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TRANSFORMATION

STOCKMAYER



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TRANSFORMATION.

BY
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This little book is a translation from notes taken down in German at Morning Worship at the Schloss (castle) in Hauptweil for the guests who are there for rest and spiritual instruction. It has not been revised by the author.

All the quotations from Scripture are from the Revised Version.

Transformation.

NOTES ON I PETER I.

CHAPTER I.

GIRD THYSELF.



IN the first part of this chapter, the Apostle has spoken of the great salvation which has been brought to us through Jesus Christ, "concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently"; the greatness and the glory of which we can never fathom, which becomes to us ever more unfathomable the more deeply we search into it. All these wonderful depths of salvation are for us, to whom now the Gospel has been preached "by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven." It becomes us, in view of such a Gospel, to pull ourselves together, and, as in ver. 13, gird up the loins of our mind. The more important a lesson is, just so much more must one give his mind to it, and hold himself and his thoughts in check. A gown is held together by a girdle, that it may not flap around. Gird up the loins of your mind, your world of thought, that it may not catch

hither or thither. Take heed to thyself in thy moods and thine imaginings.

The natural indolence of the human heart tends to let oneself go. There are men too indolent to stir themselves up to fight. They fight shy of the conflict themselves, while they expect it in others. Thus we become spiritual invalids, such as are unable to bear a breath of air; who blame everybody but themselves — people without a backbone, without a moral standard, given over blindly to follow their own thoughts and inclinations, because they are sold under their own natural life. He who does not thus pull himself together, and gird himself, leaves gate and door open to all sorts of ideas; he thinks no one understands him, no one loves him, and he thinks everything gives him a right to pity himself.

Poor, pitiable creature! Can we wonder at the lack of the Holy Spirit's power, when children of God are in such a condition? "All seek their own," and finally come to blame God for His want of mercy. Whence comes this? Because men have not had the true pity for themselves, which would lead to self-mastery. How should children turn out well whose parents have never rightly disciplined them? God is a Father who does not fear to deal severely with us when we need it; and He has the right,

since He spared not His only-begotten Son, but freely gave Him up for our salvation. It is only when we are severe with ourselves that we can, and may, be severe with others. And only thus in this present evil age will characters be formed which will stand the coming storm. "He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." It is worth while to reflect whether we are weak or firm with ourselves; let us arise and gird ourselves.

Gird up the loins of your heart, your bias, your inclinations. The loins are the strength of our whole body. The only right standard for our heart is to be likeminded with Jesus Christ. He did not remain at home in the Father's bosom, and leave the world to go to the bad. No; He was hard upon Himself, and loved not His life even unto the death. As far as I understand, Jesus agreed to the Father's will that He should go bail for mankind when it was a question of creating man with free-will, and thereby with power to sin. Jesus gave Himself to be security for mankind, so that God might be glorified in creating man in His likeness.

The mind of the Lord Jesus was to empty Himself to the uttermost, and the Spirit of Christ only generates such as no longer love their own life. He who is begotten of the Spirit of Christ follows the ways of Christ—

the Lamb-spirit—which tends to give itself. Whoever is of His seed finds it to be his second nature to serve. Lasting blessing belongs to self-surrender. The love of Christ cannot grow cold; it proceeds from another world than this. The love of Christ manifested on the Cross empowers us to go on our way with girded loins. A first-fruit of being girded is to be sober. Sin destroys sobriety—then men blame others, and allow themselves to be influenced by their own minds, or those of others, and to be upset by self-made experiences. No wonder, then, that men see themselves miserable, hopeless, and complain of God and man.

As soon as we cease to rest fully in God's love, we cease to be sober. There are insane, i.e., unhealthy, minds outside asylums. There are such amongst us, who, in looking back over their past, complain, "Oh, if only I had not done this or that!" But, dear soul, thou *hast* done it, and God has permitted it, that thou and others might know and see what kind of person thou art. Thy heart *has* gone astray, even when in the eyes of men thou hast appeared to be quite normal. Thou hast ceased to believe fully in the love of God; and therefore thou imaginest all kinds of things, and exactest from others what thou hast pictured to thyself as thy due. Poor beggar! with thine

unsound mind and principles! The world is full of such existences.

How does one come to sobriety? By trusting fully in the grace of God, and by putting one's trust in the Lord, that He will carry out His purpose to restore the blurred and spoiled image of God in him from the unspeakable ruin into which it has come through the Fall. This epistle of Peter is an epistle of hope, in which the Apostle, again and again, insists on believing: and this is of the last importance, for how can anyone hope for future glory without believing? Let the enemy bring thee into ever so hard a bondage, and even when thyself is to blame—though thou mayest have inherited ever so much evil from thy forefathers—though thy character may be by nature ever so difficult—yet if thou puttest thy trust in the Lord, and leanest upon His grace, thou shalt not be brought to confusion.

There is no waste in our physical or spiritual life which is beyond repair by God, and which He has not bound Himself to restore on Divine lines. God must in the end be able to say of thy life what He could say in the days of the creation: "Behold, it is very good." "He lifteth up the poor from the dust, and the beggar from the dunghill, that He may set him among princes" (1 Sam. ii. 8). He takes no rest until the rays of

His glory shine forth from us ; us who have so long manifested the caricature which our own nature has become. Hope and trust unconditionally the grace which celebrates its greatest conquests just where no help is to be found. Trust in the Lord, that He may even bring to an end the very temptation which hitherto has returned again and again, and caused thee to fall, through difficulties of character the existence of which no one suspects in thee. Trust in thy Saviour, who is still able to make of thee a saint, living for God alone, instead of always revolving around thyself. Grace sets all in order for those who have the courage to believe.



CHAPTER II.

DIVINE CULTURE.



S children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance" (ver. 14). Everyone knows, or has at least some idea of, how much may depend upon education and culture. Uncultured people are spoken of with a certain amount of contempt, meaning, however, especially such as lack in courtesy and good manners. Man calls uncultured some expression which is not worded as is usual in society, although there might be nothing in it at all contrary to the deepest grace in God's sight; in short, there are, in society, in this respect, conceptions which are not in accord with the Word of God. With God all is uncultured which is not in accord with the likeness of Christ—of Him in whose image man was first created. Christ is the typical Man, and all in our education which is not after the pattern, after His likeness, is uncultured—only a caricature. We have only that degree of culture which results from the measure in which the image of Christ has penetrated us. How many traits of our

natural character have already, through the power of the life of Christ, been smoothed out of us, and how many corresponding traits of Christ's character have replaced them!

Wise parents, when they have the means to do it, seek to enlarge the horizon of their children, perfecting their education in familiarising them with other lands, people, languages, modes of thought, etc. Every language represents something of the people's past; and it belongs to an accomplished education to enlarge the horizon in looking back upon the past. It is important to know what men here and there have said or experienced which is worth recommending, and, therefore, parents desire that other material shall be at their disposal than they could meet with in the narrow scope of their family life, their native village, or their Fatherland. The widening of the horizon is fundamentally essential to all accomplished education.

How, then, do we educate ourselves in Scriptural Divine lines? By obedience—by walking in obedience; and that not only in a general way, but in our daily life from morning to evening, by not asking ourselves whether this or that pleases us or not. That belongs to the region of our "former lusts in our ignorance," when we would always go on in the same way, unwilling to risk anything which might displease us; while it is

just this habit, of following our own way, from which we must break loose. For such as are not settled on their lees, but seek to be accomplished men of God, life is a continuous school for progress. God orders it thus.

In every civilised land good schools are provided, and justly so ; the only question is what is really good and what not. God has a soil for every plant in which it can thrive. There are plants which thrive only in the garden, while others thrive in the open field, or in the wood. The birds have their element, and the fish have theirs ; the wild animals have their sphere in which they live and develop. And God has for every soul of man a soil which belongs to and suits him, where He has placed him, and where no one else can appropriate what God has designed for this created being ; and, therefore, all which God has allowed to come into the life of such an one—his entire surroundings, and equally all climatic and other circumstances—must serve God's purpose in him.

Through the fall, society has become dislocated, and few are the parents who have the opportunity to afford their children the education necessary to develop fully their natural gifts. With God it is otherwise. The fall of man has not rendered invalid, nor hindered, the accomplishment of His designs.

He created mankind in general, only on the security of His own Son, who, before the foundation of the world, became Guarantee for men, to bring them back out of the deepest fall to God again. In spite of the fall, God has not let the reins out of His hand: on the contrary, He has taken in hand the responsibility of every man who shall be born. For each one He has provided a heart and a way, a climate, a warmth, and a pemperature needful for his development.

Just as each special plant needs its special temperature, so every man needs his own measure of cold and heat, of weal and woe, of duty, of refreshment and humiliation, through friend and foe; through God's children and men of the world. All are elements for our development, if we have accepted the first conditions of such an education—namely, that we take from God's hand, without any choice of our own, all which God permits to come upon us, and no longer fight shy of certain things.

It is hard work at school, and sometimes it is hard to live "not according to the former lusts," where each made his life as pleasant to himself as he could. Such a life makes people become weaklings, unable to bear an unkind look, a sharp word, without being disconcerted. Such remain stuck in the mud of their own natural life, and care-

fully guard themselves, week by week, that no breath of air may blow upon them. All which thou meetest with day by day, all which thou must pass through, is material for thine education. Over all read the inscription, "He that loveth his life shall lose it"; he cannot grow in Christ to man's estate.

But "whoso," on the other hand, "hateth his life," and, sparing not himself, is every ready to accept suffering with Christ, God will carry out His purpose in him, and train him for Himself. Thus he becomes a well-disciplined, well-developed, fully-accomplished man of God, ready to all "good works which God has before prepared that he should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 10), and by the carrying out of which he is trained.

Such come gradually to recognise that all which happens to them is ordained of God, to serve their inner development, that God may be glorified in their spirit and their body, for God had this in view as His determined purpose when He created us. An artist commits himself to no painting until what he purposes to represent is clear before his own eyes. The picture which is destined to enrich, to quicken, and to instruct others, must first at least be clearly outlined in his own mind. It is our God-given work to enrich, quicken and instruct others; and if we

would be capable of this work, the very first thing is that in trials and temptations, in joy and sorrow, in short, that in everything, we see the finger of God, and His chisel at work upon us. We have nothing to add to what God Himself has provided in our life for our development, our education in Christ; for the training which God does not do is not for eternity.

O this word! educated, made conformable, resembling! O the wonder of wonders when once a child of man enters the circle of light! God has destined me from eternity to be conformed to the image of His Son! Yes, it needs a complete transformation, for we bear within us "the image of the earthly, the first Adam" (1 Cor. xv. 49). And then, when we have consciously, through the Scripture, accepted as ours the holy calling to conformity with the Son of God, 2 Cor. iii. 18, is given to show us the way to arrive at this transformation; *transfiguration*, the same word in the Greek here as in Matt. xviii. 2. This transfiguration consists in a continual transformation from our inherited image of shame into the pure image of Christ. He who no longer, in his ignorance, fashions himself according to his former lusts, but who, according to a higher intelligence, which has wrought in him the knowledge of Jesus Christ, recognises that a new personality has

come within his horizon—namely, man as God would have him to be—takes up a position against himself; his requirements, his personal character, his natural sloth; and willingly accepts hardship, even in his spiritual experience. Yes, transformation into the image of Christ costs dear, before the natural man lets himself go. It costs our self-life, from morning to evening, to take everything out of the hand of God; to welcome everything as the chisel-chips which are indispensable to our transformation, never losing sight of the fact that we are in the world for our God, and that He, the Master-workman, labours at our education, that we may be to the praise of His glory—that the inner man within us may develop and be complete unto the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This gives our life quite another colour, quite another meaning, quite another value: it brings worship into our life, and makes us acquainted with the power of the Holy Ghost, who alone can give us the material, the outfit, which we need in our perfecting, that we may never more seek our own life, but the glory of God.

“Not fashioning yourselves after your former lusts in your ignorance.” Yes, the natural man knows nothing better than self-indulgence, even if it does not manifest it-

self in gross sins, but only in letting himself go, so that his heart becomes full of prejudice against his fellow-men. Our self-life tells us that others should act with respect to, and consideration of, us. It is true there may be a great want of justice and righteousness in others, but that is not our affair. The most tender consideration, or the most unpardonable inconsiderateness, is, in the hand of our God, equally helpful to our education; and even when, to all appearance, something comes directly from the devil, yet, to them that love God, all must work together for good (Rom. viii. 28); working together for our development in the image of Christ. All which does not accord with the likeness of Christ is unrefined, a caricature, which misrepresents, and gives false conceptions to others, so that they take as true culture that which is only sham, not transparent, according to the will of God.

“In your ignorance.” Men no longer know what is beautiful and great and noble—they are caricatures, who allow themselves to be carried away by currents from the under world, the rumblings which are always sounding louder. The simplicity of the Gospel makes us wise unto salvation, unto redemption, so that the longer we live, the more we learn to seek for nothing in ourselves, and to have only the one goal before our

eyes—i.e., to get nearer to God. But every day has its own tests, its own speciality, its own school, and whoso fully learns the God-ordained lesson of to-day will have new lessons awaiting him to-morrow.

Christ is the Alpha and Omega. We have not yet fully spelled our alphabet, and we cannot be too thankful to God that He has graciously spared us until now. O the glory that we are permitted to let go all things in our life into the hands of God, that we may see all the educational material designed to bring us out from our former lusts into a life of service, of obedience, and of worship!



CHAPTER III.

OUR HOPE.



SET your hope perfectly on the grace that is being brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (ver. 13). Tit. ii. 11 (R.V.), reads: "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession, zealous of good works."

In the Redemption brought to us by Christ—"bringing salvation to all men"—we have all that we need to empower us to deny the former frames of mind, and to enable us to break loose from a world of lust, estrangement from God, folly and unrighteousness. Grace cleanses and looses us from all sin. In His grace we have all the power to live so as to please God here below, while we

wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He came down into the imprisonment of this earthly life that we should not remain prisoners to our bodies, and to the exhalations of a world poisoned through and through by sin.

Now the question of *hope* arises. The passage quoted from Titus connects faith with hope. If we would pass unstained through the temptations which are awaiting us to-day, and remain true to our Saviour, we must have an eye to that which lies before us. Faith draws now in the present moment upon grace, with the eye upon the hope of the Lord's soon coming; which depends, as far as I can see, only upon His finding at His coming a people prepared for Him. He waits more for us than we for Him. He who has grasped this fact can no longer delay to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit (2 Cor. vii. 1). It is the hope of a grace on its way to meet us, and of a Saviour on His way to meet us, attracting us upward to Him, and glorifying us according to His love, when He has sanctified our soul and spirit. This is our hope in Christ, and it ought to become more and more definite. In the word here translated "hope," there is in the Greek root something which answers to consciousness of aim. One thinks of a man starting for the goal, on whom the

goal works with a far more powerful attraction than can be measured by what eye or ear can perceive. The lesser gradually loses its power of attraction in view of this greater aim ; one thing stands out : " I go to meet my Lord for transfiguration."

We set our hope perfectly on a coming, an approaching grace ; therefore, a grace which does not yet exist. Now, we are using the present, existing grace ; and the more truly we make use of it to conquer what we have to conquer, so much the more definite will our hope be for " the grace that *is to be brought* unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Then will grace be lost and swallowed up in glory, which, however, will only arise upon such as, conscious of their aim, trust in grace, whose anchor sinks deeper and yet deeper into eternity, through the very things which disconcert others. But it is necessary, also, faithfully to redeem the times of stillness which God may send to one and another ; otherwise, let us look to it how, farther on, we may be able to get through. If we utilise well the hours and moments of quiet and recollection which God in grace provides us, He will take care that the provision of strength to withstand shall not fail, but be continually renewed, and that even in the most exhausting labour we may always have gleams of light to keep us

from being dragged out of the world of light.

"At the revelation of Jesus Christ." We have not yet beheld Him with our outward eyes ; but we love Him, and, through the hope we have in Him, to be caught away to meet Him, we fully count upon new grace, new glory, new strength to overcome.

"As children of obedience" who not only *enjoy* the Word, seeking impressions and excitement, in churches, chapels and meetings ; but who, in all we hear of what lies before us to do, obey our Lord and Master, knowing that He has the grace ready for us to receive, and to put to account all which He requires of us—who not only obey from time to time, but "as children of obedience," who absolutely cannot but obey, for we are born unto obedience ; it has become our second nature to obey God and to be faithful to Him—we would rather die than fail to obey Him.

"Children of obedience." Every act of obedience is self-education ; every obedience is an education in the likeness of Christ. Our body is subject to a continual process of transfiguration, through all which it assimilates or expels. A similar change takes place in our spirit through what we receive from others. A healthy constitution rejects that which is injurious. When once the Divine Nature in us has prevailed, and we faithfully

watch over our inner development, our spiritual instincts increase in sensitiveness, and the Spirit of God gives us power over what may tend to strengthen or to weaken us. This is especially needful in relation to our intercourse with our fellow-men; for just in this way much Divine seed is lost through frivolous chatter. Wherever this is so, the inner development is interrupted, and the man becomes spiritually weaker, and yet weaker; he absorbs all kinds of impressions, against which the Holy Ghost has warned him, without filtering them through the Word. Gradually he loses his sensibility to the Holy Ghost, falls into bondage, and has always less power to overcome.

Fashion yourselves in a mind entirely new, not after your own desires, as in the time of your ignorance, when, through the eye and the ear, you took in all manner of foreign and polluted things, so that you fell into developing self. Fashion yourselves *not* according to the former lusts—pride and carnality. Well is it when this has ceased to be.

Where our conversion is real, the development of the flesh in us ceases, and every day finds us stronger in fashioning ourselves after a new Pattern. Christ stands before us, and where we perceive in or upon us anything which does not accord with His image, we place ourselves under the Blood,

and give God no rest until this corruptible feature gives way before a new feature of the image of Christ, in which we are fashioning ourselves. For this the Holy Ghost is come: for this the blood of Christ was poured out. The "corn of wheat" must die, that it may bring forth much fruit.

Thus a people proceed from Christ crucified who bear His image, and who more and more become free from all those things which formerly had left their mark upon them. Such people cannot any longer irritate their fellow-creatures; they bear the stamp of Christ, and continually fashion themselves more fully in His image, by obeying the Holy Ghost, and by being evermore ashamed of that character on which they once so prided themselves. The Spirit of God sweeps out all pride and self-glory. In the whole universe there is but one Image to which it is worth while to be transformed—Christ, the Lamb of God; God's prototype; His true original.

"In your ignorance." Formerly you have known of nothing better; but now, through the preaching of the Gospel, a new thing has arisen upon your vision. Christ Jesus is of God made unto us Wisdom. Through Him a new world comes to meet us, into which, through faith and obedience, we have entered. Faith comes first, for the devil

takes care to sow in our hearts unbelief and suspicion, as he tempts us with the suggestion: "Don't imagine thou wilt be able to hold on as thou art." No; it is no imagination: I believe in the power of the Word of God. The Word of God possesses a power to transform, and proves it wherever anyone with immoveable faith, aim-conscious, trusts God's grace for his transformation.

"Your ignorance." Thou hast heard of the power of grace. Well, then, put thy confidence in it. There is nothing worse than to abuse grace; as when one appropriates God's grace, and yet remains the same as he was before—the same ill-bred, foolish, idle being. Grace forms us as we yield ourselves to it. In your former ignorance you have never had an idea that there was a power equal to free you from all the yoke which has kept you bound so long, even should it be only that of the world of dreams. Grace never fails, and the grace that bringeth salvation to all men has appeared, and gets its way into all bondage, of despondency, mental derangement, fixed ideas, false notions,—grace can reach all. Wherever the Word of God is purely and transparently announced in the power of the Holy Ghost, grace is to be found.



CHAPTER IV.

FLEE CORRUPTION.



WHO can tell how far personal responsibility goes? or how far our ignorance has been the consequence of the world in which we have grown up, of our special temperament, or our peculiarities of character, inherited from our parents? How often have we been ashamed when we have come to recognise our stupidity in one way or another! How often has the blush mounted to our cheeks when someone has succeeded, through our ignorance, in drawing us into things which have turned others aside! and we have sought to hide our ignorance, without its ever striking us how infinitely more ignorant we have been concerning that which is Divine, and how an entire world has been hidden from us! We knew nothing of what powers we were serving—powers of darkness and of ignorance, for darkness and ignorance go hand in hand. Behind darkness stands its prince, whose garment is darkness, while God the Eternal is “clothed with light as with a garment.”

This prince drugs us with opium, and every

kind of narcotic, that he may keep us from awaking to a sense of our guilt. In spite of our supposed intellectual culture, we were utterly unaware of our own condition, and of the holiness of God. Our fellow-creatures admired us, while we still moved in a world of ignorance regarding all which pertained to the greatest and the highest ; and we have been at home in a world of lust, and of various forms of self-pleasing. "Thou shalt not covet, not allow thyself in thy desires," says Luther. Covetous people are such as are never satisfied nor contented. Let not thine eyes desire what thou seest others possessing, whether of outward show, of pedigree, position, profession, education, wealth, etc. Coveting such things, thou gropest in ignorance and blindness, for thou seest not that those things for which thou enviest others have no power to make thee happy.

There is ignorance, insanity, folly in a man when he looks enviously on the goods of others and covets them. In the wide world thou canst never find a place where thou canst be happier than in the position where God has placed thee. No man has a right to covet anything which belongs to his neighbour. It is pure imagination for anyone to think that by possessing this or that he would be happy. Thou fool, in thy blindness thou hast failed to discover that it is in

very grace when God, from time to time, has let His hand light heavily upon thee, in taking away from thee what thou hast longed to keep, but what was leading thee to destruction.

“Having escaped the corruption which is in the world through *lust*” (2 Pet. i. 4): the same word as in 1 Pet. i. 14. Where *lust* is, there is decay, destruction, corruption. “Perishable *lust*,” says Luther, “decay through covetousness.” It is a wide field which covetousness covers in the world; it exhales the odour of corruption and decay, and this in all its forms; whether it is *lust* of intellect or fleshly *lust*, greed of money or glory, thirst for knowledge, or even the exercise of power over others in a good sense, which may involve the desire to play a part. We are blind if we imagine that anything earthly can satisfy a human heart, which God has created for Himself to glorify Him. What will not men do to get pleasure? And yet it is all hollow! The end of a child of man is to be buried deeply in the earth, that no odour of corruption may be perceived. And yet men go on still further in the way of corruption. “In ignorance,” which, nevertheless, is culpable in anyone as soon as God has begun to call him to Himself.

“Like as He which hath called you” (ver. 15). Let us come back to simplicity. This

is the question: "Hast thou not heard His call? Hast thou never, when about to play a role, heard on thy way, like the prodigal son, a call which sounded in thine ear: 'Come home, lost child; the world is not for thee; the world of sense on which thou hast set thine heart can never satisfy. Turn round, come home; thou hast a Father who awaits thee?'" It is God's voice which penetrates the heart at the grave-side when our beloved ones are laid to rest,—which rises above the roar of earthly hurry and business to them who are mourning their lost one. Well is it for such as then awake and take account of how much there is of corruption in things which they have thought so beautiful; and that they can never reckon on what is of earth. When it seems as though thou hast all just as thou wouldst—it is gone. It is as if thou heardest the words, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Is it not God calling thee?

There is such a Divine call in every Word of God which has been made living to us, in every thought which intensifies to us the worth of things unseen and eternal, in every glance we get into the waste and emptiness of all which the children of men look on as desirable. "And God said, Light be, and light was" (lit. trans.). When God says, "Let there be light," man wakes up; but

many have not the courage to let it come to a real conversion, they will not come home, they harden themselves and seek to escape judgment, they will neither let God speak to them, nor give Him any answer. Child of man, whenever on thy life's pathway a call of God comes to thee, stand thou still and put it to thyself whether, in very deed, thou art not in the wrong path. Neglect it not, when thou hearest such a call, when God holds up to thee a warning finger to shew thee how that which thou esteemest worthy of desire is worm-eaten, and belongs to "the corruption which is in the world through lust."

"Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, when it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. iv. 3). Where, however, it is made the end of our desires, the worms get into it, and it corrupts. So is it with all which shines here, whether in the region of love, or desire, or self-glory. "In ignorance." How much might we know if we would give the needful time or trouble to go to the root of things! We have not the courage; for it takes faithfulness and courage.

"But as He which hath called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (ver. 15). When God calls us, He does not only call us *out of* something, but also *unto* Himself. Man sees only that which he

must come out of, and turn his back upon ; but he does not yet see the Father's house and the Father's heart ; he must walk by faith. He may, therefore, think it hard that God must take from him this or that, that He must send all kinds of difficult things into his path, and spoil his garden with which he had taken so much pains. As long as he sees only from out of what, and not into what, God calls him—as he cannot see behind the screen—he considers that others are better off than he, and that God is unjust towards him. Covetousness is madness—folly. It all comes to this : that we should give a willing ear to God's call ; that we should have an ear open to His voice. The decisive moment in every conversion is just when one says, "I will turn ; truly, I do not know how my Father will receive me, but I will go home : all with which I have pampered my soul is madness and folly." There is an ignorance which is culpable. From that very moment when God calls us, and lifts the veil, we are guilty if we close our eye and ear instead of holding them wide open to Him.

Whither does God call us ? To Himself, the Holy One ; and, naturally, it must go through judgment, and not direct into the sanctuary. Where wast thou ? asks the Lord. Did not I send to call thee, and instead of coming, didst thou not turn back to the husks

which the swine do eat? Awake to thy responsibility! God is holy. Canst thou do what thou wilt with thy life? Canst thou ruin thy body without suffering for it? that body which ought to be the temple of the Holy Ghost. God has not given thee thy strength that thou shouldest spend it for thyself, but that it should be at His disposal. God is holy, accept thy responsibility, from which many fly. God is holy, therefore He so deals with us that we, too, may be holy, freed from vanity, cleansed from filth, a people for His own possession. Holy means *to be for God.*

“Be ye holy, for I your God am holy.” So can God manifest Himself as Father, and man begins to recognise his folly, and to say to himself: “How mad I have been to feed on swines’ husks, while at home ‘there is bread enough and to spare!’” Then man repents, goes home, and tells his Father what has driven him home. Then a twilight opens, and he sees, little by little, that there is no glorious calling like that one. “Be ye holy, for I your God am holy.” Now we can feel at home with Him with whom we could not meet, whom we shunned, and before whom we would not stand. The home of the soul is above, in the light, and when in faith we turn our back upon the world, then God opens to us the doors of the Father’s house, and we

see it to be the highest and most glorious thing to be permitted to live for Him, the All-holy One. That is the highest place, the highest calling; as in the world of sight the nearest place to the emperor is the most honourable. "Holy" means to be separated, taken out of the world for the courts of our God, and to be there for His Majesty.



CHAPTER V.

BE YE HOLY.



As He which hath called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (ver. 15). We have seen how this appeals to everyone who, in his former life, suffered himself to be driven hither and thither; to be made a slave, and to feel, for the time, at home on earth, feeding his mind with things which, higher or lower, anyway belonged to this lower world—and who then heard a call, as from the world above, to the heavenly home to which he belonged before the fall, and into which grace alone has power to recall us.

Whither does God, the All-holy, call us? To Himself, who is holy. "As He which hath called you is holy," we read, "be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living"—for He cannot suffer anything unholy to approach Him. And we become holy in having repentance towards the Holy One, and in following after the way of our God. In our faith in God's call, and in our acceptance of this call, there is already an emancipating power which frees us from the world in which

we formerly moved, from which formerly we drew our nourishment, and from which we contracted the pollution which was in us. He is holy : nothing which is unholy, nothing of darkness, can draw near to, or sojourn with Him ; for where He is, all is clear and transparent as the light of day. Therefore the Word of God which calls us is a two-edged sword, which pierces the hidden springs of our thoughts, and of our heart's emotions, and indeed not only to judge, but to divide, and set us free from all which formerly had attraction for us.

His call brings us into His immediate presence, and under His immediate influence. But we can only remain in His immediate presence and under His immediate influence in so far as we suffer ourselves to be freed from all which in His holy sight is unseemly, and which does not harmonise with His light, but belongs to the world of bastards, of twilight, and of darkness. Otherwise it cannot be : it is an absolute moral impossibility. To abide in His immediate presence, thou must leave anything earthly outside the door ; and tread thy way through the blood of the Lamb. That is the glory of our calling, and here soul and spirit are divided. And the outcome is, either that thou cleavest to the earth-clods, or that something in God's call has changed thy course, and thou hast

learned how to prize such a call, and canst praise God with joy that He has called thee, like the prodigal, to Himself; has changed thy old rags, and clad thee with a Father's hand, opening up before thee a new aim in life, and giving a new mind, which is bent upon living with, and for, Him. This takes away all joy in what belongs to the old life; a wall rises higher and higher between us and all which does not harmonise with the nature of our God. We shrink from it because God has called us higher.

"Be ye yourselves holy in all manner of living." Not being shut off in a cloister from all relation to the outside world, where there is no danger from temptations which arise in ordinary life; but in "*all* manner of living." In John xvii. 15, the Lord Jesus prayed the Father, "Not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world," but that, in the temptations of this earthly life, "Thou shouldst keep them from the evil," that they may not be anywhere entangled, that they might not be defiled, but that, like their Master, they might pass through all things in the holiness of Him who could not be touched by anything unholy. The Lord puts a guard, "a wall of fire" (Zech. ii. 5), around His own when once the sense of His holiness has arisen within them.

"Be ye yourselves holy in all manner of

living." It belongs to our education that we learn not to take our daily walk into our own hands; but that, by the very fact that we are brought back into the holiness of God, our heart's emotions and our daily coming and going may be in the hand of God; that we watch not only at the daydawn, but throughout the day, that nothing may come back into our own hands, lest we should fall back into "the former lusts," the old habits of life. Otherwise, we shall never come into a real newness of life; for the looks, the gestures, the words and deeds of those with whom we may meet, are leavened with the spirit of the world. "*As God is holy, be ye also holy*": reserved like your Lord and Master; near to all men, but distant from all contamination.

Jesus received sinners, and let them come near; never during His life on earth driving them away. That He might save the lost He must eat with them, enter into their life; but always and everywhere surrounded with the wall of fire from God; and He never let Himself be defiled by the ways or thoughts of sinners or of the self-righteous. He has a path for His saints where they may come near to the most deeply sunken in sin, without being inwardly defiled, or losing communion with the Holy One. They have Divine power of resistance, and their God

watches over and warns them. They do not forget what they are by nature; but they know how to remain hidden in Christ under all circumstances, and they bear about them everywhere the sweet savour of Jesus Christ.

"As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of living, for it is written, Be ye holy, for I your God am holy." This last word is to be found more than once in the Old Testament; for instance, in Lev. xi. 41-44. "And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination, it shall not be eaten." And yet the Lord says in the New Covenant: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth." God has preserved our nature in giving us a shrinking from reptiles. Defile not thyself with worms, which are in close touch with the earth, "for I am Jehovah your God that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God: ye shall, therefore, be holy, for I am holy."

All other creatures have power to rise from the ground; the birds can even live in the air, but worms, creeping things, crawl in and out of the earth. Taken out of the earth, they are yet bound up with the earth; they feed in the earth, therefore God has given man a certain shrinking from them. This is no accident; therein lies the lesson:

Have nothing to do with that which cannot separate itself from the earth; you are the sons and daughters of heaven; therefore defile not yourselves with earth; be no longer earthly-minded, no longer earth-worms, which wallow in the earth: you are called to, and belong to, a higher world. Worms belong to an earth which is cursed, and the curse appears in them. As God's redeemed, we belong to Him, and have nothing to seek on earth, but that in all our walk we may be true to God, and in all things be more deeply rooted in our home above.

This sheds a new light upon the healing of the sick. Let us not, then, seek for healing just because it is more pleasant and agreeable for ourselves, but because we would prove, to the glory of God, that while we are placed on earth we are not under the power of earth, but while we live as citizens of heaven, He can, through the power of His blood, set us free from all the powers of sickness which may attack us. During His life on earth He healed all that came to Him "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. viii. 16, 17). On the cross He freed us from the earth, and the earth-worm spirit; and as we in spirit carry out this deliverance, we see that by His sacrificial death

upon the cross He has redeemed us from sickness, until finally at least a group of overcomers are so far ready that He, by transforming them in glory, may be able to translate them without dying or being buried in the earth.

Let us now look at some passages which bear on holiness. Jeremiah xxv. throws quite a new light on holiness. "Before thou wast born," saith the Lord ". . . I sanctified thee." This can only mean, "I have taken possession of thee." All of which God has taken possession is holy. God sanctified His Son, and sent Him into the world. His sending into the world was the consequence of His sanctification (John xvii. 18). As God sent Jeremiah into the world, so He sent His Son into the world. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

And finally Heb. x. 10: "By which will we have been sanctified." They who are sanctified are so by the "once for all" offering of Jesus Christ.



CHAPTER VI.

CREATED FOR GOD.



VERSE 16 says, "Be ye holy," or "Ye shall be holy: for I am holy." Again and again this word occurs in the Old Testament. For instance, when Moses was called of God (Exod. iii. 5), He said to him, "Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. And," moreover, He said, "I am the God of thy father: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." In verse 14: "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel . . . The Lord, the God of your fathers; the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever." The unchangeable, who is, through all the changes of time, what He was, and ever shall be!

The unchangeableness of God is a living monument of His holiness. He is highly ex-

alted above all which is created; and independent of all the changes of the ages. The gods of the heathen are dependent on the handiwork of their worshippers; the holy God stands in incomparable contrast to heathen idols in that He has created man after His image. He abideth holy, and rather than abate one iota of His holiness and unchangeableness, He has given His only begotten Son.

“Put off thy shoes from off thy feet” is pregnant with meaning for the call of Moses and of his people. We carry on our shoes the dust of this world; and our shoes bring us continually in contact with the earth. At the moment of his call, God opened before Moses a new standing-ground. It was the ground of revelation, and of redemption from the taint of earth; for God had chosen Horeb and Sinai for His manifestation as the God of Israel, who should deliver them out of the dust and filth of idolatry. “I am holy,” therefore “be ye holy,” He says. We cannot come into touch with God except as we separate ourselves from our past, and from our own thoughts and ways. We cannot mix together the earthly and the heavenly: truth and lying, holiness and sin. The weakness of this generation is in that they have lost the sense of God’s holiness, and that they do not believe in the possibility

of a life in which we may be for God alone—for our holiness consists in our being unreservedly at God's disposal. The meaning of Israel's existence consisted in this: that God should have a people for Himself. And as Israel came short of this, God has chosen in Christ another people, redeemed by the blood of His Son from the pollution of sin. Holy, "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing"; for "holiness becometh Thine house for ever." This is seen in all the offerings of the Old Testament. The lamb to be offered must be without blemish, or it could not be accepted by God, but would become an abomination.

"Be ye holy, for I am holy." All which God has created is created for Him, and has no other right of existence. That which does not exist for Him is destined and doomed to perdition. Everything belongs to a holy God, and must return to Him; and the entire development of Holy Scripture goes to prove that all which will not return to God must pass through judgment; while all which is willing to be reconciled to Him comes into full oneness with Him, so that every trace of unholiness, of self-life, and self-esteem may pass away in judgment and destruction. "I am holy," and ye are Mine; with every thought of your heart, and every drop of your blood, be ye Mine.

God chose a people out of the world for His peculiar possession, and this people fell into adultery, instead of reserving themselves for God alone; therefore He chose special individuals: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet to the nations," said God to Jeremiah (Jer. i. 5). Whatever instrument God takes in hand is thereby sanctified—and He had foreseen in this man a chosen instrument. Before his birth, God had taken possession of him. Whatsoever God has not yet been able to take possession of is not yet sanctified. We are holy so soon as we prove ourselves to be people who exist for God, instead of walking, speaking and thinking in the light of men. God has a people who every day draw nearer to Him, who sanctify themselves, and become every day more free from creature influence. They do not let man decide things for them in their thinking, speaking, and manner of life, and they shrink from being constrained by men who one day would hold them back, and another hurry them forward.

We have to perfect holiness (2 Cor. vii. 1), and in everything,—eating and drinking, speaking and silence, work and rest,—we have to prove of what spirit we are, and to practise

our firm hold on the position God has given us, as people whom God has called to His royal court, and who are for Him, whether they have to go out into the world to carry out His behests, or to drink in His wisdom in secret.

In spite of the many prophets which God had sanctified to Himself, He has not yet succeeded in bringing Israel back to Him; lost Israel has not returned. Therefore it was that in the fulness of time He sent One whom He had sanctified to Himself. Because He offered Himself, God created the world, else He would hardly have done it. He was sure of His Son, therefore He sanctified Him and sent Him into the world (John x. 35,36). He did not send Him into the world and *then* sanctify Him, and lay His hand upon Him as His instrument. His mission in the world was the consequence of His having been sanctified. God had foreseen His Son as His instrument, who should be absolutely at His disposal, and who would live as a perfectly disposable instrument, living, suffering, and dying to serve Him. So that the Lord Jesus could, on His part, say later, "I sanctify Myself" (John xvii. 19); "My God, I place Myself at Thy disposal, with all I am and have, that those whom Thou hast given Me, who live Christ, may be sanctified by Thy truth." He lived a life of glory,

and thereby made room for the existence of sanctified ones.

The highest position in the universe is to be holy. To be holy children, come back again to God, washed in the blood of the Lamb, clothed with the righteousness of Christ! Such have learned to draw a holy circle around them, so that men do not pollute them, and the things of the world cannot burden them, and the world's magnetism must yield to the magnetism of heaven. They keep their heads above water when others are carried away by the stream, and they, through experiences which drag others down into fleshly lusts and longings, only come nearer to the Holy Spirit; and in the midst of temptations under which others fall, they hold fast. "Jesus, I live to Thee; Jesus, I die to Thee," they say, "Rescue me ever more completely from all secret connection with the world, its cares, its vanities, and its curse."

Let not these things be lost sight of, and know that every word of God which we believe, lifts us above vanity, and binds us more fully to God; while every word which we hear without fully giving ourselves up to it, causes spiritual weakness. Nothing is more unhealthy than to feel afraid, or moved, without going into the sanctuary and coming to a deeper consciousness: "I am for

God; He can bring me in contact with whom He wills, friend or foe, nearest or farthest from me. He is educating me, and apports my time, but He first brings me into a new position, and opens my eyes to see what 'holy unto the Lord' means; then He takes care that the influence on the side of men shall not become too strong for me, that I may fear no enemy, and be enslaved by no friend." A single golden thread goes through the Word of God, to strengthen us day by day on our way to glory. This is the meaning of the word "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xix. 2).



CHAPTER VII.

WHAT IT COSTS GOD.



AND if ye call on Him as Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear, knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." In these few verses, 15-18, our walk comes three times in question. "Be . . . holy in all manner of living" (ver. 15). Move no longer in the current of your former desires; fashion yourselves no longer "according to your former lusts." In other words, Do not let yourselves go; do not open your heart, mind, and imagination any more to any worldly pleasure which may come in your way; whether it attracts you, or makes you afraid. "In your ignorance,"—i.e., when you knew no better, when you knew nothing of a Rock where you might fly for refuge from vanity and outward show.

“Be ye yourselves holy in all manner of living,” in every step; in the world, in the church, and in the family, in business, and in society, as well as in solitude: everywhere and at all times, fashion yourselves by Him who has called you out of a world of pleasure and of care, whose call sounded in the desert waste of your imaginations, your plans, your memories, and your wisdom, and called you to Himself. Walk holily, for you belong to your God; He is your Centre, He is your Father (ver. 17). You have no room for anxiety that you may suffer want, or come, in some respect, too short. Oh, no! “Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.” The Father-name would not be hallowed, but dishonoured, if we took into our own hands the burden of our life’s path; our maintenance, our service, etc. We have a Father in heaven, and need not ask, like the heathen: “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” “How shall we manage, for living is constantly becoming dearer, and the air is always closer, and soon there will be no more room for us here below?” We have a Father who will then take us up to the home above. He will leave us down here on earth only until we are ready to be taken up into the glory.

But this Father is also our Judge; no weak

Father as are so many earthly fathers, who may love such or such a child in a soulish way, lacking courage to train him, and under certain circumstances to punish him, or to send him to a strict school. The end we have in view is so high, that in order to reach it, every school of God, every restraint, is worth while; without restraint no one can come out of a life of vanity into a life of eternity. The vine must be pruned, however many tears it may cost. Everything must work together for the end in view, when it is a question of holiness. God can wait years long; while sometimes, in special moments, He can make a short work of it.

We have to do with the all-wise, all-knowing God, who knows every one of His children through and through, who puts all our tears into His bottle, and does not ignore one vibration of our nerves. Never does He needlessly touch any wounded spot; never does He prematurely transplant us into a school for which we are not fit. His is an absolutely certain management of each several child, according to his individual circumstances, giving attention to every habit which may have been formed in the course of the year, and which must be encouraged or checked as the case may be. In His training there is none of that over-pressure and exacting which is often to be found in

teachers, for God has nothing to do with making His children shine in order that He may gain some credit for Himself. With Him all must be genuine, and worthy of eternity. He takes time with our education; He is merciful, and where it is necessary, sometimes unmerciful; but He never fails to know our frame, and to remember that we are dust. But under certain circumstances He takes no heed of our whining, or even of our opposition, but goes forward unhindered with our education, because He is holy, and He wills to make out of us a people who bear His image. Therefore make nothing of thyself, do not exhibit thyself, but be careful that thy work can stand the fire. Everything must be put to the test.

“Without respect of persons.” It is only when the work of anyone is weighed in God’s scales and put to the proof by Him, that it is manifest of what spirit he is. It is tried, not by human judgment, but Divine. Because we have to do with such a Father, such a Judge, into whose eyes we cannot throw sand, bestir and pull yourselves together, let nothing foreign to Him come into your walk. Do not turn your mantle to the wind; you have to do with God, therefore let no personality, no letter, no thundercloud in the sky, no star which may arise on your horizon, turn you back from the right way. You stand

before God. "If we live, we live unto the Lord." Therefore we need have no other care than to do what is right in His eyes, so that our endeavour is to please only Him. Walk before God in holy awe, and you have no foe to fear, and if still something of the old life, inherited from our fathers, comes up, God will deliver you from it.

"Pass the time of your sojourning in fear"—your earthly school time, your years of pilgrimage—during which you were like students far from home, in a strange land. God is preparing you for future rule. Our home is above, our pilgrimage here below; therefore we pass the time of our walk on earth with holy fear, justifying Him who judges righteously, that when we may have passed our examinations we may become well-educated people. Before the foundation of the world, God saw beforehand the works in which we walk, and in which our sanctification is wrought out; therefore we walk before God in holy fear, that we may suffer nothing and nobody to bring us out from those works; and all the more because we know, know full well—otherwise we would not be Christians—that we have been redeemed from the vain manner of life received from our fathers.

It is again and again the question of our Christian walk. The worth of anything is determined by what it has cost. Generally

speaking, the more pain and trouble parents suffer through their children, the more precious they are to them. We are not redeemed with common things, "silver, gold, precious stones," and such like, from the vanity and bondage of the visible world, from the tyranny of the words, the looks, and the gestures of men; from their favour or their fear, from creature-dependence by which we forget that we exist for our God,—but with the precious Blood. We are not permitted to approach other men in a creaturely, soulish, fleshly manner, in cringing or in fear; but, rather, in the love of Christ, to draw ever nearer to them.

We are not responsible for inventing our former miserable manner of living,—as a consequence of the Fall, we have been committed to it by our fathers. Since the Fall, a thread of darkness runs through the world, and very few, comparatively, have walked with God, and of these were only two individuals whom He could take to glory without passing through death. It has not cost our God less than the Blood of His Son to set us free from the almost universal slavery to vanity. Christ came down to earth, and took upon Him a human body, that from the innermost outwards He might overcome all which can enslave a child of man, and bring him into a life of vanity. But it is also by

a redemption price which no man and no thing can withstand; not even our many inherited traits of character and disposition. Yes, there is much which we have inherited. For that very reason the Lord Jesus came in our flesh to redeem us from our natural characteristics. Only the blood of the Lamb could set us free from the bondage of sin, of nature, of the fear of men, of the love of the creature, through the presentation of a redemption price, before which every habit of our own thoughts and ways must give way.

The weakness of this age is manifested by the light esteem in which the blood of the Lamb is held, and men become accustomed to look upon such or such a trait of natural character as invincible, from which there is no deliverance. It is not a matter only of the motions of our outward, but also of our inward life; that we may neither here nor there remain enslaved. The spotless blood of the Lamb redeems us from an entire trend of life. The very best of us only come into deliverance through the blood of the Lamb.

Every child of God has a two-fold generation; as begotten of God, and as the child of an earthly father. From the latter we inherit sinful blood; but, through being born of God, the pure blood of the Lamb, on the ground of which the Father has begotten us in the image of Christ. Because we are the chil-

dren of God, we have within us this precious, priceless, unspeakably valuable blood of the Lamb, "without blemish, and without spot," and that which is of Him is a new creation. This new nature, begotten of God, and cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, must and can overcome all which we have inherited from our fathers. He is mightier than any habit, any secret unevenness which may be continually cropping up to occupy us with representations, imaginations, opinions, and such like. The blood of the Lamb purifies down into the very sources of the blood and nerves; and opens a path to holy living as followers of the Lamb. Do not compare thyself with others, but with the nature of the Lord Jesus. "Be ye followers of Me, as I also am of Christ," says the apostle (1 Cor. xi. 1). Christ had clothed him, therefore was he Christ's follower. He had fashioned himself after a new character, after the image of Him whom he met on the way to Damascus. Now, take time to draw nearer to the image of thy Saviour. As thou lookest upon every feature, upon His purity, His manner, His words, and silence, say to thyself: "This is the Holy Ghost's work; He will work it out in me; I will be silent unto Him."



CHAPTER VIII.

GOD'S MASTER WORK.



CHILD of God looks out upon a double heritage. 1. There is what we have from our fathers and which we came into when we first saw the light, and which accompanies us through our path of life—viz., impure blood, bequeathed to us, and connecting us with a cursed world hastening to its doom; for by our first birth we are bound up with earth; this we have inherited. 2. A new birth from above. It is only with this latter that a new pedigree begins. So far as we are born again, we are brought into a living connection with another blood, the blood of the Lamb. The blood of the Lamb in the first place shows the character of the Lamb; there is a difference between the blood of the lamb and the blood of the lion; the one is mild, the other ferocious and raging. A lamb goes its way gently; a lion roaring. As we have said, this difference of nature is in the blood which runs in their veins. We are redeemed by “the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”—with pure blood,

through a living union with the Lamb, are we delivered from the inherited union bequeathed to us by tradition from our fathers.

We have already noted how repeatedly our manner of life is treated of in this passage (vers. 17, 18). If we will to be delivered from this sad inheritance—this vain manner of life; vain behaviour, vain words, and vain imaginations—we must more intimately examine the manner of life of the Lamb. We cannot receive the blood of the Lamb by the Spirit, as long as we do not take time to be more nearly acquainted with the Lamb. Why are the four Gospels given to us? Is it not that the person of the Lamb during His life on earth may stand before us, that the picture of our Saviour as He passed through the world may unconsciously be present to our sight? We, who are so ready to spend time over the picture or the memory of the living or the dead, can we not take time to give the Lamb His place, so that the lineaments of His character, as they impress themselves upon us in His manner of life, may hold us under that impression, and, indeed, so much so, that by this means the persons of men may be relegated to the background, whether they be those who cause us joy, or sorrow? All must bow before the Lamb. When once, in the eternal world, the brilliance of the Lamb will be unveiled, the whole universe must

bend the knee. To Him every knee shall and must bow ; " of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth " (Phil. ii. 10). Then all creature-glory will sink into darkness, and the whole universe will give glory to One alone—the Lamb that was slain (Rev. v. 13, 14), who stands in eternal glory before us, He who went His way, here below, quietly and with no stir or bustle.

Our vain glory is bequeathed to us from our fathers ; the glory of the Lamb is bequeathed to us in the Gospels ; and if we read the Gospels from this point of view, we get a new key to the Epistles, and an introduction to the book of Revelation, which depicts the glory of the Lamb at the right hand of the Father. Then the image of the Lamb becomes more and more a power in our life, so that all the traits of the lion character, all pride, all that is evil, whether of an attractive or a hateful nature, all traits of the fallen Adam-nature, must give way before this bequest. When we once become really disgusted with our own natural character, and no longer admire ourselves, saying with the Pharisee : " Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are,"—when we no longer chatter, as those only can chatter who have not looked deeply enough into the image of the Lamb,—then the thought of admiration passes away for ever. One only purpose

is before our eyes: to become daily more like the Lamb, and to put away from us, daily and utterly, everything which does not accord with the image of the Lamb. This is why we have the Gospels, and this is why the Holy Ghost is given.

“The Holy Ghost was not yet given,” said the Apostle (John vii. 39), but now He is given, and “He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you” (John xvi. 14). As, for example, an artist walking through a picture-gallery stands opposite a wonderful picture, and asks, “Do you understand what kind of picture stands before you?” so the Holy Ghost takes of Christ, and brings it so into the light before us, that one trait of the picture of Christ after another is impressed upon us in such a way as to be indelible; as, formerly, some scene in a novel made a lasting impression on the reader, which never left him, or a certain feature of some work of art, which had been brought before him,—the beauty, the love, or whatsoever was depicted—in an entirely new light.

But what, after all, are the masterpieces of the most famous artists, poets, or authors, to whom God has given genius—but not the Holy Spirit? What are all these in comparison with the master work which God has placed in our path, in the image of Him who portrayed in His every movement the eter-

nal Original, in the likeness and in the will of the Father? "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doeth, these also the Son doeth likewise" (John vi. 19, 20). The notes of His life were harmonized every moment in the chords of eternity, determined according to the good pleasure of His Father. He had no other end in view; and therefore He could twice during his life on earth have the testimony from His Father's lips: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In Him there was nothing of self, no hurrying forward, no lagging behind. He trod in the lines of His Father's will, and, as being the Original of what the Father has purposed to bring each of us up to, He regulated Himself by His time.

"From your vain manner of life, handed down from your fathers." Oh, how the fathers of the house of Israel have watched over the true handing down of the Holy Scriptures! How wonderfully they accomplished the handing down, untouched, to posterity, these records of the mighty works of God! And how can we, on our part, be sufficiently thankful that the image of Christ had been depicted by eye and ear witnesses, from the most diverse points of view, who have left behind for us a united view of our Saviour? How can we be thankful enough

to our God for this mirror, in which we may daily see a double picture—of our own shame, and of the glory of the Lamb—so that we are in a position to compare them, day by day, and thus to take account of what there is in us which is unlike our Lord Jesus? Only thus does the blood of Christ attain its full meaning for us; for the pure blood of the Lamb was shed for us that everything in us which differs from the image of Christ may be exposed through the Word and the Spirit, that we may take refuge in the blood, and be able to say with all confidence: “The blood of the Lamb was shed that our own blood should not flow unhindered in our veins; so that nothing doubtful may remain behind in our being, unjudged by the blood of Christ, and from which that blood does not deliver us.”

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains!

—all their vanity and self-consciousness.

This was foreseen before the foundation of the world. Before the foundation of the world, He presented Himself to God as Security for man. It was a fearful risk to take the responsibility of creating responsible creatures who *could* fall. It might have seemed necessary to drive the devil out of

the world. Man ought to have separated himself from the prince of this world, and, by holding fast to the Word of God, have expelled Satan from the world. But instead of hearkening to God's Word, he hearkened to the voice of the devil; therefore One must come who never listened to the devil's voice, but who, as man, must learn to know His God on the lines of Scripture. As Security for man, He was foreseen from the foundation of the world; and thus He came forward for the salvation of the world, but only at the end of the times (of the ages—Gr.); 1,900 years ago was He manifested.

The end of the ages began with His appearing; and the Church has no idea how much she has postponed the end, by her unwillingness to let herself be transformed into the image of the Lamb. We can appear before God in no other image. He is become manifest; and since then the whole creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, who shall be transfigured into the image of the Lamb: for this is the purpose of God. There are some whom He has predestinated to be transfigured from all the shame of their nature into the image of the glory of the Lamb (Rom. viii. 29).

“Manifested at the end of the ages for your sake” (ver. 20); for the sake of the reader of this Epistle of Peter, the Lamb

has been manifested at the end of the ages ; for thy sake and for my sake ; that the impress of my nature may yield before the revelation of the Lamb, as it has met me in holy hours of my life, and as it has met thee, as often as thou hast taken to heart that thou canst not with thine own mind decipher the glory of the Lamb, that it belongs to the Holy Ghost. Even the disciples themselves only saw in the light of Pentecost who their Master really was. He was manifested at the end of the ages. Let us no longer drag on the end of the ages, but let ourselves be transformed. Having too long fashioned ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance, shall we not now let ourselves be fashioned into the nature of the Lamb, that the creation may not be obliged any longer to wait for the manifestation of the sons of God ?

“All men have not faith” (2 Thess. iii. 2). “Faith is not everybody’s business,” says Luther. And yet everyone is under obligation to believe, and responsible if he does not believe—responsible, when the world above opens to him in the Word of God, whether he opens his heart to it, or shuts himself up against it. “He that believeth not is condemned already,” but as truly as by Him we believe in God (1. Pet. i. 21), so truly no one who is condemned will be able

to say, "Thou hast not given me faith." Christ has been manifested at the end of the ages, for the sake of the saints, of believers, and of such as through them believe in God. However much against our poor human understanding they may be, we hold fast, and humbly acknowledge these two things: that we are indebted to grace for everything, and that we have no reason whatsoever to boast of our own will or our own choice, or to say: "*I have willed, and so and so has not.*"

Through His resurrection from the dead, God has given new glory to His Son. His resurrection is a manifestation of new glory. Grace and glory were indeed manifested in His first appearance upon earth, and His disciples could say: "We have seen His glory; glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). Glory—unrecognised glory—shone out in His earthly life through grace and truth, even in His hidden life in Nazareth. Child of man as we are, yet how different was His being and His manner of life from ours! But who had eyes to see His glory? None less than the inhabitants of Nazareth! Nowhere was His arm so shortened for the manifestation of Divine glory as in Nazareth. Their hearts were hardened because they looked with indifference on the hidden glory of this Child and Youth, for, just as we go on from faith

to faith, so we go on from unbelief to unbelief. Let no one gaze on glory without personally yielding himself to it: else his eye for glory will grow dim.

Glory begets glory. Beholding glory, our perception is intensified, while it is diminished whenever we suffer it to pass by us without letting it penetrate our hearts in such a way that we live it out, and let God transform us to it. Wherever the pure, unadulterated Word of God circulates, His glory and His judgment come to light, and whosoever does not open his heart to it, runs the risk of the judgment of a hardened heart, and must give account of what he has done with the holy seeds of blessing and of judgment. We must be called to account for our responsibility as to how far we have accepted or rejected the Word of God. This judgment is already at work in the world, and even now divides men into two classes. The one accepts the Word of God, and glory can be manifested in him. The other does not accept it, and yet wonders why he receives no blessing. There was glory in this Nazarene. He was the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, manifested in the flesh; and "we beheld His glory."

But here, 1 Peter. i. 21, speaks of another glory. Through the resurrection of Christ from the dead, God gave Him glory, as in

John xii. 24: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." When the inhabitants of Nazareth were, on the one hand, responsible for their indifference in regard to Jesus, they were nevertheless at the time not in a position fully to recognise who He was that walked among them. "Who hath believed our report?" Who understands? "And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Until the corn of wheat has sunk into the ground, "it abideth alone"; and the life of glory which He lived could only become the possession of His own through His death, resurrection, ascension, and pouring out of the Holy Ghost. "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 14). He will not only set before your eyes a lovely picture, but He "shall take of Mine," shall open up the innermost depths of your being, and deeply root His everlasting life. This is glory; multiplication of the endless, an outshining in such a manner that the lost may see the light. The outshining of glory is at the same time the opening of eye, ear, and heart by the Holy Spirit to take it in.



CHAPTER IX.

GOD GAVE HIM GLORY.



GOD gave Him glory (1 Peter i. 21). Power to reflect His being through the Holy Ghost, power to impart the germs of His being to His children, power to be born in the children of men—that is endless glory, the possibility of endless reproduction. The opposite from corruption and barrenness is reproduction; radiating the brilliancy of eternity, and of the life which dwells in Christ. God “gave Him glory,” power to impart Himself, to multiply Himself thus, “so that your faith and hope might be in God.” Did not He come that He might reconcile lost man to God? After He had sanctified Himself—and He did so that we might be sanctified through the truth—there exists a whole fund for the Holy Ghost to dispose of, a hidden Christ-life, the germs of which the Holy Ghost plants in our souls, and which He, in stillness and holy purity, fosters in those who have an eye for the Divine, who set a value on this germ, who would rather

die than destroy, or let weeds overgrow, what is Divine.

So long as our Lord Jesus lived on earth, no one could live such a life of union with God as He led ; it was through His dying on the cross that God gave Him the glory to beget in His followers a life of "faith and hope." Faith and hope are also exercised in our earthly existence ; but it is a vain faith and a vain hope. One may put trust in man until he has been deceived, in consequence of which he retaliates, becomes man's enemy, and loses confidence in man. One hopes, until one hope fails after another ; and, hopeless, one yields to a sullen indifference, which dishonours and degrades. What can one hope for, when everything gets worse instead of better ? Yes, when hope is placed in the visible, a hope where is nothing to hope for, how can it be otherwise ? *Our* faith and hope is an outcome of the glory which God has given to His Son.

He gave Him glory, so that our faith and hope may be fixed on God, on the living God, that He may take out of us to-day such as we know from which world they come, and to which world they are going—a people who have made up their mind. Begin, then, to let thyself be loosed by the blood of Christ from the folly of vain hopes in the things which are seen. Let the "old things" pass

away in forgetfulness ; then God will lay a new foundation, and thus room will be made for glory through a continual putting away and getting rid of all vain influences in the external world, and thou wilt be drawn always more fully out of vanity into the kingdom of glory, thy true home.

“So that your faith and hope may be in God.” In the following verses love appears as third with faith and hope. Faith and surrender to God, who has given us such a Saviour! He spared not His only-begotten Son—how should He not with Him also freely give us all things (Rom. viii. 32)? How can I still open my heart to the serpent, when he whispers, “Thy God is hard,” and such-like things, by which the enemy seeks to bewitch a human heart which is not kept by the Holy Spirit from this serpent seed?

“That your faith and hope may be in God”—trusting in God. God “is not a man, that He should lie”; He cannot be mistaken in promising what is beyond His power, as Jeremiah expresses it: “Why shouldest Thou be . . . as a mighty man that cannot save?” (Jeremiah xiv. 9). He is the Almighty, whose arm is not shortened, that He cannot save (Isa. lix. 1). He is the Almighty and the All-knowing One, who is not away to-morrow in some other land, sending word: “It is

not thy turn just now." It is never thus with our God. If our faith is in Him, we are standing on rock ground, eternal ground, which can steady even the tottering feet, and quiet the most enthusiastic hearts. On Him, the Rock, we not only have a sure standing-ground, but safety from the touch of the surge. Truly a wide vantage-ground ; a large horizon.

From faith to faith. If, on the one hand, unbelief goes on to unbelief, so, on the other hand, it is true that with every new horizon which opens to it, faith deepens. By receiving grace, faith is strengthened, the lungs open anew, and draw in the air of life, of home, of eternity. And whatever task or whatever suffering may meet us to-day, to-morrow or in the coming days, it is not for us to say, "Am I grown so strong that I am equal to go through this?" We lean neither on ourselves nor on others, but on our God, whom we cannot trust too much : His arm is not shortened, His sight is not dim.

We believe in God : this carries us through life. Faith is daily renewed, and if it does not always possess us in the same way, if we cannot always enter into full possession of what we see in Scripture, we yet continue to hope ; and those things which God cannot fully carry out with us to-day, He will accomplish to-morrow. We learn faith as we

practise it. This is why difficulties exist, even the peculiarities in our character and in our imagination, which do not give way from one day to another. We must first learn to know the difficulties which have got root in our physical and spiritual organism. Our faith must be put in practice, and we must learn the strength of him who opposes us, in view of our powerlessness in dealing with our likes and dislikes. All these things must, one by one, be overcome, and then hope comes to our help. In relation to all these things, these faults of character and temperament, which in the present bring us into trouble, it must be from faith to faith. Where some lose courage, others take courage anew, and say: "God's grace is not yet exhausted." In this way we learn to expect nothing from ourselves, but all from God, and thus victory is sure, whether in outward things, or whether in the darker regions of our inner life.

Faith and hope—not only in order that the Lord may complete His work upon us, but also another hope, that the work may lead to the glorious end. If we are faithful in our renunciation and putting off, God will finally bring us to the breach, and translate, without death or the grave, those whom He has transformed. The fruit of His work will be a life of love. Faith, hope, and love belong to each other. This is glory from the home

above. We cannot continue to entertain such a question as whether it is worth while. Yes, truly it *is* worth while, and whosoever in deep earnest gives himself up to this glorious life can never let it go; he becomes bound, fast held; he becomes a man of glory, who bears upon him the mark of hidden glory, and who, while in the kingdom of corruption, lives out glory.

If we perverted people really desire to be transformed into the image of Christ, we need the full, the complete testimony of Christ, which the Scripture gives: "They are they which testify of Me," He says (John v. 39). As the Lord Jesus turned the attention of His hearers to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in the words "Search the Scriptures"; so also after His resurrection, when He met with the two disciples at Emmaus, He at once took up this central theme. Even before they recognised Him, He had shown them light regarding Himself in His opening up the Scripture to them. And what was the main point of His Scripture teaching? "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He taught them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself."

That is the great work which the risen and ascended Christ accomplishes by His

Spirit, opening the Scriptures to us, as He opened them to those disciples on the way to Emmaus. If we would have a complete, a fully comprehensive, picture of our Lord in all its wide extent, and in all it includes, we must turn for witness to the four separate Gospels. I have often alluded to the fact that the Rev. John Wilkinson, so well known in his Mission to the Jews, ever and again urged the need of going to the Jews, Gospel in hand, that the true portrait of the Lord Jesus might be presented to them, which they would be unable to recognise in the Christianity of the Church of our day. "Only too often," he would say, "they have seen in the lives and persons of so-called believers only a miserable caricature."

When we would accept an entire Christ a great difficulty at once presents itself. We have so long borne the image of the old Adam, and lived in our self-life, we have introduced so much of our Adamic nature into our Christianity, that we awake only slowly, and come only too gradually to a consciousness of how little our character, in thought, word, and deed, accords with the life our Lord led, and we need to be very careful not to say too quickly with Paul: "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16), "We have the mind of Christ"? Let us ask ourselves in right earnest before God, "*Have*

we indeed the mind of Christ? Are we indeed people who have finished school?" He truly says: "Come unto Me . . . and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart" (Matt. xi. 28, 29). He wants to teach us to be what He is, and to this end He seeks to educate us. Are we verily meek and lowly in heart, as He was, who is set before us as our Pattern? He seeks to bring us to this; it is His expressed will that we should be thus.

Let it be, then, the first thing with us that we may never neglect our own transformation, that we may lose no time in vanity, since the blood of Christ has redeemed us from it.

Why delivered? That, as redeemed, we may be able to stand still in the sanctuary, to study the traits of Christ's character until those old traits in our character disappear, and the glory of the image of Christ becomes more and more clearly apparent in us. For this purpose we are here on earth, that from thousands of individuals the image of Christ should be reflected. In these thousands, and ten thousands, nothing must be left which does not bear the impress of Christ, for whatsoever does not bear this mark is displeasing to God, and cannot become His sanctuary.

You know how in Rom. viii. 29, God, by

an eternal calling, has foreordained such as are to be conformed to the image of His Son. One to whom this Scripture has been enlightened can never forget it again, and in comparison with this marvellous thing, "My God has foreordained me to be conformed to the image of His Son," all else is worthless. If God makes the image of Christ become living to us, we see in this calling a citizenship, a right of privilege. If thy heart is drawn out to the Crucified One, if this Man of the Cross awakens something in thee, know that is the best proof that God has predestinated thee from eternity to be conformed to the image of His Son. This is the practical explanation of predestination. But God has predestined no man who does not at one time or other in his life set the glory of the Cross before him. If thy natural man bows down before this Christ, it is even because God has foreordained thee from eternity, and, therefore, thou needest to let no difficulty in thy training hold thee back, however gradual thy transformation may be.

It is remarkable how we have here the same expression as in 2 Cor. iii. 18. "We all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transfigured"—yet only by degrees—"from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit," who glorifies Christ, discovering to us His attributes, and in draw-

ing us nearer to the Crucified, shatters our own likeness, so that we are drawn out of the old into the new. This is the work of the Spirit of God, and it is in consciousness of the goal, the Father's purpose as expressed in the words "He hath predestinated," and the Holy Spirit unites with Him in this Divine thought. He will accomplish that which He has purposed from eternity. Shall we doubt? We believe in the Holy Ghost. If I believe indeed in the Holy Ghost, then I must believe that He will not rest until He has transformed every trait of my own character. I believe that every inherited failing, whatever it be, must yield before the quiet working of the Holy Ghost. Only do not lose patience; only enter into the purpose of God; only have no other end in view, if that purpose has taken root in thee, thou shalt be glorified. It is worth while, it is worth everything, that God should attain to the full His purpose in us.



CHAPTER X.

LOVE UNFEIGNED.



BEING ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth, unto unfeigned love of the brethren"; or, "Having purified your souls in your obedience."

The passage we have so long considered closes with faith and hope. But faith and hope are organically bound up with love. Wherever faith and hope exist, they must be lived out in love. Our love must not be dependent on what we expect from man: we believe in God, and therefore we love. Our love is independent of whether others do or do not understand us; it is an outflow from our faith in God. Love which is not upheld by a hope which is stayed on God, is but a caricature of love. It is self-nurture, which, loving itself in another, strengthens its own self-life. There is no patience, and there is no love, without faith and hope in God that He, in the most intricate circumstances with our fellow-men, still has means and ways to order everything aright. There are circumstances in which we must wait until God

has disentangled all; otherwise things only grow worse and worse. It often happens that one has not oneself an eye to recognise where one has been in fault. But let us set our hope on God, when we have entangled and lost all, and, with the best intentions, have brought everything into confusion. He will disentangle the threads, just as the mother disentangles the threads and picks up the dropped stitches of the knitting which the child gives over into her hand. We have a Father in heaven, who, with clear and sure hand, picks up our dropped stitches: only, we must give Him time. That is healthy for us. For in the region of love we must also have the patience and faith of the saints.

"Seeing ye have purified yourselves in your obedience to the truth, unto unfeigned love of the brethren." "What is truth?" asks Pilate (John xviii. 38). The Preacher saith, "Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity" (Eccles. i. 2) and untruth: and David said in his haste, "All men are liars" (Ps. cxvi. 11). No confidence is to be placed in man. Therefore, we purify our souls from our dependence on man, and from our wounded feelings when we did not receive the daily bread of man's consideration and love. Vanity! Ye are redeemed from the vanity of your walk—your thinking, your loving, according to the traditions of your fathers—through the Lamb, whom

God has exalted and given glory, that His life of love might shine out through you.

The Spirit leads us into a new world of love, in which we do not keep accounts with our brethren ; where we can afford to give without return. "Lend, hoping for nothing again" (Luke vi. 35); sow in hope, and they will see one day what your meaning was. You invest your money ; invest your love in hope. That is a life of glory in contrast to the life of vanity, in which people will always see to it that they get interest for everything.

God gave His Son glory that your faith and hope, even in regard to love, may be in God and not in man. Then, all true love which we enjoy from man will bring us nearer to God, instead of chaining us to the creature ; and if we should not have the love from the creature which they owe us, or to which we think we have a claim, then let us not dispute with them, but know that God will look after that which is our due. Thus doing, we get our interest, pure and holy, direct from heaven. He comforts those whom their fellow-creatures have treated inconsiderately, on whom they have been inclined to think their love has been wasted. Sow in hope without the expectation of always quickly reaping. Become a man of eternity, and through every painful experience let thy Divine anchor sink deeper into the king-

dom of a hope which cannot be disappointed.

"In obedience to the truth"; the absolute truth of our redemption. Let us contend no longer with any man, but live in faith and hope in God. Love on, and be strengthened by all which thy fellow-men either give or refuse thee. Whatever they may give us, will not harm us, and whatever they may deny us, will not make us doubt God. We have purified our hearts through faith, and obedience to God's revealed redemption, and through this faith we become always more established in the power to love unfeignedly.

This word "unfeigned" contains in the original the sense of something of judging lying in the background. Let there be no undercurrent of judging or criticising thoughts: an undercurrent of judgment, a speculative hope of being repaid, an interest on good capital for oneself, and not for others. Give to them who have nothing to give in return, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. Think not that here on earth thou must always receive interest: rather lay up treasure in the upper world, where no thief can break in and steal. This love purifies us, while natural love, which always exacts an equal return, develops powers of corruption.

Thou must have unfeigned love of the brethren, with no undercurrent of secret judgment. Who art thou, then, that thou

shouldest judge thy brother? That is not glory. O how needful is it for just those who most try us, that they should find someone through whom they may be thrown back upon their God, and who meets the self-interested with love unfeigned, until, at last, the creaturely-minded, who have been offended at us, come, by our love to them, on to Divine ground, and come to see in the true light the claims they have made upon us. God will know how to find them. We love them without any background of secret judgment in our hearts, without letting ourselves be influenced by their way of treating us, which might make love grow cold. We stand under the dazzling light of Divine glory, that our faith and hope God-wards may endure, and our love may be as the love of Jesus, who loved us unto the death, and who did not cease to love even a Judas. As He loved His disciples, although they so little understood Him, and threatened others with perdition (Luke ix. 54); as He bore with them—even Judas—unto the end (John xiii. 1), so let us hold on in love unto the end. Through everything the Lord Jesus stood true to His disciples, and did not judge them, but so dealt with them that in His deepest inner life He justified His Father's sending Him into the world as His express Image (Heb. i. 3). It was only through the blood of the

Lamb that the disciples could be cleansed from all the ways and the failings which are common to man. The entire experience of life had strengthened Him in what He knew from all eternity, and which became yet clearer to Him, that He must die ; there was no other way to direct their faith, their hope, and expectation to God, that man might no longer expect anything from himself, and that he might draw from Him the love with which He loves. That is the well which never dries up. Neither John nor Peter, nor any one of the twelve, could be depended on. Christ must die for all as much as for Judas.

No judging thoughts in reserve, no hidden speculation about being loved in return, and of reaping a present harvest. Learn to wait, learn to sow pure love-seed, so that others may perceive that we have not expected return for our love or for anything else, and that our love to-day is the same as yesterday, before we made the unhappy experience of being misunderstood and wrongly judged. We are unconquerable while we stand on glory ground, and in this way our love becomes a manifestation of the glory of God, because we are redeemed from vanity. We are more and more living witnesses of the glory of Christ, in whom our fellow-creatures can find love, eternity, and purity.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE HUMAN AND DIVINE.



INTO unfeigned love of the brethren, . . . having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

There is also a thought of "outspread," "over all," something "extensive," in the word from which "unfeigned" is translated. *Ex-*tensive and *intensive* meet in the region of love, and here it is the concentrating one's love, but not in the way of choice, upon this one or that one. There are various kinds of love—filial love, wedded love, the love of children, etc., which include a special region; but our love must spread out and beyond these, and every kind of love is prized when it stands upon the classical, all-inclusive ground of "love unfeigned." The one works into the other. Love one another from the heart, or with a pure heart (A.V.) fervently.

Love, as we have seen, seeks not its own. One who has a situation in business, and has not a clean heart, seeks only his own interests. Those who seek the interests of their

employers are few and far to find ; and one may be doubly thankful to have found such.

“Out of a pure heart.” One may be under the impression that one is large-hearted ; but, in practice, natural love cannot reach out into the infinite ; it has its limits, and often they are very narrow. One who seeks his own has not a pure heart. If love does not enlarge, if one is “easily provoked” by all kinds of peculiarities of character, the cords of love loosen, and it grows cold, because it does not proceed from a pure heart. Only he who is begotten of God can, with pure heart, really understand others. Since the Fall, man is burdened with the curse, and the fall of our nature consists in seeking our own, and therefore in corruption, instead of the glory of God.

“With a pure heart.” How can that come to pass ? “Having been begotten again.” It needs a new birth, not a bridled nature. Education may truly curb considerably, but the hidden tendencies of our nature are not changed by education. Only by new birth can we become partakers of a new and second nature (2 Pet. i. 4). God is Love, unspotted, self-renouncing Love, which shrinks from no sacrifice—not even that of His only-begotten Son. That is Divine love which is begotten in us by the Word of Christ and the Father. No corruption, but continual quickening, is

in that love, which is always extending wider, and intensifying, in measure as the Divine in us overcomes the old man. "All seek their own," in so far as their nature is not transformed. "Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." No change, no variation, in Love.

Here a word from Rom. xii. 21. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Overcomers hold rule. Before the fall, God had given man dominion over all creation. The Redemption which is in Christ Jesus leads us back into this place of victory over ourselves; so that we are no longer overcome of evil, but can overcome evil with good. We ought to be brought back from victory to victory; not, indeed, to the state of paradise, but higher still. God does not heal only from the consequences of *the* fall, but leads us through *our* falls higher up, and deeper into His secrets. We shall reign again over the natural world, over fishes, birds,—in short, over all. God will give all back into the hand of man when all is brought together under one Head. Meanwhile we must, in our little circle, begin to overcome evil, and bridle our own nature, so that thoughts and feelings may be brought back into the obedience of the Cross.

If we are truly crucified; redeemed from

the tyranny of our own life, and from the ground of sin, it will go on in concentrated circles from victory to victory, and from glory to glory. The closest sphere is that of the family; in the relation of man and wife, parent and child. These are domains where one can see clearly how dominion and love dovetail one into the other; I can only love where I can rule, overcoming evil with good. In course of time every husband will see in his wife, and every wife will see in her husband, something which must be overcome. First of all, then, the husband has to rule; but this rule consists in his being grounded in exactly the opposite from what is generally considered to be his prerogative. True Divine rule is such as Jesus, the Head of the Church, exercises. He has given His life for the Church, that He may kindle in her a reciprocal love, which yields to Him. When, therefore—to begin with the nearest, most intimate circle—a husband discovers in his wife that which is not Divine, it is for him to overcome it, in so far that his love for her is in no way lessened by it, but, on the contrary, stronger and more intense. True love sacrifices itself, and thereby the ties between the husband who rules in love, and the wife who obeys in love, become sanctified, and the Christ-like house becomes a centre from which love shines out beyond.

God is Love, and all must come back to God, the original Source of Love, else love cannot be. I love intensely if my love is not affected by anything unworthy of love which I discover in others. As those who rule, clothed with all the dignity of rule, we must, in the power of God, discern and overcome all which is unlovely, or even repulsive, in those who are nearest to us.

"Love never faileth," and, instead of growing cold, only becomes more intense when opposition increases. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," with love, which is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost. And if thy love cannot endure, then see to it that thy new birth be perfected. Wherever something of thy past remains where thou hast been tempted to make use of another for thine own gain, then learn first to overcome in thyself; when thy love cannot reach out, put on new power of God, and instead of murmuring, thank thy God that, through the character of others, thou hast been made aware of thine own failures.

"Be not overcome of evil," but take courage that thine eye be always single. Suffer it no longer to occur to thee to say: "O if I could only serve elsewhere!" "O if only I had a different husband, or a different wife!" Whence come all such kind of thoughts? Look upon everything, as much in the most

private circle as in a wider sphere, as intended to further thine upbringing and thine education, that thou mayest learn—but not by force—to overcome difficult characters, and to bathe ever more deeply in the ocean of grace; that thou mayest no longer make others tributary to thee, but only ask of thyself what thou owest them. We are the most indebted to those very ones who make us the least return, for they are the poorest, and thou art rich. Thou hast the love of God, and if it should not suffice, thou canst get more, thou canst let thyself be filled with love, that thou mayest serve God practically, wheresoever He may place thee; that out from thence Divine love may be able to extend and outflow—not sentimental, but essential love, flowing out from its Centre.

In private home life thou hast the opportunity to measure, if thou art of incorruptible seed, how far thy new birth is genuine, and how far thou dost manifest thyself in the circumstances where God has placed thee, as an overcomer of the world, by faith which expresses itself in incorruptible love.



CHAPTER XII.

GENUINE NEW BIRTH.



BEGOTTEN again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth. . . . For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever." What is this new birth, this being "born from above" (John iii. 3, marg.), this being "begotten again," "born of God" (1 John v. 1)? This is the question which occupied the scribe Nicodemus, and on which he might have been able to find a solution in the Old Testament, for the Lord Jesus said to him, "Art thou a teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?" And yet, even now, children of God can ask, What is it exactly to be born again? The apostle answers, "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," thereby and there-out of.

All that which is born of corruptible seed—"that which is born of the flesh"—is flesh (John iii. 6), and "all flesh is as grass, and

all the glory thereof [of men thus born] as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 24, R.V.). All that which is begotten through the living and abiding Word of God is "born again"; that is incorruptible seed.

Now, have we, we who are born again, actually nothing more in us which is corruptible? Will it always remain so? And if our body also should succumb to corruption, is there nothing corruptible remaining in our inner man, in our being? How far may we hope to overcome the corruptible? So much is certain,—both the apostle in 1 Pet. i. 23, and our Lord Jesus, in John iii. 6, speak of great and marvellous things, which we have far too much undervalued and lightly esteemed, as though they were only images from nature, forgetting that all the images drawn from nature are essentially types of all which meets us in the spiritual world, and that the reality of the spiritual world must not come short of the types.

Wherever there is the new birth the sweet odour of the Gospel is spread abroad. Whosoever is begotten and born from above, has a new bent, a new life's centre; he stands on new ground, and will be guided in all his way of life, speaking or silence, no longer by nature, but by the Holy Ghost; and we all

of us have cause to humble ourselves that the eternal seed has not penetrated the whole region, nor, at least, shone through all the region of our will, our work, and our doings.

A new birth is a being born again of the Spirit, and He must rule over all the old life, until all has become renewed ; just as in the whole universe, all that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, must bow the knee, until God be all in all. All the inner and outer life of every new-born soul in the house and in the family, in his going out and coming in, his looks, his manners, his spiritual impressions and dispositions, must come under the command of the Holy Spirit, out of the domain of the corruptible—the flesh, the sensual, the self-admiration and vanity,—otherwise the new birth will remain blemished, unreal ; and the world will then hardly know how to distinguish between one who is born again and a naturally noble man, such as, thank God ! are to be found.

Many children of God remain behind in their development, compared with some unconverted people, who, through their environment, have sprung from a noble race, who have had the advantage of good training from their parents, and who have not been defiled with all manner of things. There are noble natures, as well as vulgar and impure. By the latter, the seed of the Word naturally

penetrates with greater difficulty, and if the Divine seed is not presented to them in its perfect purity, they easily remain behind in their development. Born again they may be, but it is a kind of abnormal birth, which stops short in the region of thinking, doing, and liking; not yet penetrated through and through with the Divine seed: one meets again and again in them things which have not been judged.

Such abnormal births may be counted by thousands and tens of thousands in the world; and it is worth while for a moment to give attention to this matter. When a woman mixes leaven in the dough, the whole lump becomes leavened. And do you think God will rest so long as any part of our being is not overcome by this incorruptible seed of the Word? Men speak lightly of regeneration, and remain satisfied with only a partial development, instead of letting themselves be radically transformed, and brought up to full manhood in Christ.

In Heb ii. 1, it is written: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (R.V., "drift away from them"). In Langes' "Bibelwerk," there occurs in this passage the remarkable translation: "That we may not be rushed by." This translation is to me full of meaning just

in view of Ezekiel xlvii. 9—"The rivers." Two rivers, two currents, flow through the world: the one from above, the other from beneath; the one life-giving, the other life-destroying. He who will not "be drifted away," as Luther translates,—will not slip into the fatal current of sin and perdition,—must have some firm hold, and this firm hold is only to be found in the Word of God. Therefore let us all the more "take heed to the things which we have heard."

The words, the looks, the example of man,—in short, all the influences proceeding from man,—trouble, poison, and weaken us, divert us, and draw us into the great stream of world-dominated perdition, if we have not a sure Word of God. And written indeed, not only with ink or printers' impress, but written in us with the iron pen of the Holy Ghost (Jer. xvii. 1); the living God Himself hiding His Word deeply in our hearts (Ps. cxix. 11; Col. iii. 16), to which we can cling, so that we can take our bearings over the world-dominated current.

All which does not accord with this sure Word belongs to the current which comes from the world beneath, although its outward appearance were never so fair. Refined poison is often in its working more dangerous and lasting than the more common kind. Much hidden poison flows in a cease-

less stream straight through the world, and everyone who lets himself go to vanity goes with this current of corruption.

We live in a superhumanly-developed age, a development which has attained the lowest grades of people; and what men sought to accomplish in the days of the tower of Babel—but in which they did not succeed, because God intervened and confounded their language—men succeed in now, for now there are printing presses and daily papers, telegraphs, telephones, even wireless telegraphs,—in short, the multiplication of communication of every description is a terrible progress towards the abyss! Through the power of the press, which brings all into bondage which is not grounded on the pure Word of God, communication is established from one end of the world to the other. A terrible mixture everywhere prevails, and men are only too quickly inclined to be influenced by the daily increasing current of popular opinion; and a world getting every day farther away from God.

Therefore "let us give more earnest heed to the things which we have heard," lest we be washed away and drawn into the current of vanity. Where are they who judge all things by the Word of God? Where are they who, independent of their fellow-men, fashion themselves after the likeness of Christ, and

who cast off all which does not accord with the image of Christ, the Word made flesh, even though the whole world deride them?

If thou art not at home in the Word of God, and only read superficially some little portion, be not surprised if thou shouldst be carried away with the stream. Instead of taking in the fresh, pure water of life, thou absorbest in thy constitution the weakening mixture which others have trodden with unholy feet. Naturally, in such a case, thou art unable to take thy bearings as to the way thou hast come, or that which lies before thee, seeing thou art no longer standing on the height.

How completely different it is, however, when anyone comes into the current of which Ezek. xlvii. speaks! It deepens and deepens, until at last it bears us. Then we feel indeed that we have lost our foothold. At first we only drink of the stream; at last we lose ourselves therein. We should prize every Word of God. The Lord Jesus is the incarnate Word: in the life of every man some Word of God ought in a special way to find its incarnation; we ought to become bodily expressions of the thoughts of God. This can only be as we swim in, and are borne upon, the stream of living water, continually separating from all which could here and there insinuate itself. There nothing can be

smuggled ; there are coastguards on the spot : and there gradually develops a more delicate and clearer power of discernment.

Thus we are not only healthy, but developing for rule ; we who for so long a time have suffered ourselves to be overcome by popular opinion, by our environment and by our family traditions ! The God-begotten do not fashion themselves after the vain conversation of their fathers, howsoever pious they may have been : the God-begotten swim in a new current, drink of living water, and even now overcome the world. The saints who one day will rule over the world may not now allow themselves to be overcome by popular opinion, however much they may be looked upon as fools. The Gospel is foolishness to the world (1 Cor. i. 18), and rebukes all ungodliness. A Gospel which would suit the world, and which the world would suit, would be no Gospel.

It cannot go on much longer. The power from beneath is too mighty, and it may be we are in the last hour in which we may enter fully into the Word of God. The horizon is overcast, everywhere there is chaos, and surely all is hastening on. But to Him all power in heaven and earth is given who is for us "the Way," and who ever has a way for us,—namely, the living Word of God. His name be praised even in our bodies,

and in our existence, that we may become incarnate words of God to the praise of His glory.



CHAPTER XIII.

FLEE FROM IDOLATRY.



THE question of idolatry in 1 Cor. x. 12-14, has its place in connection with our chapter. Having been so long occupied with the difference between corruptible and incorruptible, we come now to the necessary application of verse 23.

In what does idolatry consist? It has two sides. The heathen, who know not God, do what lies in their power to appease their bad gods, and to win or to retain the favour of the good ones. They have gods, for they make to themselves such, not only of the sun, moon, and stars, but of all manner of created things which cause them either pleasure or harm. How, then, can the apostle say to children of God: "Flee from idolatry"? The Corinthians were idolatrous in a very different way from us; but idolatry goes deeper than we have any idea of: what is written in our Book of books applies to all, and at this day idolatry is wider-spread than we think.

In what does it consist? Essentially in our deifying that which profits us or injures us, reckoning with it, instead of with the Ruler

of the universe, without whom not a hair of our head can fall, not a tiny stone can lie in our path to hinder us in our course. No drop of sorrow or of pain, and equally no drop of happiness or enjoyment, can fall into our cup without God's absolute permission; good or evil can come into our life only by God's direction. Idolatry in God's children consists in their reckoning with the suffering or the joy which will come in their way, in their taking account, at day-break, whether it is going to be easy or difficult. In short, it is reckoning with things seen, instead of giving God alone the glory, from whom storms come as well as sunshine; and who in every Christian life apportions with a faithful Father-hand both the sunshine and the storm, measuring the portion for each according to his spiritual nature. A man has different temptations (or trials) than a woman, and an old man other than a child. Thus it is idolatry if we make our weal and woe to be dependent on how we stand with man, or if we anxiously consider what unknown good or evil may be hidden in the day.

It is idolatry when we fail to recognise the hand of God in every hair of our head which falls to the ground, or which someone may pull out; or fail to remember that every little stone in our path, every gleam of light, every smile from one of the family, or from a

friend, as well as every unpleasant look which any certain person can cast at us, is part of our education. It is not always sunshine, or the roots would not penetrate deep enough in the home-soil of eternity; therefore, reckoning direct with woe and weal, with friend and foe, is idolatry. It is the receiving and having in view secondary influences, instead of bringing them into connection with Him who, in His wonderful organising, makes them all work together for good to them that love Him. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John v. 21), from the idolatry of being hindered by temperature, wind, or weather, by bright or gloomy prospects. Let your disposition be in no way dependent on the outlook, be it pleasant or gloomy.

But when it seems as though there were no way through, and every kind of trial comes upon us—what then? All things remain in the faithful hand of our God. "There hath no temptation taken thee but that which is common to man"—whether from spirits, from demons, or from men,—and, indeed, not only "common to man" in its general sense, but suitable to thy temperament, constitution, and power of endurance. Thou hast not another's tests, but thine own personal, individual ones, which are as peculiar to thee as though thou alone wert in the world. Thou hast not my trials, nor I thine; thou hast

never met with a trial which was not common to men, and which did not suit thine environment, and which did not act either as a spur or as a check to thee.

But, then, how about to-morrow, dost thou ask? God is faithful, and He alone is God. There is not a God of the sunshine, and then another God of the storm, but one only God, who knows every one of His creatures in his own peculiarities, and counts every pulsation of our hearts. He is faithful, and will never permit one of us to be tempted above what he is able to bear. Temptation adjusts itself, and has a deep and wide meaning. Trials are measured by their force and their duration. A temptation may be weak, but when it continually recurs, and lasts long, it gnaws, under some circumstances, at the very vitals, as a small tooth is often much more tender than a larger one. The Lord exactly proportions strength and temptation to every man. As concerns strength, it is expressed in the words "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear." Thou hast not to do with man, who is hostile to thee, but with God, who knows how much He can put into thy cup, that it may work out that whereto He has designed it; and, on the other hand, may not overpress thee, so that thou mayest be harmed. This is Christianity; all else is

heathendom. Christians have a God whose clock does not strike only hours and minutes, but has also a second-hand.

Thus be still—only still! God does not miscalculate the measure of the trial which He allows to come upon thee, nor yet its duration, nor yet thy power of endurance, nor thy spiritual age, and He knows whether He can lay on thee longer to-day some trial which yesterday thou wouldst have been unable to bear.

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” Certain things cling to and oppress us. Therefore flee,—flee to God. Certain things drag us down, so as to weaken us. Therefore flee. Where? To the Word of God, to our heavenly Father, under the blood of Christ. Then you come into the blessed experience of how true is your God, and how blessed it is, in a hopeless outlook and circumstances, to trust Him. Situations and circumstances are only so bad because thou hast not escaped from idolatry; because thou still keepest count with the ruin which sickness or which thy past life has brought upon thee. God would soon burst thy chains and thy bondage, if thou wouldst begin to keep count only with Him, and not with the rage or the severity of this or the other experience. All this will be only a hint how to come out of the corruptible into the incor-

ruptible. The corruptible is all which is created; the incorruptible, the only God who is above all; and we are begotten of incorruptible seed, and not given over to the idolatry of the corruptible. By faith and transparency we rule in God over all. Be not afraid of the prince of this world, who acts as though he were in power, as though he could, at his pleasure, bring us into every conceivable frame of mind, as though it were in his power to make us happy or unhappy.

"Save thyself," he whispers in our ear, as in His time to the Lord Jesus (Matt. xxvii. 40). Say, with thy Saviour, "No; I do not save Myself. I am under orders to My Father." Believing in the one true God, we come into the kingdom of the incorruptible. Thus thou art redeemed from the high pressure of the visible, and come into the kingdom of truth. It is true salvation to live for God alone, and not be slaves to our fellow-men.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNADULTERATED WORD.



THE first chapter of 1 Peter is the key to what the apostle expects of us in the beginning of chapter ii. The vileness of the vile things there enumerated proceed from not having to do with God alone. Thereby we come out of simplicity into guile. As soon as we consider any other point of view in our lives than the continual leading of God, we come into guile and deceit; we seek to lend a helping hand, there to add a little, there to detract a little—in short, we are not thoroughly upright. That we may make a pleasing impression on others, we do not appear as we really are, just as though our woe or weal were dependent upon our fellow men. Hypocrisy!

Be ashamed, thou follower of Christ. Awake and lay aside all guile, all self-help, all efforts to get the better of others. "God is faithful, who will not let you be tempted above that ye are able to bear," whether by things or by people, or yet by nerves, if you remain with your work under God's discipline. God's saints have to do with God in all things.

That is glory, and this glory must conquer; otherwise all looking for the coming of the Lord is simple folly. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ."

Perfect holiness in the fear of God, by laying aside all which is unworthy of a child of God, who has to do with His highest majesty, and is under His guardian hand. Lay aside all guile, all taking advantage of others, all hypocrisy, which screens itself behind a fair appearance. Hypocrisy is everything which is artificial and unnatural. Only in sitting free from the creature, honouring God step by step, can one become or remain natural, simple, unaffected. Such are royal children, preserved from guile and envy.

Oh, thou wilt praise God throughout eternity that thou hast not what others have! Whatever thou hast coveted from others would have been useless to thee.

"Putting away therefore"—putting away and putting on. We have much to put away before we can "put on Christ." To make room for the unadulterated milk of the Word of God, and for the Person of Christ, other things must give place: "Wickedness, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and all evil-speaking."

And whither must these things go, when we put them off? Under the Cross of Christ. There is room; there we must take

them, and there, on the cross, we ourselves must go, else, sooner or later, they will be back again. "Crucified with Christ," "buried with Him"! There is no other way to come down from the cross but into the grave, from whence God raises us up, to live henceforth "in righteousness and true holiness." For all who are bound, such is the simple Gospel; the one only remedy for wickedness, guile, hypocrisies, envy, and all evil speaking—that habit of carrying from one to another what they need not to know. Let us carry to the Throne above, in the sanctuary, that which we see wrong in others: not spread it abroad. Only by being born again can we be free from such things. With our new birth new instincts as well as new needs arise, and the habit of speaking against others dies out.

"As new-born babes"—to whom it is clear: I have a Father in heaven, who makes a way for me, and orders sunshine and rain, as is good for me—long for the sincere milk of the Word of God, instead of longing for what thy neighbour has: leave that to thy neighbour; God has enough for thee. He is no step-mother to any of His children.

The first universal instinct of the babe is to seek the mother's breast. It is an inborn craving to seek the unadulterated mother milk: nothing else so really satisfies, how

ever good it may be. But when those who are born again grow older, only too easily, through the influence of sin and bad example, all manner of evil desires and longings arise, of which, as new-born babes, they had not the slightest idea. Happy are they who, from the moment they are born again, hold fast to the Word of God, and not to all kinds of human inventions! Just as a healthy infant stretches after its mother's milk, so is it with a healthily-born man of God, and it is his to be cautious as to what he takes in, and that he puts to the proof what he reads in the Word of God, lest he should weaken his constitution, and lose his power of discrimination.

Seek, child of God, thy restoration in the Word of God, that it may regulate thy reading, and that thou mayest become a healthy man of God. In the spiritual, as in physical life, it is not often that a perfectly healthy, normally developed man is to be found. There are few spiritual men, as there are few physical, who are not more or less fastidious in all sorts of ways. How much depends on the right nourishment of the body in childhood, and that the child shall not be allowed to eat all kinds of improper or even pernicious stuff! And so is it with the spiritual life. Unreasonable parents bring a great responsibility upon themselves by yield-

ing to such unhealthy desires in their children, and particular circumstances may ruin their children's health. It is just so in the spiritual.

New-born children seek after the sincere, unadulterated milk of the Word: that is healthy food. Reject other things, then, until they become distasteful to thy restored organs, and thou hast again the gift of discernment; a certain spiritual instinct for that which is good for thee, and all else becomes insupportable.

Unadulterated milk; the unmixed Word of God, drawn direct from the Holy Scriptures, without the addition of human commentaries. However much that is glorious thou mayest draw from the explanations of pious men, it is far more important for thee to learn to read the Bible with thine own eyes. It is only by conscientiously feeding upon the milk of the Word of God that thou comest to manhood in Christ; to a true Christ-character, in a world where one runs after and imitates another. It is exceedingly rare to find one who edifies himself by the unadulterated Word of God, rather than by the words of man.

“That ye may grow thereby unto *salvation*” (1 Pet. ii. 2, R.V.). The Greek word may be translated in three ways. We are saved; “delivered from this present evil

world" (Gal. i. 4); saved from the wrath of God: we are saved from our cross-deserving nature by our new birth through the Word of God (1 Peter i. 23), justified by faith through the grace of God. That is the first great step in salvation. Saved!—but we soon discover that there is much in our lives from which we need still to be saved. We must take a farther step, into sanctification, and learn that the blood of Christ has not only a forgiving, but a delivering power. He loved us, and washed (or loosed) us from our sins in His own blood (Rev. i. 7), and in this cleansing we must go on to cleanse ourselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1).

Have you ever tasted that the devil, the world, or the flesh, was gracious? No; the world is not gracious, however much of her enticements she may hold out. She seeks to attract us for her own advantage; God draws us out of His love to us. God is good; the world only apes goodness; she has no real good-will towards us; she seeks only to strengthen her own side. God's graciousness is pure, sublime, above all. His thoughts and purposes with us are pure and exalted: surely we have tasted something of them, if we indeed are children of God! Then hold fast, and be not so soon turned from the

straight way into crooked paths, bringing yourselves into all manner of complications. Hold fast the mind you were in when you were new-born babes, that in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation you may not become carnal-minded, or, at any rate, may not be drawn into lines in which there is a mixture of flesh and spirit. "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," hold on to that which you have tasted in your first love.

Draw nearer; you are far from having sounded to the depths what there is in the Lord; you have but in little measure tasted of it. There are breadths, and depths, and heights, world without end, of which you do not so much as dream. Draw nearer, ever nearer. Abiding in Jesus is a continual coming nearer to Him. We are either drawing nearer all the time or getting farther away. So, abiding in Him is one and the same as continually coming nearer. The Spirit opens always new depths to us in Him, and binds us closer together with Him, so that we cannot do other than cling to Him; and more and more all else loses its attraction, while we are tasting His loving-kindness, and experiencing that all else alienates us from Him.

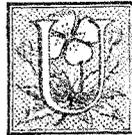
In verse 4 the wonderful picture of a living stone comes before us. Where can we find such a thing as a living stone? And

yet, there it is. That which cannot be in the visible world is to be found in Christ. He is immovable as a stone, laid deep down in the history of mankind; a foundation-stone, on which houses may be built. He will never give way, and will always bear the weight of all which is built on Him. Again, He is Life—full of life. Nothing is so movable as life. The blood in my veins is never for a moment still; the heart does not cease to beat, unless I cease to live. Movement, constant movement; not downwards to the grave, not on a descending plane; but up to glory, to eternity, to transformation, which rejects the corruptible. Movement, but movement on incorruptible ground; on a foundation firm as a rock, on an immovable stone, on which He has built true manhood. All is created on and in Jesus. He is the Stone which is the centre of the universe, and all life, all normal development, proceeds from Him. Be, then, sincere, and stretch out after the sincere milk of the Gospel through which thou mayst cultivate the acquaintance with the Living Word and become one with Him. Men have rejected Him; but thou belongest to Him, the rejected One, who alone can make us whole.



CHAPTER XV.

A SPIRITUAL HOUSE.



UNTO whom coming . . . be ye yourselves . . . built up" (ver. 4, German trans). We come unto Him, following the drawing of the Father, who has found us in the midnight of our ways—our wanderings. As we, in our self-consciousness, defiance, and presumption, sought our own, God has led us to become acquainted with His Son, and has set His Son in our lives. Like others, we had all "gone astray"; but although man rejected Him, He remains every man's only good. Only as drawn by the Father and the Holy Spirit, we come to Him. There are two attractions influencing men's lives in this world: worldly attraction; the creature; things visible; human emotions and human nature; and then, among God's children there is that attraction which draws nearer and nearer to Christ. The more we yield to the power of this latter, so much the more do we receive power to follow Him in the measure in which Christ, the Cornerstone, has conquered us. By our very habit of coming to Him in every good, as well as

in every difficult moment, we become more dependant upon Him, and, as spiritual men, are built up a spiritual house.

There are among God's children extraordinary ideas about edification. It is quite possible to be edified by sermons and by good books ; in some cases even by novels (but that is no reason why we should read novels) ; there are some by which the moral nature may be strengthened. Certain resolutions are formed, in the light of what is attractive in the hero of the story ; or one may be struck by such or such a sermon, and be edified thereby. But this frame of mind passes ; and the reader or hearer finds that his power to resist temptation is not stronger than before ; he has gained no moral strength to keep him humble and little ; no discernment to distinguish what has been confessedly contrary to God. After all this kind of help, one is as poor and miserable as before ; a mere dish-rag. Only he who habitually turns to the Lord at once, with all which is encouraging as much as with all that tempts him, seeking that every influence from without may only bind him closer with the Lord, —will be edified by all things. If every movement is continually towards the Centre, the "Foundation," in whom we are set, nothing more can overcome us, no influence or impression can master us. That which

formerly drove us into carnal, soulish ways, now brings us nearer to the Corner-stone, and serves to the growth and edification of our moral being.

Firmly grounded and rooted in Him, we ourselves become a spiritual building, a house, a finished day's work, a personality, breathed through by the Holy Spirit, where all things are measured by the Spirit, not by man, circumstances, traditions, ancient customs, church theology, and such like. In this way each individual is personally dependent on the Corner-stone, and regulates himself in everything thereby. When once the foundation of a house is laid, the whole house must be built upon it; no deviation to the right or to the left is permissible, or the whole must fall. All must be grounded and built into Jesus Christ, that all may be borne and upheld by Him. Oh, what grace that, in a decaying world, in which all order and law in the various governments is more and more losing power through the socialist currents of our day—I say, what grace it is that, in this shaking world, through all the changes from day to day, from one turn of the road to another,—we may sink deeper into the Foundation on which God has set us, which we know from Scripture, and which one and another amongst us proves by experience, to be immovable!

A spiritual house, in which nothing that is unspiritual, fleshly, soulish, can find a dwelling-place; a house permeated with the Spirit of God, dominated by His constant presence! The Holy Spirit never rests: like a fresh breeze, He blows through all the rooms and corners of His dwelling-place. "Spirit" and "wind" are the same word in Hebrew. Where the Spirit is, there life is in circulation. Life, mightier than all death, all ossification, stagnation, functional sloth, etc., which here and there may set in. A spiritual building, where the Spirit lives, and works, and glorifies Christ, bringing everything into relation with Him. Is it not the office of the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus, to establish and to renew, from moment to moment, the connection between Him and man?

An organically-spiritual priesthood is produced in this way. By the circulation of the Wind of God—the gusts and the sighing of the Holy Spirit—Christ is more and more glorified in us, and our inward atmosphere becomes more completely purified, and thus we become prepared for priestly service; for a life of love, cleansed from both fleshly and spiritual self-seeking. A spiritual house is a house where God is worshipped, and our neighbour is loved, served, considered, and cared for. A spiritual priesthood, a priestly people, is a priesthood, a people, who offer

to Him "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"—namely, prayer, intercession, and thanksgiving.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). Our own burden is lightened as we bear the burdens of others in our intercession. It is all wrong when people say, "I have enough myself to bear; I cannot add to it by taking up the burdens of others." Open wide the windows of thy heart, turn away from that which oppresses thee, bear the burden of another, and thou wilt see how it lightens thine own. Fresh air will rush into thine exhausted heart, and with it new elasticity, new breadth and endurance in bearing thine own burden. In ceasing to be self-seeking with thine own burden and task, thou wilt not give way under what presses upon thee. The closer thou comest into relation with Christians, so much the more indispensable to thee will be Christ, the Foundation-stone, on whom all depends, and so much wider will become thy horizon. Out from Him thou canst extend, north and south, east and west; for Christ has become for thee thy Starting-point, thy Centre, and thy Goal.

How is that? It is contained in the Scripture. God has in His wisdom so ordered it. He has given to men a Name in whom all men may be saved, as it is here written: "Be-

hold, I lay in Zion a chief Corner-stone, elect, precious." Zion is the only people whom God has placed in the centre of the nations, in whose history He has revealed Himself, and who nevertheless have not remained faithful to Him. But in this Zion He has set a precious Corner-stone, and in Him laid the foundation of an entirely new house; a building of priests and kings; "elect and precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame" (1 Peter ii. 6). The spiritual development of many is often made through painful experiences. Many throw away their confidence that, under such or such temptations, they may be free; they yield to doubt under a certain magnetic power, which attracts the regard where there is nothing to be found. They rest content with the forgiveness of sins, and leave off seeking for a deeper cleansing. Naturally, such can never become a spiritual house where the wind of the Spirit blows out all the dust. Because they do not fully believe in Christ, nor in a complete redemption and cleansing, they come to shame.

But God can turn shame into blessing. Some lose hope by it; but others, on the contrary, come to a full decision through it, and cast themselves wholly on Christ, and learn that they have only been put to shame because their faith was unstable. For such

as are truly a spiritual building of God, founded on God, and sealed by His Spirit, such painful experience will serve to plant them deeper, to strengthen their union with Christ, so that He can have them unreservedly in His hands. The more completely they are brought to shame in themselves, so much the more confidently they believe that God will not let them be finally put to shame. God never lets those be ashamed who have let Him bring all their own works to naught. From the moment in which all their life-springs have come back into the hand of the King, who is seeking house-room in the hearts of such of whom He may have full possession, He will be able through them to spread His authority on all sides over such as come under the influence of His Word.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE CORNER-STONE.



ACHIEF Corner-stone. What is the character, the nature, the office of the corner-stone? The corner-stone is of the very highest utility for the whole building, as we have already seen. It is indispensable for the rectangle. In general, houses are built rectangularly, and the corner-stone must not bulge either right or left, upwards or downwards, else the whole building would be out of the straight, yet it would only be noticed when the house was completed. In a word, a corner-stone must be of perfect dimensions, especially when it also serves as the foundation-stone, which bears the entire building. Then it is doubly important that its measure should be correct.

What is infallible in the kingdom of God? What is it which is important to be straight? What lays the foundation for a faultless building in all its parts? It is the will and the Word of God. God's will is holy, and therefore it is the gauge for every direction and every decision of our will: for in the twilight world in which we live, we must

have right lines, which guard us against false paths, and such are provided for us in the Word of God. There it is that we find the will of God. We must have a measuring rod for our growth. Men may not be the measure for their fellows, and whenever we make any man the pattern for our inner development, we are sure to be out of the straight.

In only one Life were the lines absolutely perfect from beginning to end. One alone developed from the beginning according to the perfect measure; and His one life alone was educated perfectly in the will of God. Whenever He had to take His stand in regard to public opinion,—the teaching of the Pharisees and the masters in Israel,—it was always from His childhood up, according to the measure of the Word of God. Gladly He sat as a boy at the feet of the doctors of the law, but their teaching was already to Him not fully according to the measure: already then He knew the Scriptures so perfectly that the masters in Israel wondered. From His infancy He had fed on the mother-milk of the Word of God, from it He drew His directions for doing or leaving undone, speaking or silence, and thereby He became such an One of whom a heathen could say, "Behold the Man," the normal man, as man ought to be according to the will of God—the One in whom God found nothing which displeased

Him; in the character of whom not one single line was out of proportion. All in Him was in the Divine proportion of Holy Scripture.

Therefore He became a new Corner-stone of human life, on which a new humanity could be built which necessarily took other shape and proportions than those by which the world fashioned itself. In Him the typical Man, normally developed according to the Scripture, God has laid a Corner-stone in the world, that every child of man may henceforth have the opportunity to prove himself as to how far he walks in Divine lines or not, that we may no longer follow personalities who take the lead in the Church or in the world, but Him who is God's type of man. The smallest, weakest, and most ignorant have the right to follow Him. Thus restored, we can again please God.

Yes; but who does this to perfection? The simple, the incapable, who, after having formed themselves long enough on their own pattern, have at length succeeded in following the Pattern which God has set in the world as the original type of man, before whom all and every other type of manhood is eclipsed. They sit down at the feet of the Nazarene, and learn of Him the wisdom of the world, and are taught of Him that true nature consists in a walk well pleasing to God,

a correct estimation of the world, correct feeling and doing ; in short, all which is to be learned, we learn of Him in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells, as well as all the fulness of true manhood. That is to say, no one can be born who cannot in Him be set free from all wandering and all entanglement.

From Him we learn how to think healthily and soberly, so as not to be quickly drawn into this or that light converse, and no longer, from weakness of character and want of firmness, to be driven about, to-day here, to-morrow there, by every wind of doctrine. He who is formed by Him becomes more and more Christ-like in character. The Corner-stone laid by God becomes in length and breadth, depth and height, in every possible eventuality, that which decides and determines the whole building.

Who, then, is the wondrous Builder? The Holy Ghost, who takes of Christ, and opposes all in our whole being which does not accord with Christ. He is jealously careful that Christ should gain ground in us, and that human influence should decline. The Holy Ghost condemns every departure from the exact lines in our inward development: in our impressions, thinking, feeling, speaking and silence, our conduct ; in short, as we have said, all which does not accord with the image of Christ. It brings a wonderful

calm into a human life when no choice of ours can turn us round. Oh, how glorious to have solely and alone to do with Jesus, who brings everything back into Divine lines, so that our restoration is radical!

Naturally people do not know what to make of such a man, while they themselves have not known what to make of Christ. Ever and again during the time He walked on earth, souls came to take their bearings from Him, to whom He became their All. But how the Scribes and Pharisees mocked and scorned those who stood by Him and would be His followers!

Oh the glory and grace of having one only goal, one only principle of action, free from the slavery of seeking to stand right with man, having found out the true way of peace—the way to God's unspeakable light! Oh the glory and grace of being a people for His own possession, a race rescued from the world, a little flock, which has been severed from the enslaving connection with the world, to have only to do with Him: an elect priesthood and priestly kings, called out from that which, otherwise defined, would mean common and degraded. Rescued kings!

"Art Thou a King, then?" asked Pilate of our Lord. "To this end was I born" (John xviii. 37); I am of kingly lineage, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear

witness unto the truth." Only kings, only kingly-minded, can bear witness of the truth; all others are in bondage. The sceptic asks, "What is truth?" How shall we know what truth is? Everyone has his own opinion. All which comes from Christ and returns to Christ—all which originates from eternity and stretches out to eternity—is truth. He that is begotten of God heareth the voice of Jesus; and this makes him independent of human criticism, though he may be specially watchful over what he says, and may put to account whatever there is of truth in those who oppose him. Those who oppose us ought to be most helpful in making us attentive to everything in us which does not accord with the image of Christ. Above all, we seek to learn by everything, and our chief aim is to let Christ have His rights in everything. Thus all things must work together, so that God may bind us together as members of the little flock of such as He has brought into the Divine liberty of keeping step with Him. He is the Corner-stone, who determines the development of our life, our walk, and our witness.

"Art Thou a King, then?" Yes, I am. And whosoever is begotten of Him is of royal blood; no longer the slave of his fellow-men; he must for ever serve Him! A royal priesthood! As one of such, we cannot, like the shameful

worldly-wise—or, rather, worldly fools—desire to be great at others' cost: such a mind and spirit are unkingly. True kings are priests; they have a heart for others, stand for others, and learn each day better how to bear others' burdens. They have an inward shrinking from all in others which is not Divine, but only to get really all the nearer to them, that from their hidden resources they may rescue them. They do not let themselves be embittered by the bitterness with which others may seek to irritate or even exasperate them; they do not let themselves be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom.xxi.21); and, as kings and priests, shed rays of light in this dark world.

"A holy people." Everything is holy which has God for its Centre, which is formed according to the Corner-stone, and is at His disposal. God recognises such as His possession; He cares for them, He builds them up, He trains them. "A holy nation, an elect race," in whom God can be at rest—in whose heart and life He has formed a place of rest, where nothing is left behind which displeases God, which is unlike Christ, and which does not yield to "the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). Behold Me and the children which Thou hast given Me: they are the seed of Christ. And how do they serve Him? They "show forth the excellencies of Him

who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." Their whole life bears witness of their transformation in His hand, who has taken them like clay, and with master-skill has formed them. He has brought them out of the darkness of their view of things, in which like others they had gone astray and led others astray. They have heard the call, and it has found an echo in the deepest depths of their being, which was athirst for truth. At His call they have crawled out of their holes, hiding-places, and ideas, and stepped out into His wondrous light.

How wonderful and yet how simple is the light—the true light! It is uncoloured, and yet divides into every possible colour, while in itself it is simple. Those who are saved, rescued do not look at themselves, but at the light; everything in them and about them comes out of the shadow into the light. The Gospel is a new world, always becoming greater, richer, more simple for those who, having plunged into it, live in its fulness. Wonderful light! And then what glory meets us in ver. 10! Which in time past were no people, running around without a king, without having a certain government, or a certain end in view; under the power to-day of this, to-morrow of that; sold under earthly influences, and never satisfied—but now are the people of God, a people who exist for

God, of whom God disposes, to whom God swears, and to whom He makes Himself known. Whosoever has a heart knows what it means to find somebody who has a heart for us. Neither a mother's nor a father's heart can suffice for a heart created for the living God. As soon as that heart has been awakened in its depths, He gives it a foretaste of eternity.



CHAPTER XVII.

SLAVERY WHICH SETS FREE.



SIMON PETER, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." First Simon, then Peter, formed to be a Peter, sealed of God, who had called him to his discipleship; and who, in spite of all change of weather, storm, and fleshly confidence, perceived and recognised in this Simon a bed of rock. Peter means "rock." Whatsoever is contained in our character comes first to light when we come into touch with Jesus Christ. He has power to bestow new names, and such new names are not something absolutely new; but it is that by which we were endowed by nature, but which, through the Fall and through sin, has become choked. In meeting with Christ this is again liberated; and the eagle glance of the Lord Jesus, in His first meeting with Peter, instantly detected in him a rock nature. A permanent building can only be founded upon a rock. "On this Rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi.18). Peter did not forget what he had been,

as we perceive in his inclusion of his name Simon in the superscription of the epistle ; but none the less did he forget what the Lord had made him—a Peter, a man of rock.

After thus writing his name as Simon Peter, he shows more closely his relation to the Lord : a servant, yes, less than a servant, a slave, his body owned as property. A man whose body is another man's property is thereby deeply humbled. It is something most degrading to be so fallen that a man can do what he will with our body, as was the case in the slavery of the past. But Jesus Christ, who knows us by name, who has redeemed us by His own blood, and who has a tender consideration for all whom He has created, ennobles for us the slave position in its relation to Himself. It is no longer dishonourable, but the greatest glory that can accrue to us, to be, with every breath and every heart-beat, continually at His disposal who is our Creator and our Redeemer for time and eternity. Only by being at His disposal with every thread of our being do we become free men, with whom no man can do as he will, because we are the bondslaves of Jesus Christ. He does not rule by violence over what He has created. A slave, a property redeemed for Him ! He has redeemed us for Himself, for a freedom which is not of this world. Out of this position to his

Master comes the position which was committed to Peter, and which he accepted in regard to the Church. Jesus can commit the keys of His Church to whom He will, and He gives them to such as are in His eyes the most fitted. He recognises in men the Divine calling, and then sends them forth. "Apostle" (sent one) of Jesus Christ.

In old times it was the custom for a writer to write his own name and that of the addressee on the top of the letter as the title. To whom, then, does Peter address this letter, in which he introduces himself as being at the same time an apostle and a messenger of Jesus Christ? He writes "to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us"; to such we also belong. Whatever may be the dignity of an apostle, it is a commission which is given him, with which God trusts him. And yet it is a very secondary matter in what sphere we serve God, in comparison with this: that we all, apostles and church members, receive "a like precious faith," a faith of unspeakable value, which God has wrought in us by His Spirit, through whom we are come into relation with God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—with the throne of God. To possess this faith, to be able to take from God by faith grace for grace, is immeasurably higher and more important than the question, what is the office

which He has committed to us here below?

By faith we stand in relation to the upper world; by faith we do all that we do in the name of the Lord; by faith we ripen—through all the tasks which we have to fulfil here below, through joy and through sorrow—for the glory “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” Through faith we are linked to the sanctuary, and draw from the sanctuary. Thus the apostle of Christ Jesus writes to the Church, lifting her by his first words to the level where he himself stands; that is, he writes as their brother—*we* have received the faith; it has fallen to *our* lot. But in almost every word there lie deep mysteries. If we have received the faith, what kind of responsibility, then, have those who have not come into the faith? One would almost be able to say, and the lost might say, “If Thou hadst given me more faith, I also might have been saved.”

While there are in Holy Scripture mysteries which can only be revealed in eternity, yet every life of faith is also a mystery, and originates in the working together of God and man. Man must do his part, and yield to God's working. How God and man work together cannot be measured by human rule or reason. We have received faith; it is

the greatest gift which God can give. On the other hand, we are responsible to accept and to live out the Gospel, as God, on His part, has commanded. Faith is taking the position which God offers us. As far as my knowledge and light go, I am inclined to think that all men, either here or above, must come to terms with God, and that there is no damnation where there has been no rejection of the name of Jesus, that only those who believe not the preached Gospel are lost. Even the heathen are responsible, for God has written the law in their hearts (Rom. ii. 15), and has given them conscience, and much will depend on whether the heathen is or is not true to his conscience; but that he shall be finally rejected is not thereby necessarily proved. Only he who finally rejects the name of Christ will be lost. "A like precious faith with us," writes the apostle, "in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ could only be our Saviour because He was God, God from all eternity, who came on earth as God-man. He was not a man as others; He was indeed a true, real man—but like the original type of man, in whom every human individual finds himself again; the Man from whom no emotion of any man, Jew or heathen, Christian or Mahomedan, escapes, who understands all which passes in a human heart,

from whom the whole of humanity proceeds, who, as its Head, comprehends and includes all—He is the central Man in whom all humanity is embodied, at the same time as the eternal God.

Taking all this into consideration, we see how we need the God-man, that we—you and I—may be redeemed, that each several individual may be laid hold of in his inmost being, seized by Him, and drawn out of the slime, captivity, and error. He is the Head, the Creator, the Man who comprehends all human individuals, fathoms, understands, and consequently is able to deliver by His blood. Thus we understand the words: "In the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is not arbitrary. God has power to save what He has created. Through His blood, the offering of Himself, He delivers the entire humanity which proceeds from Him, so far as it returns to oneness with Him. Believing is that which unites with Him on whom we believe. God has united Himself to us. And now we, on our part, are permitted in our misery and bondage to unite ourselves to Him, to become in Him new men. Depending on Him, we draw from Him grace for grace, and grow into Him without losing an atom of our own individuality in this righteousness of God.

And what does the apostle desire for the

Church? "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Jesus Christ is become our Saviour by His becoming man; and He is, and remains, our Lord to all eternity. Grace imparted and grace multiplied has its root in an ever deeper knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ, and of His perfect redemption. These are not only direct communications from heaven; they depend upon our knowledge. We receive by faith; knowledge is more the masculine element, but in every man both must exist. We receive as we yield up ourselves, and knowledge comes from intercourse with Him. In Him is hidden all wisdom and knowledge. To know Him is eternal life, and therewith continual increase of grace and peace; deeper and ever deeper as the deepest sea, and higher than the highest heaven.



CHAPTER XVIII.

CALLED BY GLORY AND VIRTUE.



WE know how, and through whom, so much is given to us: "all things that pertain unto life." To live—not to vegetate or drag through one's life, but to live godly, to live "in newness of life"—all else is no true life,—to live godly demands something more than human purposes and efforts; it demands Divine power. Only God, the Almighty, can, even in a spiritual region, create and work such mighty things. It needs the power of God in our weakness. In this men cannot help us. They may, indeed, stir us up, but can communicate no power to us. The Lord gives all. He is no hard or exacting, but a giving, Lord. It cannot be purchased with money, and nothing is asked for it,—it is given,—it is free grace. Whosoever is disgusted with his carnal, soulish, natural life, and yet does not get rid of his habits and his bondage, let him know that there is given to him out of this fulness what is entirely new, and which will never be exhausted. Our fathers in the faith have drawn

out of this fulness grace for grace, and now we also draw from the same at every turn of the way; in every combination of our life's circumstances, whether agitating or depressing. Extending over all is His Divine power, which is mighty in our weakness, giving us all which pertains to life and godliness. Whoever still vegetates, and complains that in spiritual things he leads the life of a consumptive, has himself to blame. The fulness is offered to him. Freely and richly God's power offers us all which pertains to a godly life, all which pertains to the vitality of life, where one need not hobble languidly along his way.

And how do we receive it? Not as poured into us. To know Him and the power of His resurrection is life eternal. If we fill our minds with words, with the praise of man and the spirit of man—if we want to stand well with man—if we would follow men, even the greatest heroes,—we are in the flesh. Even if it were the Apostles who could say to us, "Follow us as we have followed Christ," yet they could not give us Divine power to follow. They can encourage us, not to draw from them, but from the Source whence they themselves have drawn; not through much knowledge, but through a deeper acquaintance with Him who hath called us.

Called us. A call has penetrated us. As we

went astray in our own ways, seeking to enrich our minds and depending upon man, there came a call which drew our attention to One who is able to transform our character, and make of us fruitful members of humanity in the body of Christ. The call has reached us, and it is no light call; it is one which is founded on glory and virtue. He has called us by virtue of His own glory and virtue. What good would it be to a poor child of man, sunk in the world, in sin, and darkness, if I should call him? I cannot change his bent. I cannot shield him from his passions, cannot give him new blood, and cannot make him a slave of Jesus Christ. The Lord must do it, who called the prodigal son from the swine so that he cried, "It is enough; I will arise and go to my Father." And he followed the call. And we who, we trust, are all following Christ, who have followed the call out from the world,—have we in one way or another lost ourselves in self-efforts? Then suddenly comes the call: "Child, whither hast thou strayed, away in the wilderness of the fear of man, or in slavish dependence on man?" "Adam, where art thou?" Lost, wandering child of God, turn round, come home. He calls thee again. The Same who once called thee out of the world calls thee again, if thou hast lost thyself in worldly, soulish thoughts: "Where

art thou? Thou art not there where thou belongest; come home." He calls thee by His own glory and wisdom. He needs no man to help Him, as we so often need with a drowning man, when, in seeking to rescue him, one is in danger of drowning oneself. He is equal to any rescue, and there is power in His call. In His alluring there is power to return. It is not only something which sounds in our ear, but something which echoes in our heart. Prodigal child, come home; thou hast lost thyself in thine ideas, imaginations and remembrances. Come home to thy Father. By this Divine glory which penetrates our shame and bondage, through this glory and virtue, are given to us the greatest and most precious promises. Thus, as we have said, it is not something which God pours into us, but something which He places within our reach, and puts it to us whether we will accept and trade with it, or whether we will go farther till we waste away in spiritual consumption.

It is quite another thing when we stand upon the faithfulness of our God, and hold His Word before Him. My heart holds Thy Word before Thee. Thou canst not forsake me, my God; truly I have lost myself in dreaming. I have been drawn into bondage by carnal, soulish dependance upon the creature; and now I know not how to get free.

The glory of God, the power of God, the promises of God, the most precious and priceless promises, are given to us—put in our way. There they are laid up in the Book, so that anyone who wills can lay hold on them: for all the need he has, they are unfathomable riches.

And what, then, is God's purpose? Our instant deliverance? No; He has more in view than simply instantaneous deliverance. He wills to give us a new nature, so that the old regime may at last come to an end, that we may have no more desire for the former things, and no more fear of man, who formerly imposed upon us, and of whom we were afraid. He wills to give us a new nature, —that of our Saviour. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," said the Lord Jesus, and that was not only the Divine, but at the same time the pure human nature. "Behold the Man," said Pilate. He was the Original, the one Man who fully represented the Image of God. Of this nature of the God-man, the Divine and therewith the true human nature, we become partakers. Therewith we get other tastes; our desires and our thoughts and aims take a new course, and are directed to quite another region. That which formerly allured us has lost its glamour, and the Divine gains life, attracts us, and we esteem and value it. If we were hasty,

we now become still. If before we sought to rule, now that we have the Divine nature, and interest ourselves more and more for the need of others, instead of being always occupied with our own troubles, we can submit.

Oh, how easily we can bear our own burden when once we have a heart for the burden of others! No surer way of lightening our burden than in bearing that of others. Our own burden breaks us down, while bearing others' burdens brings us more deeply into the Divine nature; and there we can breathe. This, however, pre-supposes one thing—that man is a rescued deserter. He must fly. The world does not so lightly let him escape. If a house is on fire, the inhabitants must fly. All children of God are rescued fugitives. They have seen that they are losing ground, and they have escaped in time. And if thou art not yet set free from earthly desire, fear, or care, fly like the prodigal to the Father's heart.

Two things reign in the world: fear and lust. "There is no fear in love; perfect love casteth out fear." Fear is slavery. Perfect love drives out lust, the desire to be something more than God has made thee. Through lust and fear, perdition, corruption, stench, are in the world. Slavery reigns; men must do as they desire. The drunkard must drink, must fall into sin. As long as we have not escaped—as long as desire or fear reigns over us—we can-

not be partakers of the Divine nature ; but when once the form of Jesus Christ in His glory has dawned upon us, and we see what it means to be a man with the Divine nature, God gives us wings, that we may escape from the perdition in which we were fast held in the world, even the dream-world, mastered by lust and fear.



CHAPTER XIX.

STEADY PROGRESS.



EA, and for this very cause, adding on your part all diligence" (ver. 5), "diligence" or "zeal," as you will. Even after having been already made partakers of the Divine nature (ver. 4), after having already escaped from the corruption, the loose-letting powers—lust and fear,—which reign in the world, after new horizons have been opened up to us—it is still, and even more unconditionally necessary that we should take our stand. We need to employ all diligence, all zeal, all haste, and to pay all attention, that faith may comprise the full totality of the fruits which in it lie—and the first of these is *virtue*. Kraemer, a German theologian, says that virtue is not the most exact sense of the word here, but rather capacity. Faith must manifest itself in capacity. The faith, once given, must develop, and one must, as the word expresses it, play the man, one must be masculine, capable, valiant. This calls for all our powers. What a dragging, sickly life there is in the pro-

fessing Christians of to-day! Men complain and complain of their faults and failings, and nevertheless remain in the mud and in their spiritual indolence. All who would succeed in business in this day know that they must play the man, but in spiritual things they think they can take it easy: and thus, instead of becoming always more capable for the service of God, they are always getting weaker. If not gaining strength, one must be losing strength, and finally it comes to a getting into heaven through pure mercy, without having brought forth any fruit unto God! Whoever plays the man in his spiritual life is also capable in his earthly calling. Whoever does not choose his own calling—for in point of fact that can only be our calling to which we have been chosen of God,—I say, to him who does not choose his own calling, God gives the outfit, the necessary capacity for it, which develops out of his entire training—grows out of his characteristic talents, out of his God-given faculties, the climatic circumstances in which he develops, his descent, his entire education, etc.

But we must also pay the price, and be whole-hearted, we must put into it all diligence, all zeal. This is manifested, in the first place, in that capability and manliness proceed from faith. And out of this capability and manliness there grows, further,

"knowledge." Capability leads on to knowledge. The more anyone plays the man, in serving his God, with ability, virility, and watchfulness, just where He has placed him, just so much quicker does his knowledge develop. All capability in our calling opens our eyes wider. All able people get an ever wider and more penetrating view of things; while, with short-sighted, idle, useless people, it is just the contrary. Their horizon is always more circumscribed, while where there is capability the whole man becomes renewed, even in his horizon, and that again brings new strength, new elasticity. The wider the horizon opens, just so much stronger will become the power to withstand, and elasticity, while in a narrow place one becomes ever poorer and more embittered. Thus increasing knowledge reacts on the capability. One reacts upon the other.

Out of this enlargement of the horizon, out of this knowledge, must proceed—or, as another translation has it, must be bound up with it—temperance, otherwise rendered self-control. We say to children, "Recollect yourself." If a man in matters of business fails to recollect himself, and to be *all there*, he is simply over-ridden. Oh, how much could God's children, if they would, learn from the children of this age! And how much we do learn from them, when once the

importance of a fundamental education for the service of God dawns upon us!

Those who are in command of a regiment, or who are appointed to the control of a province, receive quite another education from ordinary people. It needs an eye which nothing escapes, and therewith strict discipline, circumspection, self-control; no letting go of oneself, not so much as in thought or imagination. None but God's children can control themselves. The Spirit of God gives us power over our own spirit. The higher the goal, the more thorough the self-control. Should we, who have the high calling to glorify and to serve our great God, give way, instead of holding ourselves in check in every movement, in word and work, and in our inmost affections?

An unlimited thoughtlessness has come into the Church of God. Men are content if they only get to heaven, and they become more and more shallow; knowledge is not increased, and they do not think it worth while to persevere in keeping themselves in check. Of course, it needs patience. He who is not habitually solid makes a start now and then; now and then he puts forth efforts; it goes on for a time, and then he stands still again. True capability manifests itself in patience. Everyone can recollect himself for a time, but to remain day by day, year out and year

in, unmoved at his post, and then becoming not less, but more, capable; that is rare. And God bears witness to it, so that we need never complain: "Oh, if I had only known sooner!" How hast thou not known, thou who hast had God's Word? Does not the Word of God take in all the circumstances of the life of every child of Adam? Whosoever thou art, and wheresoever thou mayest be placed, thou wilt find in God's Word the explanation of all things—even the difficulties of thine own character and of the characters of those with whom God has placed thee in relation. Thou shalt know thy right path in life, if only thou findest it worth thy while to search in God's Word about it, because thou wilt become a man accomplished for the world and for the kingdom of God, fruitful unto every good work, created for the work to which thy God hath appointed thee, which lies in the lines which correspond to thy characteristics and thine upbringing. Oh, what multifariousness is in God, and into what confusion is the Church of God come, because so few clearly see their calling and the work for which they were created, and mere dabbling is the natural consequence!

"And in your self-control patience." We cannot succeed in one moment. When one continues patiently in the habit of self-control, it becomes a second nature. "And in

your patience godliness"—piety. All this of which we have spoken proceeds from godliness, and produces godliness. That is, in measure as we take power from God for everything—and the truly godly do draw all from God,—we grow in godliness. There is no godliness without the knowledge of God. The more we draw from Him, the more we learn to know Him; and the more we know Him, the deeper our godliness becomes. He becomes the motive power and the goal of all; He becomes the Beginning, the End, and the Centre of our whole life; we become consecrated to God, Nazarites, who are to be found with God when they are sought after; God must first give His consent, if men would make use of them. Men cannot have them without God's consent; they belong to God, and are not to be obtained for anything to which God has not set His signature.

"In patience godliness, and in godliness love of the brethren." These again are organically connected, and flow one from the other. The nearer thou art to God, just so much nearer thou comest to thy brother, and just so much less can the vices and faults of thy brother's character lessen, contract, or narrow thy love to him. There is no godliness without the fear of God, and if thou art in communion with thy God, then the love of

God—the love with which God loves—is shed abroad in thy heart. Whosoever is essentially in communion with God, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. It may pass through much opposition, but He is able, He has power to overcome. The love with which God loves is all-overcoming; it is mightier than death. It overcomes all the opposition of cold hearts, all prejudices against other dispositions—all by which formerly we were offended and hindered. Were God to let Himself be hindered, who could then be objects of His love? If, however, the Lord allows nothing to hold Him back, then the love which He sheds abroad in our hearts manifests itself in that it burns the more brightly through opposition. The very difficulties in the characters of others which we meet with, the friction of daily life, oblige us always more to ripen in the fulness of the love of God—that very love of God with which He has loved people such as we, who deserve to be hated. The sooner our own love goes to the dogs the better. What is there in our miserable love which can serve our fellow-men? At the root it is but self-seeking, and others are only weakened, poisoned, lamed by it, while the love of God brings life, reproves, edifies, disciplines, and educates. Loving others with the love wherewith God has

loved us, we are in a position to serve others to their good to edification.

The sphere in which God's children have to exercise love is, first, to the brethren in closest relation. As the family is the narrow circle in which we principally exercise love, so is it in the sphere of the Church. There it must be that the brethren be the nearest and the first objects of our love, those who like ourselves are begotten of God. "He that loveth not his brother is . . . worse than an infidel." Even the world knows family love. Our brethren, equally with us, have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, redeemed with His blood, and baptised with His Spirit. The family of God, the brothers and sisters, should be the first to enjoy the fruit of our godliness, our true standing with God. If we are right with God, we shall be right also with our brethren and sisters, serving them in spirit and in truth. The last named is the general love, that love which oversteps the bounds of the family, but is grounded in the acting out of love in the inner circle of the children of God. Universal love, but not in the confused sense in which the poets sang,—“Embrace we millions,” where so much is comprehended that finally no personality remains, and no one can find warmth in our hearts—but in the sense that our love spreads out over all with whom

God brings us in contact, the Mission Field included. How canst thou love strangers if thou canst not love thine own brother? Universal love is cultivated by the brotherly love to all with whom God brings us in contact in our daily life and our life's course. All must receive something of the life which God has planted in us, something of the living warmth which God has made to pulsate in every child of God. For all we need "virtue," but it involves the self-devotion, patience, "glory and virtue," which God bestows.



CHAPTER XX.

LOVE TAKES NO OFFENCE.



IN brotherly love—God's love is the simple meaning of the original: God's love, with all that it may include—universal human love, etc. How shall he who cannot love those nearest to him exercise love to those who are farther off? Love must go out from the closest family circle—not that the members of our own family are those who have the most to suffer from us. In the two verses 5 and 6, there is set before our eyes a very chain of pearls, and all these are by no means merely brilliant ideals, which one might desire and admire from afar, but which are within reach of true Christians, and must be appropriated by them. "For if these things," we read, "be in you and abound"—multiply—"they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful." All that is Divine must first exist within us, and then be put to account, and thereby multiplied, enlarged, take deeper root in the inner life, and consequently larger regions of the outer life may be encircled and fructified. "First en-

circle, and then increase," says the *Minatur-bibel*.

"They make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the things of God there is a large element of exchange. I mean, we have in verse 5, on the foundation of faith, and of a virtue (capability) rooted in faith, found knowledge. Out of the knowledge follow self-control and patience, therefrom proceeding unto brotherly love, and therein God's love. These things, again, which grow out of knowledge when they are diligently sought—for things in the spiritual do not grow of themselves, as in the natural,—we must, in all which touches the spiritual, be "all there," if out of the root of the knowledge of God the full fruit—brotherly love, and thereby ever-deepening Divine love—is to grow.

Why so? Where knowledge discharges itself in brotherly love and then in Divine love, such love has always a reflex working on the knowledge. He who exercises himself in love to his brother, and then through that same love becomes ever more nearly united with his God, learns to know Him better with the knowledge out of which grow all the fruits mentioned. Thus wider regions open—world without end—that is the Love "which passeth all knowledge." Where, therefore, "these things are in you and abound" (A.V.),

there knowledge will increase; and to know the Father and the Son in the Bible sense, is "eternal life," as we see from John xvii. 3. All other life is mere vegetating and sentimentality. True eternal life consists in knowing the Father and the Son,—not that one can ever fathom it, but that one may penetrate ever deeper into the knowledge of the Father and of "the Son of His love."

We were not created to remain confined within a narrow circle, or to revolve in a narrow circle around ourselves: we exist for an endless eternity. The love of God is unfathomable. He in whom this development and fruitfulness is not to be found is—or, rather, is becoming—blind; for, in the spiritual, it is either forward or backward. If not blind, he is at least near-sighted. "Seeing only that which is near," his circle goes on narrowing; he goes back: and an essential element in this backsliding is that arrears remain. He who does not enter deeper into the knowledge of God, does not recognise the greatness of his sinfulness in the light of God. The nearer we come to God, the more we learn to judge our own past—things even from our childhood will come back to our consciousness, which come to us only in the light of God, and which that light only can reveal to us. All must come to the light down here, and be judged and cor-

rected by the light; otherwise there will await us painful disappointments and experiences up yonder. If our past has once been judged to the very depths, it would be a small matter, even should it be spoken out before the whole world.

“Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure.” Here again a wonderful interlacing—it could almost be called mystery. Have we first, even on our side, to confirm what God does? Are not our calling and election perfect? Is it not enough if He in grace, and without merit on our part, has elected us? Yes, we have to make our calling and election sure, in that we are in earnest about it, that we act in accordance with it, that we take our stand upon it, and that our whole manner of thinking becomes lit up and transformed through this calling and election on God’s side. What is it to which we are called? To a royal throne, to the light, to the glory, even to the reigning together with Christ! Whosoever, even on earth, has such a calling before his eyes, has to be strictly educated, and in the measure in which his eye has his calling in view, willingly endures his strict discipline. And when once we have grasped what we are called to—we, the redeemed of Jesus Christ,—and who He is that hath called us, we give all diligence to

live in accordance with it, we take our stand in respect to it, we look upon life in a light very different from other people, there is a certain nobility about our entire bent of mind, we seek at any cost to walk worthy of our high calling, and cannot do otherwise. Thereby our calling and election become sure on our side, by our bringing it into our whole manner of life, and by our avoiding or rejecting, in the power of the blood of Christ, everything which does not accord with such a calling and election of grace. Things must accord; otherwise all will be misty; nothing but babbling; it is the low-minded life of a miserable beggar. Called to the highest, yet losing oneself in trifles; and setting one's heart on nothings in such a way as to give them a value which does not belong to them.

“For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble.” Another translation says “never fall.” The Greek is “never take offence.” People are offended with, or take offence at, whatever is offensive. It comes to an ever surer walk in the footsteps of Him who has made the way for us, and has strengthened us in this path, because the great purposes of God shine upon us more clearly as we more truly follow Him. Thus our entire spiritual constitution grows stronger, and we are no longer kept back by things which

give offence to others. How many there are who would first wait until they see others perfect before they commit themselves to the way! They are continually taking offence at the shortcomings of others, while those who make their calling and election sure do not take offence, even though all others should remain behind. The Lord has so deeply sealed to them their calling, and through their remaining faithful so strengthened it to them, that they no longer allow themselves to be hindered because others do not go with them, who, on account of the difficulties and the loneliness of the way, let themselves be hindered, because in their inmost hearts they are not strongly enough united to the Lord. Thus do they lose time and strength, and inwardly backslide. Their calling and election become dim; transforming power in word and thought, in the inner and outer life, fails them.

“Ye shall never stumble, for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” There are so many modest people in the kingdom of God, who say, “O if I were only once saved!” Yes; there are such as can only be saved by fire. All procrastination has its results, and bears its fruits, making the way more difficult; and who knows what they may yet have to pass

through if only they may not be finally lost? while for others the way always becomes clearer, and holy habits form themselves even in the world of thought and imagination, and in the outer and inner life, everything, from time to time, concentrates itself in this great end, to be perfected, transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ: not out of greed of glory, but for God's sake, because from eternity He, in His election of grace, has foreordained a people who shall be transformed from the Adamic image to the likeness of the Lamb; who, because they have come down with Christ into His humiliation, have been permitted to ascend with Him to His throne, to reign with Him from eternity to eternity. An entrance into the eternal kingdom, which can never be destroyed; where Christ and those who reign with Him will never have to resign the sceptre to another hand,—it can never be wrested from them; where Satan is for ever bound, and ever new spheres will open for Christ and those who share His reign! But we must begin at home, in our personal life: everything, bit by bit, must come under the feet of Jesus.



CHAPTER XXI.

PUTTING IN REMEMBRANCE.



VERSE 11 reads: "For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"—this kingdom which will be established on the ruins of the kingdoms of this world; and we are in these last world-kingdoms now.

"Wherefore"—that is, in order to acquire such an abundant entrance—"I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you." We need, after everything which passes before our eyes, whether desire or fear, remembrance or hope—after all which affects us of the present, past, or future,—to be ever again brought into remembrance of things eternal. Therefore is the Word of God given to us. Yes; even when we are no more children, but grounded in the truth, after we have already taken root in eternity, we always need anew to bear in mind the nothingness of the temporal, and the value of the

eternal—even then, we need ever again to take our bearings, because all manner of influences so easily encamp around our spirit, in memories alike of joy or sorrow. Otherwise, all manner of earthly things and memories make claims upon us—things and memories which belong to the kingdom of the perishable and vain; memories of childhood, memories of all manner of things which have transpired during our life, which now once and for ever may be, and ought to be, put away, that we may, unhindered, press straight on to the eternal. For this we need to be “established in the truth,” and the more deeply we are established, the less can other claims find room, and lead us astray.

The apostle was drawing near to the end of his career, and, just as a father, before his decease, gives to his children all that he still is able to give, as he still leaves among them his last counsels and directions, so was it the burden of the apostle to minister to the Church, which he had served until now, with the last of his strength and time upon earth; and he truly saw in this ministry a call to awake. “I think it right,” he said, “as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up.” He does not come before the Church to awaken them as sinners; the call to awake from sin is addressed to the world, which must be aroused. But does not the

Church also need awakening? Does she not need to be aroused, and her memory to be refreshed? "To stir you up by putting you in remembrance," bringing ever again the old truths before you. Old and new the apostle brings before his Church—the scribes his hearers—old and new are offered to us daily in God's Word. It becomes new to us, it works again with a new power, and we get deeper, newer light than before. This becomes ours only as we remain awake, and suffer ourselves to be ever more fully aroused by the Word of God. We live, indeed, in a world in which all manner of pictures come before us, and lull us to sleep like a narcotic, so as to prevent our seeing with watchful eye things which are eternal.

Then, also, the interests of the life that now is take us captive; so sensitiveness and all manner of things arise, and the things of eternity are driven into the background and hidden. The apostle knew this only too well, therefore he rose to the occasion, and did not grow weary in putting the Church in remembrance and arousing them as long as he was still among them. Should God call him away, he would give them over into His charge, that He might open to them the Scripture by His Spirit, or that He might send them people at the right time to exhort them when they should be in danger of falling

asleep through the stupefying working of things seen, of whatever kind they be. The Word of God must and does awaken us, if we are not already too deeply asleep in our heedlessness.

The apostle had also another reason than the tendency of the Church and the individual hearts of men to thoughtlessness. He had also the special reason why he should feel called in the evening of his life unweariedly to put them in remembrance, because he knew that his call hence from this world was at the door. The Lord had revealed it to him. "Even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me," he writes. Paul also knew that the time of his departure was at hand as the time drew near (2 Tim. vi. 6, 7). Servants who watch that they may be able to awaken others must be awake themselves. To servants who walk in the light of eternity, God can reveal something of the time of their home call. He did this with both Peter and Paul; and He has done it with divers of His other servants.

It is true one may get weary of life before the time, and think, "Now it is time for me to go home. One may be under the oppression of a life of intense pressure, or of long years of hard work, may be weary of life, would gladly unharness; and so one easily gets the impression that he has done his

part, and can go now. It is very easy to mistake such impressions for the voice of God, therefore it is most important to be careful in this matter.

It was not thus with Peter and Paul; weariness of life did not touch them; it was their Lord and Master who openly declared to them that their end approached; and, knowing this, they desired, with loving, guardian, fatherly hearts, to give to the leaders of the Church, which they had founded, nourished, and taught, all they had to give, before their departure, to keep their heads above water when they should be no more with them, and when, perhaps, false teachers should come to shake them out of the steady Gospel lines. He is a true father who provides for his own, instead of thinking, "They will soon see how they can get on when I am no more." Of course, the apostles in the first place give the Church over to their God; but, on the other hand, they give to her also what *they* have to give faithfully, fully, and wholly. Let us be faithful stewards of the legacy of our Lord Jesus Christ—His Word and that of His apostles,—in short, all which He has left behind,—let us faithfully live it out to our latest breath.

"Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call those things to remembrance"—for it is most

important that you should never forget what I have delivered to you and told you, for the things we have passed on to, and left behind for, you are not "cunningly devised fables," or ancient legends, of Hercules, etc., about whom one does not know how much is true or how much false, and wherewith the hearts and heads of schoolchildren are so filled that there is no more room for the Word of God. No; what we have given is what we have received from God. We have brought you the glad tidings of a Saviour of whose glory we have glimpses already in this life on earth. In our apostleship we have "made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In an earnest, decisive hour of His life, the Lord Jesus took with Him on to a mountain three of His disciples, one of whom was Peter. It was a decisive hour; indeed, it was just at that time that the Lord made clear revelations to His disciples of His departure ("exodus," Gr.), which He should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31). It was the very same Peter who had taken upon himself to withstand his Lord in word, saying, "Pity Thyself, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee" (Matt. xvi. 22). The Lord must needs rebuke him with such sharpness that He said, "Get thee behind Me, Satan"! Satan can prepare us a bed of roses, and spare

us all suffering. Suffering awakens the sense of eternity, while he seeks to set before us a way of ease. Children of God may think it their duty and calling to make the path of others as easy as they can. Let us indeed cause others no pain by our faults of character,—beyond which let us leave to God to take His way with His own. Peter's sympathy for the Master was soulish (sentimental). It would have been the ruin of our entire redemption if Peter had succeeded in holding his Master back.

In that hour God Himself intervened, and sealed with the seal of His Spirit what the Son of God had said to His disciples. The representatives of the Old Testament appeared, and spoke with the Lord just about that of which the disciples would neither know nor hear—perhaps, in the first place, out of love to the Saviour, but also perhaps they might have said to themselves, "If the Lord goes this way, we must finally take the same way, and then, perhaps, we also shall not go directly into glory." Then came God the Father with the word: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Hear ye Him, even when what He says does not accord with your hopes of the Messiah. But mark, this is the Messiah spoken of in Isaiah liii., and ye must not desire to hinder Him, but hear Him, and ac-

commodate yourselves to His way, even if it is very possible that ye may have to tread the same path. Through His death He must first deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. ii. 14). Through the way of the Master's death must they be delivered and redeemed from the ways and paths of death.

All this is included in the apostle's "putting in remembrance." This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased—the First who was never frightened back from any kind of suffering, or way of death; because He always had in mind only the carrying out of God the Father's will, and because He let God give Him the needful outfit for such paths. Our Saviour did not offer Himself in His own heroic strength, but "through the eternal Spirit," in the power of the eternal Spirit. We see it just in this passage in Hebrews—the only one in which the Holy Spirit is called the eternal Spirit (Heb. ix. 14),—this is of deep importance for us. The eternal Spirit who led the Lord Jesus through suffering and death, is to-day still at hand, and has power to lead us, who by nature shrink from suffering, through suffering and death. Through the Son He has accomplished it, and He will accomplish it with us; i. e., so many of us as are begotten of the Lamb, of the Son. Only, it is necessary that

the whole Word of God should ever again be brought before our souls in renewed and living power, or we may only too lightly be kept back by this or that, and lose the readiness to be offered upon God's altar and to serve Him. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Let us seek to walk in the footsteps and in the Spirit of the Son, instead of seeking to please man, and let us neither depend on the approbation of our fellow-men, nor yet fear their threatenings. We are redeemed from these, and have to do with God alone, in joy or sorrow, and it comes to this—that God may be pleased with our daily work, and with our hearts' attitude, that He may rejoice in how we stand with others and with the world, so that, set free by the Son, we may walk before God, and at last have witness borne to us that we have pleased Him.



CHAPTER XXII.

THE MORNING STAR.



HE "word of prophecy" is unconditionally sure, and will be fulfilled in all its depth and breadth: but in His own time God Himself steps in, and bears witness to His Word, and seals it to us in a new way. That which was written about our Lord, and about His first coming on earth, was written in such a way, and the disciples themselves had so recognised Him, that Peter's declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," became again indirectly sealed to them in a new way by God, as He, on the Mount of Transfiguration, bore witness to Peter, James, and John: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That was a seal.

Thereby the word of prophecy became sealed and assured to them. It was to them a preliminary fulfilling or sealing of the word, which was soon to be fulfilled through the departure and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Their Lord and Master had been

sent to them as Son of the eternal God—a seal of the word of prophecy; and everyone who takes heed to the word of prophecy in the Old and New Testaments, receives from Him a new seal of it in his own heart. The word of prophecy in both Old and New Testaments naturally has, as its central subject, the Person of the Lord Jesus, His sufferings and death—His Person and His work. And how much more important is it still for us who are of the new covenant, in the time of its fulfilment, to keep the Person of Christ and His work always, and in all things, in the foreground. The subject of prophecy is the great Prophet, Jesus, He who truly is come, and in whom all the prophecies have found their fulfilment. But prophecy has not only as its subject the unveiling of the future and of the coming again of Christ; it has yet another meaning—it discovers also the darkness of the future, and reveals the darkness of the human heart and of human existence. It is a word which “pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit,” and is quick to discern—and bring to our consciousness—the thoughts and the intents; the purposes and motives of our heart and nature.

When the Samaritan woman met with Jesus at Jacob’s well, she would gladly have occupied this Man, in whom she recognised

a prophet, with the religious contentions of the day—Should people worship in Jerusalem or in Gerizim? She wanted to divert the word of prophecy. For here there was something else of vastly greater import. The Lord had met her with His prophet-word. He had struck a light into her life, not only that He might be able to say to her what He alone as a prophet could say to her, what He alone as Prophet could altogether know,—for no one in her neighbourhood had told Him anything about her past. It is only when the Lord tells us what we have done that we see our past in prophetic light, like the woman who cried, “Sir, I perceive that Thou art a Prophet.” The study of the future and of Christ’s coming again may even harm us, and bring us into declension, if, first of all, we do not let the word of prophecy work, in the sense of bringing to the light our whole inner life and being, so that our outward life and doings also may be lit up with the light of eternity.

David had long known what he had done with Uriah and his wife, but he had taken it lightly, until God sent him in Nathan a prophet, who, with prophet-eye and prophet-authority, could illuminate him, and say, “Thou art the man.” Nathan was a God-sent prophet to him, and he broke utterly down; whereas had anyone else said the same

to him, he might have passed lightly over it. Oh, how important is it that we lay up for ourselves no surprises for eternity, when God once again, there above, at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. v. 10), may light up our whole life, and manifest to us what things which are not new to us may have meant for Him, and how He has regarded them! What will it be for us when we once see clearly over there what we have done in turning aside into crooked, downward, one-sided movements in spirit, soul and body! The prophet-word, the prophet-light, and Divine light must fall upon our life. The books, when they are opened, will reveal to us nothing new; nevertheless, what is there will be very different if we do not form the habit, even now, of bathing in the light of the word of prophecy, to be judged in and through its light, that God's mercy may be able to create within us what is new. "We have the word of prophecy more sure" since we have had the Divine manifestation on the mountain. And so our meeting with God, alone in quiet hours, must serve to make the Word of God sure and sealed to us, our walk made true, new views opened into the future in the Word of God—but, above all, in our own hearts. The prophetic word shines into a gloomy place. Oh, how gloomy, how confused and foggy, is all which comes

under the overpowering influences of the earthly life! How easily does the Divine become clouded! Overpowering darkness, twilight, gleams of light, but no bright, clear light of day!

On the external horizon, the Morning Star has long ago arisen. The bright and Morning Star has accomplished His course, and is entered into the glory. But has the Morning Star arisen in our own personal life, and with the Morning Star an increasingly brighter light, which foretells a new day—as the sun follows the morning star? Or are we still carried away by the darkness of human motives, earthly existence, corruption, and vanity, which ever and again veils to us the morning light of the Morning Star, instead of the Morning Star losing itself in the sunlight of a new day? He shines in a dark (squalid or gloomy) place—not to disappear again in such a way that the former night may gradually re-occupy all the place, but He shines and lights up the dark place of this earthly life “until the day dawn.” That does not mean “the day of judgment of our God”; it is a walking in the light, for there follows immediately, “Until the day dawn and the Daystar arise in your hearts.”

The figures dovetail into each other: morning star, light, and day. “Until the day

dawn . . .” The morning star retires behind the day-dawn; and thus the Morning Star arises in the heart—namely, a new morning which has no end, and by which the word of prophecy comes to its entire development. Jesus Christ was unto us Prophet and High Priest and King. The prophetic sentence retires behind the kingship of Christ and His high priesthood. “I perceive that Thou art a Prophet.” Through His prophet-word the Lord Jesus will become our King. Through His reproof He wills to enter upon the throne of our hearts and lives, that He may take the government in hand, or all will fall back again into the old way, and in times of judgment we sink back into the former misery. Through judgment we must come to our discharge, and Christ must therefore be exalted—Prophet, Priest and King. Oh, how soon the old shadows and the old distress return after we have been judged at Jacob’s well! There is no genuine deliverance if the Lord does not come to His rights as King henceforth to reign, and we gladly give up to Him the reins of our outward life, and thankfully open up every movement of our inward life that He may reign over all.

This is, then, also the way that we attain to priesthood. If Christ is our Prophet, and we have accepted Him as such, He gives us

a kingly position, and because, through delivering us, He has got our life into His hand, He can lead us into priesthood. Those who are set free can intercede for others, can take the troubles of other hearts, and bring them before God. How canst thou intercede for others while thou goest along bowed down under the burden of thine own misery, always weighed down and overwrought under the bondage of thy miserable self-life? Him whom the Lord can illuminate with prophetic light, He makes to be a king, and gives him also something of a prophet's eye to see into the hearts and lives of others, but in a priestly spirit, with mercy, and not with self-importance—that his priestly ministry for others may be in kingly liberty.

In the counsel of the Most High, the prophetic Word gives the Lord Jesus Christ His true position as King and High Priest in the history of humanity—and it also gives Him His true position as such in our own life personally, and in our relations with our fellow-men. It lights up all from within outwards in the whole sphere of our relations in life. One can hardly understand in the Morning Star arising in our hearts anything but an advance messenger of eternal glory, and of the eternal morning of a new life.

Ver. 20. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpreta-

tion." Through the rise of the Morning Star in our hearts we have through the Spirit the key of the Scriptures. They open to us wider and wider; it is a new morning which thus dawns upon us, and the new morning which has arisen in our inner being will be sealed to us by the new dawn of the Scriptures, for the Morning Star will disappear again if the Scripture does not arise upon us with the light of a brighter day. We bring to our study of the Holy Scriptures so much which we have learned from man, that we really must, through letting Him judge this knowledge, be placed on kingly ground, but we must also, in this, experience Jesus Christ as our High Priest, if we would not, after a short time, find that it all fades away. That does not happen when we, through such experiences, enter more deeply into the Word itself, and more into the context of Scripture, or we may interpret Scripture according to our experiences, and drag Scripture down to the level of our experiences, instead of penetrating deeper, instead of becoming men of God, in whom the Scripture lives, and to whom it is ever more fully opened. If "no prophecy ever came by the will of man," then I think there is no prophecy which we may take into our own hands, and read according to our point of view, but we have to take heed so to deal with it that

our thoughts recede, and that, far from mastering the Word of God, we let it master us, and thereby become men of God, men of the Word.



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