed upon thee as of great importance, calmly listen, inquire, take it into the divine presence, and if it be of God, embrace it and hold it from Him. But if it be not of God, if it is not in His word, it is nothing to thee. See that thou holdest nothing from man; neither contend with thy brethren as to details which affect not the grand, solid foundations of christian communion.

"*Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*" The great idea in the first clause of the verse is

amplified in the last three. Mutual disagreement is to be avoided on all occasions, and a spirit of kindness and union to be carefully cherished. And, inasmuch as there can be no greater hindrance to unity and love than pride, he now exhorts the saints not to be ambitious, but humble, and to watch against self-conceit.

It is natural for man to be aspiring to things above him, and to look with a measure of contempt on lowly persons and lowly pursuits. But the Christian must judge himself as to how far this worldly spirit has been mortified within him. We are cautioned against *setting our minds* on high things; or allowing our minds to be occupied with them; but rather, as the apostle says, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." It is difficult for the best of Christians to cast off completely the influence of rank and station in this life. Nothing seems to have a more tenacious grasp on the natural mind. It dies not but with the death of the body.

The phrase, "condescend to men of low estate," is not considered by the critics a happy one. It means rather to *associate* with them. The idea of *condescension* is quite contrary both to the teaching of the Lord and His servant; for it supposes the maintenance of worldly superiority in our own hearts, because it means shewing kindness to the lowly in a patronising way. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they

that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." Luke xxii. 25–27.

What a contrast to the self-exalting and disdainful spirit of the world! How blessed to see it exemplified in the human path of the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, and enjoined by a servant of His whose qualities of mind and heart have found few, if any equals among men! Nowhere, perhaps, where they let out their thoughts and feelings, can one find the very opposite so painfully as among the Rabbis. Their scorn for the unlettered poor is unbounded. But indeed it is too natural to man as such. Hence we have exhortations to Christians. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk even as he walked."*

The meaning of the last clause, "Be not wise in your own conceit," is intimately connected with what has been already said. Still, every word of scripture has its own place, its meaning, its own application. Self-conceit, not unfrequently, is the offspring of weakness and ignorance. The mind becomes inflated from a fancied superiority to those around us, the opinions of the lowly are dis-

* Lectures on Romans, W. K. Commentary on the Romans, Hodge. Commentary on the Romans, Haldane.

regarded, and self-confidence naturally follows. So far as this species of pride manifests itself among Christians, the prosperity of the church is destroyed, and the blessing of the individual effectually hindered. May the Lord give us the spirit of a little child, humble, docile, dependent. "Be not wise in thine own eyes," says the wise man; "fear the Lord and depart from evil. . . ." "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes," says the prophet, "and prudent in their own sight." Proverbs iii. 7; Isaiah v. 21.

Verse 17. "*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*" The apostle, having enjoined the christian duties of the brotherhood, now forbids the smallest indulgence in a contrary spirit towards anyone. Nothing is more natural to man than to return evil for evil. It has been observed that those of the most indolent and passive dispositions may be aroused to the strongest feelings of revenge, under the sense of injuries, real or supposed. This is the old nature, not the new: law, not grace: the first, not the last Adam. But whose are we? Whom do we follow? Which is it, law or grace? The Christian is called to be a witness, not of the first, but of the second Man; not of law, but of grace. He is to be the witness of grace for His absent Lord in this selfish, self-seeking world. If he falls from the exercise of this christian virtue, he may be ensnared

by the enemy to shew a spirit of revenge and retaliation.

How lovely, how heavenly, are the ways of grace! but oh! think, meditate, my soul, on the offensive, contemptible ways of wretched self. Seek, O seek, to be like Him, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed." (1 Pet. ii. 23, 24.) Did He bear my sins in His own body on the tree? Did He die for me and put them all away? And shall I, who have been freely forgiven ten thousand talents, unmercifully insist on the last farthing being paid of the hundred pence owing to me by my fellow-servant? Could anything be more unseemly in the eyes of heaven? But surely, thou wilt say, none who know Christ could ever cherish this spirit. None who are walking in the light and the joy of His presence; but if we are not living in the enjoyment of this grace ourselves, we shall be but poor witnesses of it to others. Nothing short of living, abiding, daily communion with the blessed Lord and His grace, will keep us above the temptations of making everything minister to the aggrandisement of self.

If professing Christians were to be tried by this test—returning good for evil, acting in grace—

how many who have assumed that fair name would be found to have no real claim to it! But forget not, my soul, the word on which thou art meditating: "Recompense to no man"—no man, whatever he may be—"evil for evil." And remember also, that thou canst not be long in this world and engaged in its affairs, without having this grace brought into exercise. The golden rule, "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you," is much too equitable, much too heavenly, in its character, for this world. Nevertheless, the Christian must walk so as to please Christ and to be a true witness of His Spirit, even though he should suffer earthly loss.

"*Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*" The critics tell us that our translation of this verse is not very happy, as it suggests an idea foreign to the meaning of the Greek. Paul does not mean to direct us to make provision for ourselves or families in an honest manner, which is probably the sense commonly attached to the passage by the English reader; *but to act in such a manner as to command the confidence and good opinion of men.* In this view, the connection of this with the preceding member of the verse is obvious. "We must not recompense evil for evil, but act in such a way as to commend ourselves to the consciences of all men." That transparency of character and conduct in providing things good or comely, which

raises the Christian far above the idea of suspicion seems to be the true sense of this interesting clause. We may have heard Christians say when spoken to about something that seemed rather crooked, "Well, I have a good conscience myself on that point, and I don't care what any one else thinks of me." But this spirit is entirely contrary to the spirit of the precept before us, which literally means, "*above suspicion before all men.*" And this agrees with the word of the apostle to the Thessalonians: "Abstain from all appearance of evil." The very opposite of the artifice so often used in order to gain our object. It is not enough that we abstain from what we know to be wrong, but we ought to avoid everything that would be a ground of just suspicion. Thus Paul wished others to be associated with him in the distribution of the alms of the church, "having regard to what was right, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." 2 Corinthians viii. 20, 21.

How wonderful, we may well exclaim, is the wisdom, the fulness, and the minuteness of scripture! What phase, what intricacy, what secrecy, what subtlety of character, does it not lay bare in the open light of heaven! It is easy being a Christian in the church; even a negative one, if quiet and peaceable, may pass muster well; but oh! how difficult it is to be a true Christian in the world, and in all the activities of practical life! Oh, to be above all just ground of suspicion even

by the unbelieving, suspicious world! Lord, help! Keep us near to thyself; keep us looking at every word, and acting in the light of thy presence; may our prayer be constantly ascending; may thy grace be constantly descending; maintain us thus in communion that we may be strengthened day by day. Preserve thy many children, O Lord, from the ten thousand snares by which they are surrounded; may they not do their work to be seen of men, but may they be careful in all their ways to avoid that which would bring a reproach upon thy holy name. And if at any time they may be falsely accused, may they have grace to commit themselves to thee, Lord, who judgest righteously.

Verse 18. "*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*" All who know what human nature is, what the affairs of life are, know the difficulty of living at peace with all men. The apostle acknowledges the difficulty and limits the injunction by saying, "If it be possible." But the precept is plain and the duty most important; and the believer, notwithstanding the difficulty, is to do all in his power to live at peace with all men. "As much as lieth in you"—as to what is of you, as far as depends on you, live in the spirit of peace with all. The Christian is called, not only to preserve peace, but to be a peace-maker; and a blessing of peculiar honour and dignity belongs to

all such. "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." To recompense evil for evil necessarily leads to contention and strife, while peace is the happy fruit of a forgiving disposition.

But here, again, my soul, thou must weigh up things. Consider, I pray thee, that from the wickedness of those by whom thou art surrounded this may sometimes be impossible; but let nothing fail on thy part; ever guard against giving any occasion to any one to complain of thee. Living near to God is the surest way of living in peace with men; for when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Avoid the snare of courting the favour and the praise of men, for this will surely lead thee to unfaithfulness in thy testimony. Some, in this way, may think themselves possessed of the spirit of peace; but it is rather a spirit of selfish indifference to the claims of Christ, and the salvation of our neighbours.

Much as thou art to seek after peace and pursue it, neither truth nor principle must be sacrificed to maintain it, either with the world or with Christians. The love of popularity is a great snare to many; even a Peter might be drawn aside for a moment by it; but Paul could not have peace on such terms. (Gal. ii.) The great apostle, much as he loved peace and desired it, knew very little of it during the whole period of his life, because

of his faithfulness. But though he had little outward peace, he was kept in perfect peace with God because his mind was stayed on Him. May we all know this solid, lasting peace with God, which the world neither can give nor take away.

Verse 19. "*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*" This is a kindred precept to the previous injunction, not to render evil for evil: still, it is varied and amplified. The Christian, under any provocation, must never avenge himself; we must leave that matter to God, who, in His own good time, will certainly avenge His "dearly beloved." Nothing can be more touching and beautiful than these terms of endearment. Just when provoked and excited to retaliation by wicked and unreasonable men, the voice of tenderest love is heard rising above the strife of human passions: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath." Retire from the scene; give place to my government, because of the injury you have received. It is my prerogative to punish. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." See Deuteronomy xxxii. 35.

The knowledge of God, as the avenger of His people's wrongs, is not intended to awaken in our hearts the smallest desire that the divine vengeance should overtake our enemies. This we must watch

against as a secret desire, for we are prone to count on the divine vengeance falling on those who have injured us; and such expectations are closely allied to the hope that it may come. This must be guarded against; it is natural to us, and bordering on the principles of the world. It is a most unhappy thing to be dwelling, either in our own minds, or in conversation with others, on the injuries—supposed or real—which we have received. How much happier to forget them, and commit ourselves and all our affairs into the hands of the Lord! To advance in arms against our enemies; to watch for their halting; to wait our opportunity to give out what we have been nursing within; to exaggerate their failures, that they may receive double for their sins; to rejoice inwardly when we think they have been repaid in their own coin, is to indulge a spirit entirely contrary to the mind of the Lord in the passage before us, and to the whole genius of Christianity. To the Lord alone rightfully belongs the prerogative of vindicating the innocent, and of punishing the guilty.

If this be the true meaning of our precept, and the word of the Lord can never be broken, what shall be the vengeance of God, ere long, on those who are constantly injuring, slandering, and persecuting the children of God—who make them the butt of their ridicule, and the objects of their jest and reproach? The injuries which they have sought to inflict on the unoffending disciples of

Christ shall recoil upon themselves ten thousandfold. How little such people think of the awfully solemn fact, that wrath and vengeance belong to God!

But thou hast first to look to thyself, my soul; for who amongst us can say, No malice dwells in my heart; no desire to see an enemy fall; no secret rejoicing at the humiliation of a rival; no tendency to be my own avenger? Ah, no, these things are all deeply rooted in thy natural heart, and nothing but the faith that commits all into the Lord's hands can keep them from being openly manifested. What, then, am I to do with an enemy when he is before me? Hear the word of the Lord.

Verse 20. "*Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*" The true Christian, notwithstanding his inoffensive walk, may have enemies, but *he* must not be the enemy of any man. Such is his position of grace in this world. He is called by the loftiest motives to be the true friend of all mankind. Instead of being his own avenger, he bends before the storm, looking to God, and seeks to render good service to his enemy in his need and distress. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." He not only abstains from vengeance, he manifests love. How truly sublime is the standard of the grace of God for His children's ways! He

returns good for evil, kindness for injury, blessing for cursing. The expressions, *feed him and give him drink*, are figurative of all the duties of benevolence. By these means he seeks to conquer the enmity of his persecutors, and even change them into his friends.

"*For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*" Amongst the many interpretations which have been given of this somewhat difficult passage, we accept the one most generally received, and which best suits the whole context. To heap coals of fire on an enemy's head is to care for him, feast him, and treat him kindly, as the most effectual means of subduing him, of melting him down. Who ever conquered an enemy's heart by revenge? How many have been conquered by love? What was it that dissolved the hardness of our unyielding hearts? A Saviour's love. "Let the effort be tried," says Charles Bridges; "surround the intractable metal beneath and above; not only putting it over the fire, but heaping coals of fire upon it. Few hearts are so obdurate as not to melt under the energy of patient, self-denying, burning love. If thine enemy will not recompense thee for all the good done to him, concern not thyself with that. The Lord shall reward thee. The God of love will honour His own image in His own children."

Few hearts, we believe, in ordinary life are so

hard as to be able permanently to resist the influence of such love ; but those who have read the exterminating wars of the papacy, and the rooting out of heresy by fire and sword, know well that the heart of Jezebel knows no relentings, but only grows harder and colder in the presence of beseeching, weeping, bleeding love. The hearts of the men of Jezebel, as one has said, "are sheathed in the triple iron of pride, cruelty, and bigotry;" and, we may add, can never be penetrated by the most overwhelming scenes of human love or suffering. But as the burning coals of returning good for evil, and the most patient kindness, have failed to melt them, they must answer to God, to whom wrath and vengeance belong. Those who refuse to be subdued by a love that burns like coals of fire must suffer the burning wrath of God for ever. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup. Let burning coals fall upon them : let them be cast into the fire : into deep pits, that they rise not again." Psalm xi. 6 ; cxl. 10.

Thus we see that true Christian kindness brings matters to a point. If the persecutor is softened, broken down, by the grace of the persecuted, so much the better for both ; the end is gained ; all is happy. But if he harden himself, and despise the patience and love that returns good for evil, his guilt is increased, and his judgment is of God.

Verse 21. "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*" This short verse should be the Christian's MOTTO through life. How beautiful, how heavenly, how unselfish, how Christ-like, when displayed in all its practical effects on the many details of real life! How God-like, who overcame all our evil with His good in Christ our Lord! "And now he would have us to be imitators of him in this grace, which wins the victory in his sight and to our own consciousness, even when we may seem most down-trodden before the world. For this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith—faith working by love." 1 John v. 4.

The burden of this beautiful chapter of precepts is plain. We are never to conquer evil by evil, but to treat our enemies with kindness. In the world we shall often have to experience evil in some form, but we must never allow ourselves to be provoked to the indulgence of a spirit of retaliation. The first display of temper is a defeat; the enemy has gained a victory. Men in general suppose that to resent an injury is only to shew a proper spirit. But the Christian's rule is Christ; not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good.*

* Commentary on the Romans: Hodge. Commentary on the Romans: Haldane. Lectures on the Romans: W. K. Exposition of Proverbs xxv. 21, 22: C. Bridges.

REFLECTIONS ON PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

We may search all the books of the most admired writers in the world; we may examine every code of morals, ancient and modern; but where shall we find such maxims as have just been the theme of our meditations? How unlike all human thoughts, laws, and systems! And even where the letter of the human law may correspond with the divine, the grand motive to its observance is wanting. The men of the world could not possibly understand the motives by which these duties of love are enjoined; such speak of what are called the laws of honour. The Christian may forget—alas! the great majority seem to have forgotten altogether—that these precepts of love naturally flow from the great doctrine of salvation by grace, and that he is thereby created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and ought to be their living expression. We may be very self-complacent over some small matter in which we made a fair show of returning good for evil, or at least in ceasing to quarrel with our fellow-Christian; but did we "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: *even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*" (Col. iii. 12, 13.) It is natural

to be well pleased with ourselves when we have taken no active part in the dispute, but mere negatives are infinitely below the sublime thought of the position and aggressive love of Christ in His disciples. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John ii. 6.) This is the Christian's standard, and God will never lower it to suit the selfishness of man.

The harmony between the Old and the New Testament on this great subject of christian morals is perfect. Love in all ages must be the same as to its nature; it is too expressive in its character to be satisfied with mere negatives, or bare desires. The natural man would as soon think of cutting off his right hand as stretching it out to feed an enemy in distress; but not so the true disciple of Jesus, who died for His enemies.

We have a fine instance of this divine love in operation in the prophet Elisha; 2 Kings vi. 21, 22. The Syrians, who had been smitten with blindness were led by the prophet into the midst of Samaria. The king of Israel, judging this to be a favourable opportunity to be revenged on his enemies, exclaimed, "My father, shall I smite them, shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? *Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to*

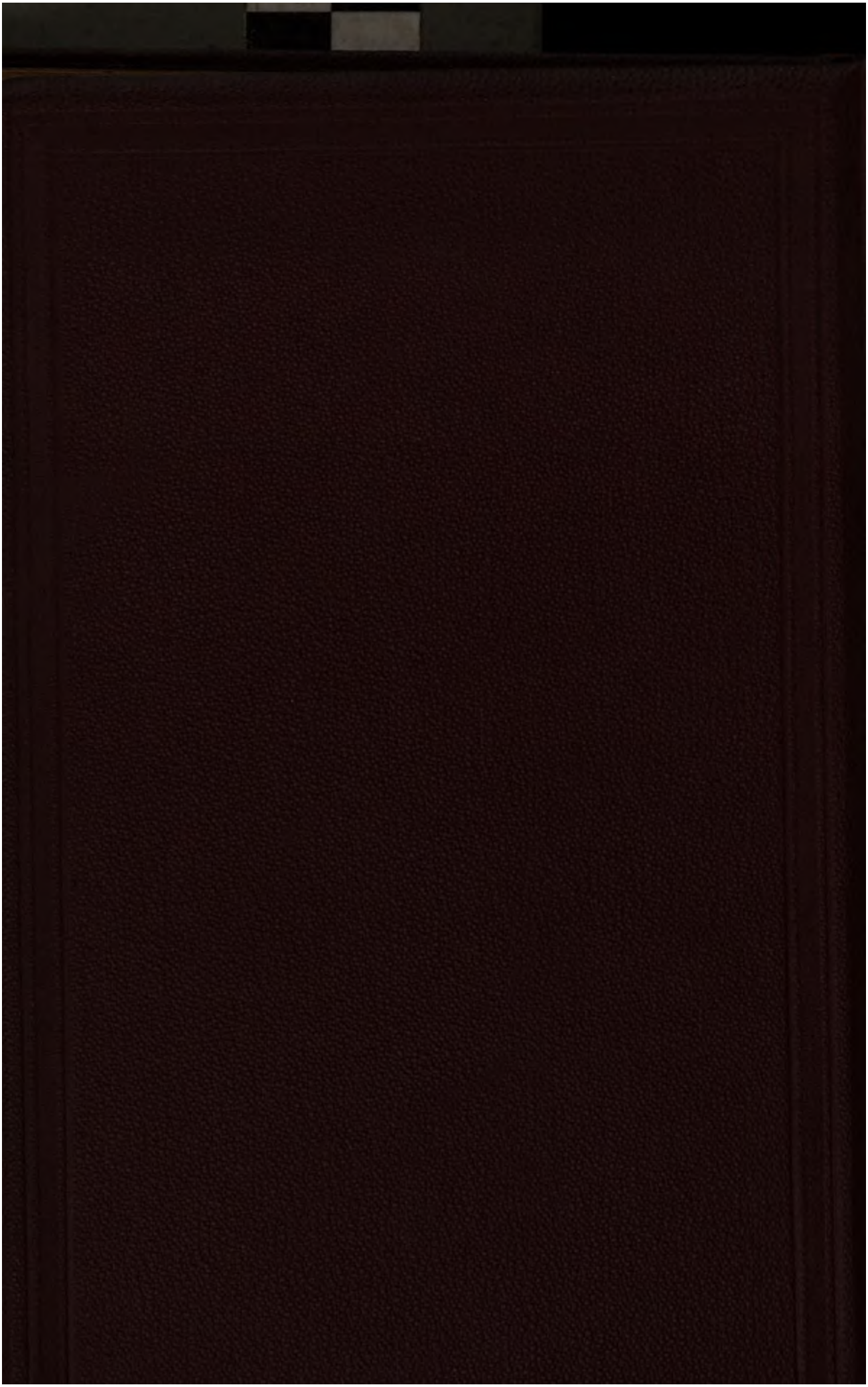
their master. And he made great provision for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." This was God-like; this was divine; but most foreign to every thought of the king of Israel. "Shall I smite them, shall I smite them?" being repeated, argues a readiness to shed blood on the part of the king. "Never," says Bishop Hall, in his Contemplations on this passage, "Never did the king of Israel see a more pleasing sight than so many Syrian throats at his mercy. . . . . But the charitable prophet soon gives an angry prohibition of slaughter. Thou shalt not smite them. . . . If it be victory thou aimest at, overcome them with kindness. Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink.

"Oh, noble revenge of Elisha, to feast his persecutors! to provide a table for those who had provided a grave for him! These Syrians came to Dothan full of bloody purposes to Elisha: he sends them to Samaria full of good cheer and jollity. Thus, should a prophet punish his pursuers. No vengeance; but this is heroical, and fit for christian imitation. The king of Israel hath done that by his feast which he could not have done by his sword. The bands of Syria will no more come by way of ambush or incursion into the bounds of Israel."

We have another equally noble example of the

power of love in the most degenerate times of Judah. 2 Chronicles xxviii. 1–15. The prophet, Oded, met the children of Israel carrying into captivity two hundred thousand of their brethren, the children of Judah and Jerusalem, including women, sons, and daughters. But in place of slavery, through the touching appeals of the Lord's prophet, they were all set at liberty, and not only at liberty, but with every mark of tender affection. "And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, to their brethren; then they returned to Samaria."

We will only notice one other passage in the Old Testament, the one from which the apostle quotes, shewing clearly that both were inspired by the same Spirit, and that the one stamps the other with divine authority. "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." (Prov. xxv. 21, 22.) Having dwelt at some length on the general bearing of this text, we would now conclude our reflections by earnestly entreating all our readers not to entertain the thought, so common, that all these pre-

cepts are impractible; that they are only ideal, something to be admired, but never to be actually practised. This is unbelief, the suggestion of Satan, the language of the world and of our own corrupt hearts. Rather let us adopt the language of the apostle, and say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;" and surely this among the rest. May the Lord Himself give us to drink deeply into His blessed Spirit, so that the duty which now appears to be an impossible task, a heavy cross, may become our pleasure, our delight, our willing service. Philippians iv. 13; 1 Peter iii. 8, 9.

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