

THE
GLORY OF CHRIST:
ILLUSTRATED IN HIS CHARACTER AND HISTORY,
INCLUDING THE
LAST THINGS
OF HIS MEDIATORIAL GOVERNMENT.

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"FIRST THINGS," ETC. ETC. ETC.

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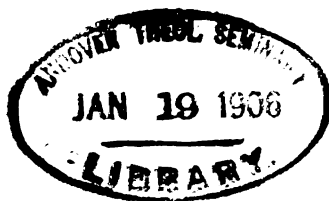
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INTRODUCTION.

IN giving the present volume to the press, the author has little to say but that which is suggested by the importance of the subject of which it treats. Christians should often call to remembrance those truths which remind them of their high relation to Jesus Christ. Such truths are fitted to give vigor and freshness to their hopes, and enforce their obligations not only to avoid bringing religion into reproach, but to hasten its predicted supremacy in the earth.

It was the original design of the writer to make the present work the sequel and counterpart to his last published volumes, entitled "First Things." In arranging his thoughts for this purpose, he found the topics so allied to the *glory of his Divine Master*, that he selected rather the present title, because without excluding "Last Things," it would furnish him a wider range of useful topics.

It has not been his desire so much to suggest new thoughts, as to illustrate and enforce those that are old. A Christian minister is never warranted, even when writing for the press, to forego the opportunity of addressing the conscience. It may be there is in some of these chapters a redundancy of practical remark; and even a reiteration of thought in urging those obligations and inducements to godliness which result from *different truths*. Nor could this be well avoided. It is difficult to prevent the same light from being reflected from different reflecting surfaces.

When he first announced his topic, some of his friends kindly

intimated that the train of thought suggested by it might too closely resemble that which he had already presented in the work entitled "The Attraction of the Cross." He felt at the time, that there was weight in the suggestion; nor has he felt it less in the progress of the work itself. He can only say that he has endeavored to avoid a recurrence of the same illustrations even upon the topic which would most naturally offer them.

The theme and the service have been delightful ones to his own mind; fitted to humble and stimulate it, to remind him of his responsibility, and "so much the more as he sees the day approaching." Should this prove his last service of the kind, he is thankful that it has been employed on such a theme. If the reader be interested and profited, he will share in the pleasure with which the work has been prepared, and the gratitude due to the Father of lights in allowing it to be consecrated to the glory of his great name.

G. S.

BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, }
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CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST AS THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF SUPERNATURAL REVELATION,	7

CHAPTER II.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S DIVINE NATURE,	38
--	----

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST GLORIOUS IN HIS INCARNATION,	73
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE HUMAN CHARACTER OF CHRIST GLORIOUS,	101
---	-----

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST AS A PREACHER,	134
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VI.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES,	162
---	-----

CHAPTER VII.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURATION,	194
--	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS HUMILIATION,	220

CHAPTER IX.

CHRIST GLORIOUS IN HIS RESURRECTION,	247
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION GLORIOUS,	275
--	-----

THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST, AS THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.

NATURE and reason say nothing of Christ. Truths there are which they demonstrate and enforce; they are great truths, truths which underlie the whole theory of revealed religion, and which none but atheists deny. But they are not appropriately Christian truths. They lack the distinctive coloring of Christianity, because they reveal no hope for the fallen, and speak not of the gospel of peace. They tell us of God and man, of law and government, of conscience, and responsibility, and retribution; but they have no consolations for the wounded spirit, when it is bowed down by the burden of sin, and trembles at the apprehension of the coming wrath. They encircle God's throne with light; but they throw no bow of promise around it amid those portentous omens that fill the world with terror. Benighted and

desolate world! did not the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, brighten these scenes of desolation, and show us "the path of life." God out of Christ, is nature, is reason; God in Christ is Christianity. Throughout the Bible "Christ is all, and in all;" his character and work form the great and prominent subjects of this entire book of God. This, then, is the thought with which we introduce the present series of lectures: **THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST AS THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT OF SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.**

To a great extent, the Bible is *a narrative of facts*. It is an historical chart, sketching the events of more than four thousand years, from the earliest times. It speaks of the creation of the world, and of the original apostasy of angels and men. It speaks of the corruption of the patriarchal age and the destruction of the race by the deluge. It speaks of the selection of a peculiar people to be witnesses for the truth, when the world was sunk in idolatry; of their intellectual, civil, and religious advancement; of their bondage and their deliverance; of their internal convulsions and their foreign wars; and of their exile and return. It speaks of the overturning of states and empires; of men who, by their rank, their talents, their virtues and their vices, have contributed to elevate or disgrace the age in which they lived, and who were designated to act a distinguished part in fulfilling the coun-

sels of heavenly wisdom and mercy toward our lost race. It speaks of events, some miraculous, and some in the ordinary course of Divine Providence. We affirm of all these, that they are strongly marked by their alliance to Him who came to seek and save that which was lost. There are facts recorded in these sacred pages which have but an incidental and remote relation to this great personage; yet are they few, unillustrated and insignificant, compared with those which, for their moral influence, their chronological, or genealogical verity, sustain a more direct relation to the "Word made flesh."

Political history reveals the knowledge of man; scriptural history reveals the knowledge of Christ. In the political history of the world, we see so many events which perplex us by their intricacy, that our very knowledge of them confounds us; nor are we duly sensible of our embarrassment until we try to thread out the labyrinth. We are assured, indeed, that infinite wisdom and goodness have never been dethroned for a moment; yet, subduing as this conviction is, doubt and darkness envelop us. From the instructions of the Scriptures we learn, that not only facts that are inexplicable by us, but the entire series of events in the divine government, have a single aim; while the facts themselves there recorded, not only have a bearing on the method of mercy by Jesus Christ,

but unravel that divine mystery, show how the system of providence moves onward in subserviency to this gracious design, and how the great events they speak of are the stepping-stones in the progress of his redemption. As we read them, we are convinced that this redemption is no new thought in the divine mind. We feel that amid all the conflicts and convulsions of earth, God's work has been going on, and that all things work together toward this great end. They all have this great peculiarity, that they are facts which God himself has recorded; and the reason why he has recorded them, and left so many others unrecorded, is found in the special relation they sustain to this great purpose. Events and characters, men and nations there spoken of, though at first view they seem wholly disconnected, are ultimately seen to be bound together by this great centripetal agency.

Higher value would be attached to the historical parts of the sacred volume, if the readers of it were more in the habit of searching for and inspecting the seal of that unsearchable wisdom and love which it is their great object to disclose. They furnish us not only very many of the evidences of Christianity, but an abridgment of its brightest evidences. They constitute the hinge on which Christianity turns. They are not isolated, but form part and parcel of a series which is inseparably conjoined,

and of which Christianity itself is the consummation. Everywhere they speak the same language, and bear testimony to God the Redeemer. Christ himself lives and speaks on almost every page. We find nothing in them that diverts our thoughts from the main object of the Christian revelation; while the more severely they are scrutinized, the more are they seen to bear a relation to Christ, and to indicate him as their end and object. While we seem to be conversing with our first parents in the garden of Eden; or with Noah as he builds his altar on the desolated shores of the new world; or with Abraham as he pleads for Sodom; or with Moses as he takes the shoes from off his feet at the burning bush in Horeb; or with Elijah as he contends with the prophets of Baal; or with Daniel in the den of lions at Babylon; or with his youthful compeers as they walk unhurt in the burning, fiery furnace; we are at the same time taught that a greater than patriarchs or prophets is here. It is the liberated and risen Saviour who draws nigh to us, talking with us by the way, and opening to us the Scriptures. Even the more barren parts of this history are not barren of the unsearchable treasures of his grace; they are not unchristian records, but at every step reveal more and more of the great Redeemer. The Christian element is the main element in them all; they attain their object only as they authenticate

Christianity, and honor the author and finisher of the Christian faith.

The Bible is also distinguished for its teaching by *prefigurations and symbols*. We are not insensible that this is a method of instruction which is liable to abuse. Men there have been who have made themselves ludicrous by searching for types and shadows where they do not exist. Inventive minds and ungoverned imaginations have sometimes made fearful havoc of God's word by this lawless process of tracing out analogies between persons, and events, and things, and their supposed spiritual counterpart. But it may not be forgotten that there is error in the opposite extreme. Every type has its antetype, and every symbol its corresponding truth. The Bible, more than most books, perhaps more than any other book, is distinguished for its symbolical instruction. Nor does it diminish aught from the value of such teaching that it has given rise to interpretations that are purely fanciful, and to exegetical laws and systems of interpretation which have converted the substance into the shadow, instead of making the shadow represent the substance.

In this method of teaching, *Christ* holds a prominent place. It is, indeed, distinctly recognized in the Scriptures themselves as having its counterpart and completion in him as the great Mediator. The prefigurations of the ceremonial

law of the Jews are so abundant, that to one not acquainted with the Christian Scriptures, it is difficult to perceive their import, or even their relevancy, unless they are typical of Christ. In themselves they were but outward rites and ceremonies; they were even worthless and worse than worthless, a grievous yoke, and not easy to be borne. But they represented brighter and nobler realities, and were "a shadow of good things to come, but the body is Christ." The blood of beasts, the offering of incense, the lights of the sanctuary and its gold and pearls; the holy vessels and the holy garments; the High Priest and the anointing oil: the Passover and the day of annual atonement; the Holy of holies and the entering in of the High Priest alone within the veil, were but the prefiguration of things more spiritual, pure, and precious. The tabernacle and the temple service, the golden candlesticks, the ark of the covenant, and the cherubim were not only typical of the Messiah, but so regarded by not a few even of the later and more learned Jews. It is difficult to conceive how the great doctrine of vicarious atonement could be more impressively taught than by the Jewish sacrifices, in so many of which the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the victim, there leaving the burden of his own offences, and sacrificing the guiltless for the guilty. Still more impressive, if possible, was that affect-

ing scene when, on the great day of atonement, the High Priest publicly imposed the sins of the people on the head of the "scape-goat," and sent him away into the wilderness. And what was the import of that solemn transaction, when "Moses took the blood of calves and of goats, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you;" if it does not prefigure the confirmation of the new covenant by blood of infinitely greater value and efficacy?

Nor are these isolated prefigurations scattered here and there; they run throughout the whole of the ancient economy, and are imbedded in its institutions and laws. The very existence of the Jewish people, among whom were the sole vestiges of the pure faith for so many centuries, and with whom, even in their lowest estate, those were found who "waited for the consolation of Israel," was itself a foreshadowing of the Messiah. If we ask for the special import of particular prefigurations, the answer would require a volume. Suffice it to say, that sometimes their object is to identify the great Messiah himself; sometimes to set forth his offices as Prophet, Priest, and King; and sometimes to indicate his mysterious character as God and man. Sometimes they speak of his humiliation, and sometimes of his reign and victories; sometimes they personate his friends and their

triumphs, and sometimes his enemies and their overthrow. In some of the books of the Old Testament, and more especially in the Psalms of David and the writings of Isaiah, and the minor prophets, the character and glory of "David's Lord and Son," are presented in such truthfulness and beauty, as to have become in every age of the church the themes of Christian, devotional, social praise. We may safely affirm that the relation which the Old Testament bears to the New, is not more intimate than the relation which these emblematical representations bear to Christ. And it deserves remark, that as these varied prefigurations were, for the most part, coeval with the rise of the Jewish economy, so they terminated when it vanished away. The oracle of Urim and Thummim was silent: the splendid jewelry in the breastplate of the High Priest became dim; the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom—all ceased when Christ came. They had accomplished their object. God poured contempt upon them in order to honor their great antetype.

If from the typical and emblematic, we pass to the *figurative and metaphorical*, representations of the Bible, we find them full of Christ. Truth is often presented in the Scriptures in the language of emotion. When the heart is moved, it always expresses itself thus: and never more intensely than on religious themes. They are delineations, rather than

lectures ; rhetorical, rather than dogmatic views. They are the graphic pencillings of an enlightened and ardent mind, into which truth has sunk so deeply that it is not satisfied without representations that flow from the full fountain of devotional feeling. They have all the elements of poetry and painting, and address themselves not so much to the vigor of the intellect as to the delicacy of a sanctified taste and fancy. And it is a most fitting method of communicating God's truth, and in keeping with the principles of man's nature. It is the genuine language of a well-instructed and fervent piety thus to give utterance to its emotions in metaphors that are bold, and where a single word announces some great and pregnant truth. Devotional emotion finds its way to the soul only through the instrumentality of *truth* ; yet are there other ways of presenting and uttering truth than the calm and unmoved lessons of a sanctified philosophy. There is a language which speaks with logical accuracy to the intellect ; and there is a language which speaks to the imagination and the emotions. Both are equally true ; but the latter is more free, unembarrassed, and impressive. The former is more definite, the latter is more striking ; and while it illustrates, gives beauty to its illustrations. Nor are such representations to be regarded as mere matters of taste, or in more modern phraseology, as the æsthetical judgment of

the sacred penmen ; but as the manner and style of writing to which they were directed by the Holy Ghost. The inspired writers thus received instruction, thus they communicated it. It was stamped and burnt in upon their own minds ; and in order to arrest the thoughts of men that were too sluggish, to be arrested by more didactic representations, they addressed it in "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." And what majesty, what force and adornment, and what alternately bold and delicate coloring do they impart to the unchanging, yet ever-various glory of Him who is their great and predominant theme ! I had almost said, look where we will into the sacred writings, and we find these representations in a richness and variety scarcely equalled by the rhetorical drapery of any other book. If there be one that fills the whole circle of this vivid imagery, it is Christ. It centres in Christ ; as though genius, and taste, and cultivated piety, and all the objects of nature and art, in all their sublimity and beauty, were laid under contribution by his all-comprehensive and exacting loveliness. It is the melody of the truth, as it is in Jesus, coming upon the soul, sometimes in airs sweet and enchanting as the harp of David ; sometimes pensive as the prolonged notes of the weeping prophet of Anathoth ; sometimes thrilling as Isaiah's lyre.

It deserves remark that they are the most

beautiful objects in nature which the revealing Spirit selects to show forth the beauty of the adorable Redeemer. He is the pure *light* of heaven, its *sun* and centre, illumining the whole sphere of revealed truth. He is its bright *Morning Star* ushering in the day. He is the *rose of Sharon* and the *lily of the vallies*; the *lily among thorns*, and the *apple-tree* among the trees of the wood, everywhere diffusing their fragrance. He is the *fairest of the children of men*, and his *garments are white as snow*. He is the *bridegroom* rejoicing over the bride, and his lips drop with sweet-smelling myrrh. He is the *Shepherd* of Israel, who gathereth the lambs with his arm, and carrieth them in his bosom. He is the *fountain* of purity and the fountain of life. He is an *hiding-place* from the storm, and a *covert* from the tempest; as the *shadow of a great rock* in a weary land, and as *rivers of water* in a dry place. He is the *rock* and the *stone* of Israel, their *high tower* and the *horn of their salvation*. He is the *bread* of life, the *tree* of life, the *vine*, the *head*, the purifying fire, the true way, the living temple. He is Judah's lion and the Lamb of God. He is the brother and the friend. He is the angel of the covenant, the surety, and the advocate. He is the Prince of Peace, the wonderful Counsellor, the conqueror Captain. There are beauties in the Bible, but he is the crown of its beauty. There

is rich verdure there, and flowers of hope; but the stem of Jesse is the branch from which they grow. That sacred soil is fringed with trees that yield their fruit every month, and there is a river there pure and perennial, because it flows from God and the Lamb. But he is the life of all this sweet and sublime imagery. The Bible is but the mirror which reflects his face of comeliness. It is the ocean from whose broad surface the warm exhalations of Jesus' love ascend, to fall in showers on the thirsty earth. Its imagery is beautiful; to a devout mind it is so, because it gleams in the light, and is reflected from the brightness of this never-setting sun. What an enigma, what a blank were this book without Christ! It is he who imbues these sacred pages with this heavenly atmosphere. His name is as "ointment poured forth," diffusing its fragrance like a bed of spices; while from the green, luxuriant earth, the air rises up loaded with rich perfume, and faith and hope breathe its odors and revel among its flowers.

If, then, in the next place, we take a glance at the *prophetical writings* of the Bible, we find that Christ himself is the great subject with which the spirit of prophecy is conversant from the beginning of the world to the sealing up and formal close of the prophetic dispensation. His advent and redemption were the great and glorious events towards which the expectations of men were di-

rected by the bards of the Old Testament. They were thrilling predictions which they uttered, because they were full of Christ; predictions which, when accomplished, would make the trees of the field and the little hills and the mountains clap their hands, and which would fill the world with joy.

Prophecy is God's word; it is eminently the preaching of God himself, and in every respect like its author. We may well suppose that it falls in with the design and spirit of the Gospel, and tends to promote its spirituality and power. Hence we are instructed that "the Spirit of Christ" was in the prophets when "they testified beforehand his sufferings, and the glory that should follow." We are told also that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy;" or, in other words, that the spirit of prophecy is the testimony concerning Jesus. When we take a view of the prophecies, from the first prediction in the garden of Eden relating to the "seed of the woman," to the prediction of Malachi concerning "the Messenger of the Covenant," and the prediction of John in Patmos concerning him who is to "come in the clouds of heaven;" we not only find they perfectly harmonize with the spirit of Christianity and the great end for which the Bible was given, but that the entire and uninterrupted series of prophecies is mostly made up of predictions concerning Jesus Christ. Even those predictions which relate to this world,

and to earthly things, as well as those which relate to the kingdom of Satan, and the nations and races and rulers over which the Deceiver exercises his sway, stand abreast with predictions which immediately relate to the kingdom of Christ, and derive their only importance from their predicted subserviency to this kingdom. Holy angels and holy men of old were sent by God during the progress of four thousand years to announce him who was "the desire of all nations," and whom "God had set upon his holy hill of Zion." To him "*all* the prophets gave witness." Sometimes they speak of the time when he should be born; sometimes of the place; sometimes of the dignity of his person; sometimes of the excellence and meekness of his character, the miracles he wrought, the instructions he gave, the beneficence of his life, the time and circumstances of his death, and the triumphs of his resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God. Take Christ from the system of prophecy, and it has no object; it is spiritless and dead, and the whole fabric crumbles and falls. The prophecies can be studied and understood only at the foot of the cross. There was no other object worthy of this long-continued intercourse between heaven and earth, unless it was to "prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight." They are sacrilegious hands that would fain rudely separate the root and the offspring of David from

the ramifications of prophecy. Men there are who have done this: nor is it any marvel that their interpretations of prophecy should be bald and jejune, when they have thus abstracted from it its vital element. Piety weeps at this estrangement of prophecy from the testimony of Jesus, and exclaims with Mary at his empty sepulchre, "They have taken my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

A collection of all the prophecies in the Sacred Writings would leave but few that have no respect to Jesus Christ. The prophet that did not bear witness to him would have been counted as one of the oracles of the heathen. Even false prophets were constrained to speak of him; "they saw him, but not now; they beheld him, but not nigh." Heavenly seers were stationed all along the hill-tops of time for the great purpose of announcing Him who was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel;" while, as their circle of vision becomes extended, and they penetrate the last days, they anticipate the scene, when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Nor, obvious as the fact is, may we overlook the thought, that of the *great truths and doctrines of the Bible*, Christ is the sum and substance. In the language of the Scriptures, believing Christ and

believing the gospel, preaching Christ and preaching the gospel, are commutable phrases. By common consent *Christianity* is the very definition of revealed truth. There is no truth in the Bible with which Christ has not such a relation, that if there had been no Saviour, there had been no such truth revealed. God's truth has this one great theme. The Bible is the most perplexing book, the greatest enigma in the world of thought, if the great subject of its instructions be not Christ and him crucified. Natural religion would have consulted all the exigencies of men, had it revealed a Saviour. This is the great and universal want of the race; and where there is no provision for this, there is no truth but that which rebukes, condemns, and destroys. Christ is the "wisdom of God and the power of God," because his unsearchable wisdom and power are in him and by him disclosed. If there is anything by which the glory of God is pre-eminently manifested, it is the system of truth which was taught by his Son, and of which the Son is the centre. Here alone men see "what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God." Angels see it here, and will see it in perpetually augmenting manifestations. Nor would there be any difference in the theological creed of men and angels, nor in the now conflicting views of men themselves, if they all had the same views of Christ. The fact

that the leading controversies between Christians and infidels, and other heretics and errorists relate, and ever have related to the person and work of Christ, shows that Christ himself is the all and in all to Christianity. Dispute about doctrines as they will, there is no denying the fact, that the system of belief which most excludes Christ and obscures his glory is the farthest from the truth, and ruinous to the souls of men. It is "another foundation" of which Christ is not the corner-stone, and one which he himself has not laid in Zion. Christianity is the same thing everywhere, because Christ is the sum and substance of it, and he is everywhere the same. Incidental differences there are in the church of God, but there are no essential differences where Christ is made of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption to the soul. There is neither Greek, nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. All have this great mark of identity, that they are one in Christ. The Spirit of God everywhere inscribes the same truths on the hearts of good men, because he "takes of the things that are *Christ's*, and shows them unto them." Divine truth receives its consistency and beauty from Christ; nor is it possible to have just perceptions of it, nor feel its practical influence without perceiving its relations to him. Does the Bible assure men of the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments; where is that assur-

ance made so sure as by the teaching, death, and resurrection of the Son of God? Does it teach the great doctrine of moral obligation: where is there such evidence of the binding force of obligation as in the obedience of Christ to the death of the cross, and in the motives and influences to obedience which his death secures? Do we look for any firm foundation on which to erect the structure of morals; Christ is that foundation, there is no such morality as Christian morality.

“Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding love,
The grand morality is full of thee.”

Every thought, and word, and act of obedience springs from faith in Christ. Is it the design of the Bible to exalt God and humble the pride and self-sufficiency of man? By what is God so exalted and man so humbled as by the doctrine of Christ Jesus and him crucified? Does this book of God reveal the only test of character? Where is there such a test as the “child that was set for the fall and rising again of many, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed?” We cannot specify any one truth, the faith of which is essential to the Christian character, and which is itself the means of piety and hope to good men, but is contained in that one word, CHRIST. Are they born again; it is in the image of Christ. Have they pardon and acceptance with God; it is

through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Have they grace, mercy, and peace; it is because Christ has died, and they love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. Or are there any among the sons of men who are anathema; it is because they do not love him. If there be one whom the Scriptures represent it as important to know, it is Christ; one whom all are bound to love, and in whom all are bound to believe; one in whom all who believe are bound to profess their faith; it is Christ. If there be one to whom, to be reconciled, is to be reconciled to God; one who is the Christian's example, the minister's and the church's glory; one who is Lord of the conscience and King in Zion; one who is precious to the good of all names and nations, and before whom every knee must bow and every mouth be stopped; one who, as the accredited Prophet, Priest, and King, is destined to triumph over ignorance, unbelief, superstition, and wickedness, and whose influence is destined to extend to the masses, and by whom humanity is to be ennobled and exalted; it is Christ. If there be one to whom the Spirit is imparted without measure, and upon whom all spiritual gifts are bestowed for the benefit of his people; one who was ordained to this great work from the foundation of the world, and who is himself the inhabitation of the Deity, it is Christ. In all Christian doctrines Christ has the pre-eminence. It pleased

the Father that "in him all fulness should dwell." It is he of whom the great Apostle said, "I have determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Christ crucified not only gives its complexion to the whole system of divine truth ; but apart from this crucified one, there is no truth which is the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation.

We add a single thought more: the Scriptures not only abound in the inculcation of Christian truth, but in the delineation of *Christian experience*. And does not every devout mind respond to the remark, that the religious experience, of which we have so full an account in the Bible, magnifies Jesus Christ? In all its forms and varieties, in the love of its espousals, in the vigor of its manhood, in the maturity of its old age, in the meltings of its penitence and the fervor of its zeal ; in prosperity and adversity, toil and relaxation, life and death ; its most devout and sacred sensibilities flow from enlightened views of Christ, from believing and sanctified contemplations of his glory, from the life-inspiring relationship which believers sustain to him. The Bible knows nothing that turns men from the power of Satan unto God but Christ.

If we inquire for the great principle of spiritual life, we hear one who was not behind the chief of the apostles, say "I am crucified with *Christ* ; nev-

ertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ* that liveth in me, and the life that I live in the flesh is by the faith of the *Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Do the Scriptures speak of adoption into God's family; their language is, "But as many as *received Christ*, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name." Do they speak of fellowship with God in religious duties; their language is, "For *through him* we have access by one Spirit unto the Father;" "in whom we have boldness and access;" boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way." When the early Christians advert to the grace that called them, and that made them differ from others, their grateful language is, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in *Christ Jesus*, before the world began." Do they speak of their final perseverance, they rest on such truths as these, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Do they advert to their encouragement in duty, their impulse in love, and the great incitement to a life of devotedness: it is "the love of Christ that passeth knowledge."

When, amid their scenes of trial, they advert to the source of their consolation, they speak of one refuge, one comforter. All their support and all their hopes are centred in One. It were a severance from them all to be severed from Christ. However brilliant the lights which this world casts upon it, clouds and darkness would hang over every path and step of the Christian's pilgrimage, did not he who caused the light to "shine out of darkness, shine in their hearts to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." Sweet is the solace which the Christian finds amid those days of depression which visit him, from the assurance that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and that in the dark night of his adversity, one star there is that turns the shadow of death into the morning. The preciousness of Christ, the attractions of his love, the adaptation of his grace, ever ready, ever faithful, ever full, are sufficient for his greatest need. The conscience may be alarmed, the heart agitated, and the fairest earthly hope may be disappointed and wither; but precious are the hopes which Christ inspires; precious the repose at his cross; precious the refuge at his mercy-seat; precious the joys which cannot be embittered, because he gives them.

The life that now is, is but of few days and full of trouble. We feel the burden of sorrow, we

shrink from conflict, and we shudder at the grasp of death; and though reason cannot tranquillize, nor sympathy relieve, nor any created helper support us, there is tranquillity, relief, support, and perfect peace amid them all, derived from Christ. It is the believer's privilege to say with Paul, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord *Jesus Christ*." Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in *Christ Jesus* our Lord! sufferings await them; but if they suffer with Christ, they shall also be glorified together with him. Death awaits them, but they sleep in Jesus; the grave awaits them, but Christ is the resurrection and the life, and they come forth from it fashioned like unto his glorious body. The judgment awaits them, but it is the judgment-seat of Christ. Heaven awaits them, and he himself says it is "his Father's house," and that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters." It is he who will there "make them kings and priests unto God, even his Father;" and there their song shall be "unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood!" From first to last, Christ is as pre-eminent in the Christian's religious experience as in the theory of Christianity. The Christian needs no other, he has no other, he desires no other than Christ.

This, then, is the thought which we place at the head of our observations on the glory of Christ. God is not more omnipresent, than the presence of Christ fills the sacred volume. He himself is its author. Prophets were sent by him; apostles were his amanuenses. His light shines on every page; it envelops us whenever we take the Bible into our hands. We live in this illumined atmosphere. It is not as though Christ were in heaven and we on the earth; or as though we were looking at the sun at a distance; or as though we were on the side of the globe on which it does not shine. The mind is not less distant from the body than Christ from the Bible. He is the mind, the very soul of the book itself. He enriches it, he adorns it. He has great and glorious designs to accomplish by it; and not only are they here unfolded, but they comprise all the designs of the divine mind in relation to the restoration of fallen man. It is the instrument of good only as it speaks of him. He spoke in the prophets, uttered the law, and now speaks in the Gospel. He is the cause, and these ample and varied revelations are the effect. There are some striking instances of his glory on which we propose to dwell in the following pages; but his glory shines throughout these divine communications, even though its rays sometimes fall obliquely. His light fills it with truth; his grace and mercy

give birth to all the hopes, and his promises form the clue to all the prospects it reveals. His fullness makes it so full of God. Men may not see that the Bible is so full of Christ, yet he is there; they may not believe that it is so full of Christ, yet he is there; they may deny that it is so full of Christ, yet he is there. All their efforts to exclude him are of no avail. It was to reveal Christ that this revelation was given. It is impossible to get at a distance from Christ, so long as we have any true intimacy with the Scriptures. If we go up to heaven he is there; or if we make our bed in hell he is there.

And if these things are so, *what shall be said of those, who, instead of giving Christ the prominent place in their preaching, indulge themselves in the speculations of philosophy, the researches of science, and the obligations of an unbaptized morality?* This age of progress vainly flatters itself that it is in advance of the Bible. If we give credence, not merely to modern lecturers, but to the teachings of not a few modern pulpits; we must believe that this apostate world is to be regenerated by other means than the simple gospel of Christ. There is a marvellous falling off from primitive Christianity, in the days in which we live. It is not the object of the writer to rebuke this fault so much as to recall to his own thoughts and the thoughts of others the pre-eminence of his Divine Lord and

Master, as the great subject of God's revelation. O that those of us who are preachers of the gospel, instead of thirsting so much for the applause of men, would more steadily seek the honor that cometh from God only! Which of the apostles throws Christ into the shade, or keeps him in the background? Lost men need nothing so much as the knowledge of Christ. It must surely be of great practical importance for the teachers of religion, to seize hold of the sum and substance of this book of God. And what is the Bible to a lost world, without Christ? What concern have men in these rich and varied revelations more than in any volume of sage counsels, if they are denuded of those truths which constitute its excellence and glory? I cannot find that Christ is ever lost sight of in the Bible. The man who would understand the gospel and preach it intelligibly, must carry Christ along with him into the pulpit. He must habitually carry Christ in his mind and heart. Christ must be near him, or his preaching will have very little meaning. That system of theological opinions which has the most of Christ is the true system; that which has the least is the most erroneous; that which has none is heresy, infidelity, atheism. Do not call us *bigots* because we war with *Anti-christ*. Be its form however specious, and what it may, we would hold fellowship with our Divine Master; we seek no fellowship with those who have

no communion with him. To be indifferent to all religious opinions, when Christ himself is the way, the truth, the life, is not the charity that "rejoiceth in the truth." True piety has but one author, and that is Christ. It has but one instrumentality—the truth of Christ; one aim and end—the glory of Christ; one image and superscription—Christ himself. We see that Christ takes complete possession of the Bible: so must he take complete possession of the pulpit. Error must not exclude him. Sin must not make this his rightful abode unwelcome. It is his own: the palace in which he loves to dwell. Self-righteousness must not divide the throne with him. The world must not crowd him out; its wealth, its honors, its learning, its science, must not jostle him out of his place, nor rudely repulse him from his own domains. Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and know not Christ, I am nothing. The *world* by wisdom knows not God. We glory in the progressive career of human thought. Man was formed for it. We fear no researches that terminate in Christ. Penetrate the labyrinth ever so far, only let it be with the torch of truth, and for holy ends! Let the speculations of philosophers be imbued with the love of Christ! Let the learning of the wise be redolent with his spirit, their most enduring memorials be baptized in the name of Jesus, and their triumphs be his! And then,

whether they lead, or whether they follow in the race, the echo of their footsteps falls upon the ear with a sacredness that nothing can inspire but holy ground. When poetry sings, only let it be of Christian themes, and in the spirit of Christ. When fancy plays, let it be around the cross; and when she weaves her garlands let them be to be suspended there. O that the tendencies of human thought, in this our age, were more toward the "simplicity that is in Christ." Beautiful simplicity, and still more beautiful Saviour! Give us, adorable Redeemer, more of thy image, and we shall possess a treasure, which does not become dim like the gold of earth; a beauty that will sparkle with radiance when all that is earthly shall have passed away.

Nor may we close this first chapter without asking our readers, "What think *ye* of Christ?" What is Christ *to you*? What is he *to you* as a child of apostate Adam, as a sinner against God, and condemned by his holy law? What is he *to you* as one born for immortality, and hasting to his judgment-seat? Do you love him? Do you believe in him? Have you found pardon and peace in his precious blood, and has this blessed hope shed its purifying, gladdening, comforting light and influence over your soul? Do you live to him, and are you among those who wait for his appearing? If the Lord Jesus be not the object of your love and confidence, and if you rest not

your eternal hopes on him alone, then are you weighed in the balance and found wanting. Christianity differs from everything else. To be a Christian, Christ must be seen, loved, confided in, and obeyed. There must be abiding convictions of his excellence. Nothing fills the soul with such delightful emotions, as those with which the true Christian contemplates his Saviour. Men are sadly mistaken who expect to find religion out of Christ. An exemplary deism is not Christianity; neither are moral virtues Christian graces. Men may be humane, generous, kind, without being Christians. Truth, justice, honesty, honor in our intercourse with the world, are not love and confidence toward Christ. If he holds this conspicuous place in the Bible, true piety must consist in right affections toward *him*. Men have more to do with Christ, and he has more to do with them, than they have to do with one another. It is as irrational and absurd, therefore, as it is unchristian, to place religion in virtues which have no regard to Christ. It is proof of great moral blindness, and great ignorance of the Scriptures, when men satisfy themselves with a religion that has little or nothing to do with Christ. Our obligations to Christ stand first; there is no other obligation that can come in competition with his prior and everlasting claims.

Should these thoughts disturb you, we can only

say, repair to that Saviour *without delay*. Bring this great question to an issue by "receiving Christ Jesus the Lord." Rest not satisfied to be numbered with his enemies, and to sink forever under his appalling frown. And be entreated not to wait for a more convenient season. Ask the dying sinner what makes him tremble and weep; and he will tell you that he once resolved to repent and believe the gospel, but he waited to a more convenient season. Ask tens of thousands of the lost in hell why they weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth; and they will tell you they were once startled by a view of their sin and danger, but they delayed to escape the coming wrath to a more convenient season. Away with this madness! The heart of Jesus is as full of mercy as the Bible is full of Jesus. Stretch your thoughts as far as you will, and you cannot conceive the fulness of his love. You have never yet learned what a Saviour he is who died on the cross, and now lives and reigns. O dismiss these doubts, and abjure the spirit of delay. Break this spell of the fowler. Let the breath of prayer sweep these refuges of his away, and come now to that Saviour who filleth all in all.

CHAPTER II.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S DIVINE NATURE.

DR. PRIESTLY, the celebrated materialist and Unitarian, has remarked, that "the value of the gospel does not, in any degree, depend upon the idea which we may entertain concerning THE PERSON of Christ, because all that is truly interesting to us is the object of his mission, and the authority with which his doctrine is promulgated." At what a great remove is this subtle remark from the whole scope and design of the sacred writings; from their special teaching on this very point. As we have already seen, there is no topic of which they treat more largely than the Person of Christ; none on which they speak with deeper interest, and none of which they take more pains to present just conceptions.

Our theme is his great glory. Our starting point is indeed far above us; it is a lofty eminence; but it is the only point of vision from which we hope to see him even "in part." The Scriptural views of the glory of Christ recognize HIS TRUE AND PROPER EQUALITY WITH GOD. If it is

important to know anything concerning him, it is surely of importance to know whether he is God, or a mere creature. The difference is infinite.

To assist us in deciding this question, I propose in the present chapter to institute the inquiry, What are the appropriate and peculiar excellencies of the Deity; to show that the same excellencies are ascribed by the sacred writers to Jesus Christ; and that he is therefore truly and properly God.

Our first object is to institute the inquiry, WHAT ARE THE APPROPRIATE AND PECULIAR EXCELLENCIES AND CLAIMS OF THE DEITY?

There is no uncertainty in human language when it speaks of this great theme. The first and most prominent thought, connected with the great word God, is that he *possesses existence which is underived and eternal*. This is what natural and revealed religion mean by God. The idea of an eternal, independent Being is the most exalted conception the human mind can receive of the all-perfect Deity. He is one who exists prior to every other being, and derives his existence from no other. He is self-existent, and has the principle of life in himself. This is the conception which the eternal Deity has of his own existence, and which he has revealed to men in the Scriptures. When he revealed his *name* to Moses, his words were, "I am that I am; that is my name. Say unto Pharaoh, I AM hath sent me unto you." The

peculiar and distinguishing name of this uncaused and eternal deity is *Jehovah*, and it is specially expressive of the majesty and glory of his underrived existence.

To this eternal being the Scriptures also ascribe infinite *greatness and goodness*. They represent him as *immutable*, and as the being "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." They speak of him as *omnipotent*, as "the mighty God," and the "Lord God omnipotent;" as *omniscient*, as the one who "knoweth all things," and "looketh on the heart;" and explicitly affirm that he, even "he *only* knows the hearts of all the children of men;" as *omnipresent*, "Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee," "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" They clothe him, too, with the robes of *supremacy*, and declare that "Dominion is with him;" that he is "the King of kings and the Lord of lords;" that his "is the glory," and that "his glory shall endure forever."

Reason and the Scriptures also ascribe to him *great and glorious works*. They affirm that he has done, is doing, and will yet perform deeds which are done by no other being in the universe. They recognize him as the *Creator* of all things; as having "stretched forth the heavens *alone*, and spread abroad the earth by *himself*." They speak of him as the great *Preserver*, and say "that the heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hosts,

the earth and all things that are therein, he preserveth them all." Him, too, they represent as the *Redeemer*. The whole work of redemption, from beginning to end, is spoken of as peculiar to God. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." "I, even I, am Jehovah, and besides me there is no Saviour." And as the work of redemption in general is ascribed to God, so is each particular part of it. The work of *atonement* is attributed to him. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; wherefore, glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are *God's*;" "the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." *Regeneration* is attributed to him. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." *Justification* is attributed to him. "It is God that justifieth." The *resurrection* of the dead is also declared to be his peculiar work. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that *God* should raise the dead? God will raise up us by his own power." *Judging the world* is also the sole prerogative of God. "The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth." "The heavens shall declare his righteousness, for God is Judge himself." The destruction of this material universe at the consummation of all things, is likewise spoken of as the peculiar work of God. "As a vesture shalt thou fold them, and they shall be changed;" so

also the *final glory of the righteous* and the *final perdition of the wicked* are declared to be the act of God.

The Scriptures also enjoin *duties* which all are bound to perform toward God and God only. All creatures are under the strongest obligations to obey him. They are to *love* him with all their hearts, and to *trust* and *confide* in him. Nor are they allowed to place their supreme confidence in any other; "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his aim." They are required to *worship* him, and him alone. It is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him *only* shalt thou serve."

This is the Scriptural description of that Being whom the Bible calls God; such are some of the peculiar properties and claims which belong inalienably to the God of the universe. He is just such a Being as this—infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. They are not the property of any mere *manifestation*, but of a Being. Nor are they the properties of *man*, nor angel, nor any created being in the universe: they belong to Deity. Reason ascribes them to him: the Bible ascribes them to him, and gives him this high honor. It is thus angels and the spirits of the just honor him; thus that holy men on his footstool honor him; and thus he will be honored by the services and the

song of an ever-growing eternity. We repeat the thought, therefore, that the great Being who is this and does this is truly God.

We are then now prepared to show that ALL THESE PROPERTIES, AND DEEDS, AND CLAIMS ARE AFFIRMED IN THE BIBLE TO BELONG TO JESUS CHRIST.

There are some comprehensive declarations on this subject, that are not to be overlooked. We are told that "*all*" men and angels "should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." If they honor the Father as God, even so should they honor the Son as God, because he has all the properties and claims of God. They shall treat him as God for the same reasons that require them to treat the Father as God. Whatever of religious veneration, whatever of honor in any form, is given, or is due to the Father, the same is due to the Son. "*All things*," saith the Son, "that the Father hath are mine,"—and what is so properly God's as his divinity? His existence is my existence; his perfections are my perfections; his works are my works; the allegiance and the service that are due to him, are mine; our natures are equal and our glory one.

But it is important to substantiate this position; and therefore we remark, in the first place, The *eternal existence* of the Father is declared in the Scriptures to belong to the Son. *Eternity*, that great and emphatic property of the Deity, is expressly ascribed to him. Speaking of himself, he

says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I am the First and the Last. Before Abraham was, I AM." The Prophet Micah, predicting the birth of Christ, proclaims, "Out of Bethlehem, in Judah, shall he come forth who shall be a ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been of old, from *everlasting*." There is a declaration of still more unequivocal and decisive import, and one in which the Saviour explicitly affirms that he possesses the *wondrous principle of self-existence* in his own eternal nature. "For as the *Father* hath *life in himself*, so hath he given to the *Son* to have life in himself." This is the great and special attribute of the Deity; it is his gift, it belongs to his nature; and the Son possesses it in common with the Father. It equally belongs to both their natures to possess this principle of self-existence. He existed from eternity; the Father's eternity is his eternity; he inhabits it: it is his appropriate residence, his own eternity. What an avowal is this from him who was despised and rejected of men! It is no marvel that the Jews accused him of "making himself equal with God." Nor is the force of this declaration at all diminished by the phraseology, "so hath *he given* to the Son to have life in himself." *Literally* understood, for the Father to *give self-existence* to the Son would be a palpable absurdity, because it would imply a dependent *self-existence*. The true meaning is that

the Son is a partaker, a sharer in his Father's eternity. Christ borrows his existence, not from another: it is not a stream from another source; the fountain of it is in himself. He, like the Father, is the uncreated one; nor is it possible for us to conceive, if he were a mere creature, though the highest of creatures, that he "could have life in himself."

Then, in the second place, all *other properties* which are peculiar to the Deity, are ascribed to Christ. The same names and titles that belong to the Father are given to the Son. He is called *Lord* by the Father himself. "The Lord said unto *my Lord*, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." In the vision which the Prophet Isaiah had of *Christ*, he says, "I saw *the Lord* sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." The angels, after his resurrection, say of him, "Come see the place where *the Lord* lay." Very frequently, indeed, this divine name is applied to Jesus Christ, both in the Old and New Testaments; the Saviour, even in his lowly humiliation, more than once thus applies it. Jesus Christ receives this name and title of the Deity in an acceptation altogether different from that in which it is applied to any human superior or prince. He is styled "*The Lord of glory*," and the "*The Lord from heaven*:" and "*King of kings*," and "*Lord of lords*."

In a multitude of passages, also, the Son is called God. Isaiah says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called the *mighty God*." Even Dr. Priestly consents to regard this passage as "evidently referring to the Messiah." In the forty-fifth Psalm, which Jews and Christians regard as addressed to the Messiah, the writer addresses him in the following exalted strain: "Thy throne, O *God*, is forever and ever." And in the epistle to the Hebrews the validity of this application is confirmed beyond a doubt. "But unto *the Son* he saith, Thy throne, O *God*, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Socinians have affirmed that this passage admits of a different translation, and will bear to be rendered, "But to the Son he saith, *God* is *thy throne* forever and ever;" but there is no grammatical reason for this rendering, and the argument of the apostle forbids it. And why should we, by a harsh and repugnant metaphor, thus make the eternal majesty the throne of a mere creature? John, speaking of Christ, says, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may *know him* that is true; and we are *in him* that is true, even in his *Son Jesus Christ*; this is the *true God* and eternal life." Paul says, "By whom, as concerning the flesh, *Christ* came, who is over all, *God* blessed forever." "In the beginning was the *Word*,

and the Word was *with God*, and the Word *was God*." The *Word* is obviously a person, and not an attribute. The attributes of God are nowhere personified by the writers of the New Testament. The Word is also here said to have "become flesh and dwelt among us." And who was this, but Jesus Christ? Thomas also said to Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, "My Lord, and *my God*;" and Paul says to Timothy, "I adjure you *before God, even Jesus Christ*."

There are several passages in which the Son is also called JEHOVAH. The prophet Isaiah, in the vision just now referred to, in which he saw the glory of Christ, says, "Mine eyes have seen the king, *Jehovah* of hosts." The same prophet, speaking of the forerunner and herald of the Messiah, says, "Prepare for the way of *Jehovah*; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." "Behold, the *Lord Jehovah* will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." "Surely shall one say, In *Jehovah* have I righteousness and strength; in *Jehovah* shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper. In his days, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is

the name whereby he shall be called, *Jehovah* our righteousness." By the general consent of Jewish and Christian interpreters, this and a subsequent passage which is parallel to it in the same prophecy, designate the Redeemer. In the prophecy of Zechariah, where the converted Jews are represented as looking to the Messiah with hope and repentance, *Jehovah* is introduced as saying, "They shall look upon *me* whom they have *pierced*;" and in John there is a reference to this passage, in which he applies it immediately to Christ as he was hanging on the cross. Another Scripture saith, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced." The Father addresses the Son in the following language: "And thou, *Jehovah*, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth." In all these passages, the original Hebrew word is *Jehovah*.

The Scriptures also ascribe the same *nature and attributes* to Christ which they ascribe to God. *Immutability* is ascribed to him. In the one hundred and second Psalm, there is a strong and beautiful description of the immutability of God: "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." The author of the epistle to the He-

brews applies this description directly to Christ. "But unto *the Son* he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundations of the earth;" and then he repeats the whole of this passage from the Psalms which has just been recited. The writer of the same epistle elsewhere says, "Jesus Christ, *the same* yesterday, to-day, and forever." *Omnipotence* is also ascribed to Christ: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the *Mighty God*." Christ himself says, "I am Alpha and Omega,—*the Almighty*." *Omniscience* is ascribed to him: "His disciples said to him, "Now we are sure that thou *knowest all things*." Peter said to him, "Lord, thou *knowest all things*. Our Lord himself says, "And all the churches shall know that *I am he* which searcheth the reins and the heart."

The most emphatic passage asserting his omniscience, if we mistake not, is in the following words: "All things are delivered to me of my Father; and *no man knoweth the Son but the Father*; neither knoweth any man the Father, *SAVE THE SON*, and he to whomsoever *THE SON WILL REVEAL HIM*." This and the exegetical passages are remarkable declarations. It teaches us that such is the incomprehensibleness of the Redeemer's nature that it cannot be known by finite minds, while he himself knows the infinite. "None knoweth the Son but the Father;" such is his nature that the knowledge

of him is too high an attainment for creatures, and is possessed by the Father alone. God only knows himself. He is the sun which no mortal eye can look at; a deep where all created thoughts are drowned; a plenitude which none but the infinite mind can fill. The Bible has nothing to propose to our belief more adorable, more sublime, or wonderful, than the fulness of God. Eternity alone can develop it; nor will the development ever be completed. It must be seen with the eyes, and known by the intelligence of the infinite mind. The deeper we search into this unfathomed depth, the deeper we find it. "Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." Creatures do not know him, cannot comprehend him: He surpasses all comprehension but that of the Son. "O righteous Father!" says he, "the world hath not known thee; but *I have known thee.*" "As the Father knoweth *me*, even so *know I the Father.*" "No one knoweth who the Son is, except the Father; and who the Father is, except the Son." The Father's knowledge of the Son, and the Son's knowledge of the Father, are reciprocal. It requires omniscience to comprehend either. Their knowledge is equal, having the same extent and plenitude. It differs from our notions of perception, association, and intelligence; yet this mode and extent of knowledge, and in relation to the most incomprehensible theme, belong to the Son. Creatures

know God but in part. The Son comprehends the entire nature of the Deity; and this is one of the indications of his unaided wisdom, of that "light of light," which beholds the Deity without a veil and without a cloud; which is co-eternal with the all-comprehending mind, and which in time, dignity, and perfection, is equal to the incomprehensible God.

We have remarked that the Scriptures predicate great and glorious *works* of the true God: they *ascribe the same works to Jesus Christ*. He is declared to be the *Creator* of all things. The Apostle John declares that "all things were made by him, and without him there was not anything made that was made." All things were made by him—the universe, worlds material and immaterial, were the product of his power. "Unto the Son he saith, And *thou*, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the *earth*, and the *heavens* are the work of thy hands." Paul says to the Corinthians, "To us there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." And to the Colossians, speaking expressly of Christ, he says, "Who is the image of the Invisible God, the first begotten before all creatures; for *by him* were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, *all things were created by him and for him*. And he is before all

things, and by him all things consist." In the epistle to the Hebrews, it is said, "*By him God created the world:*" Unitarians have deduced the inference from this passage, that Christ was the mere *instrumental* cause by which God produced the creation; and that this passage is the key to the true meaning of all those texts which speak of the Son as the Creator. But is it a questionable fact that God himself is the Creator? Do not the Scriptures affirm, that "God *himself* formed the earth and made it," that *he alone*, "and not by other hands, spread out the heavens?"

With equal clearness is the Son represented as the *Preserver* of all things. "By him, all things consist." Of him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory" it is said, "upholding all things by the word of his power."

And surely, it is needless to show that the work of *Redemption* is everywhere attributed to the Son. "His name is *Jesus*, because he saves his people from their sins." He is the "Captain of our salvation." He is the "Prince and Saviour." It is expressly declared, "there is salvation in no other." And as the work of Redemption generally is attributed to Christ, so is each particular part of it. It is he who made the great atonement, and who "was set forth to be the Propitiation." He too is the author of Regeneration. "No man knoweth the Father, but he to whom *the Son will reveal*

him." "Other sheep I have, them also *I must bring.*" He also is said to "sanctify the Church, and cleanse it with the washing of water." Christ is also declared to be the Justifier: he said of himself, "The Son also hath power on earth to forgive sins." When his enemies once murmured, because he exercised this power before their eyes, he wrought a miracle to justify himself, and to prove to them that this prerogative of the Deity belonged to him, as well as to the Father. In the Prophets it is also written, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." The Redeemed before the throne, also speak of him as "having washed their sins in his own blood." And it is moreover explicitly declared, that "he is the author of eternal life to all that obey him."

It is he also who *raises the dead.* "As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom he will." "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the *Son of God* and come forth."

He also shall *judge the world.* "The *Son of man* hall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," and "before him shall be gathered all nations." "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of *Christ.*" "The *Lord Jesus* shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom." Before him all the tribes of the

earth shall stand ; patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, kings and potentates of the earth, and of the universe, fallen and unfallen angels shall bow before his judgment-seat, as the absolute disposer of life and death, as the everlasting rewarder, the immortal king of ages, the sovereign Lord of men and angels, the supreme Judge of every intelligent creature.

It belongs to him also to *destroy the world*. "As a vesture the Son shall fold up the heavens, and they shall be changed." "His voice once shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven ; and this word, yet *once* more, signifieth the *removing* of those things that are shaken." Such are the high prerogatives of the Son, as the Creator, the Preserver, the Governor, the Redeemer, the Judge, and the final Rewarder. "Whatsoever the Father doeth, those things doth the Son likewise."

We remark, in the next place, that *the same claims that are insisted on by God, and the same duties which all owe to him, are also due to the Son*. This will not be doubted by any believer in the sacred Scriptures. The *supreme love* of every intelligent being belongs to the Son. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be anathema, maranatha."

The *supreme confidence and trust* of the soul are also due to him. While the God of heaven has denounced a woe on the man who puts his trust in any other than the Deity, he invites and urges all to trust in Christ. "In his name shall the Gentiles trust." "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Nor is the duty of *worshipping* the Son less binding than that of worshipping the Father. When the Father "bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him!" The early Christians, we are told by the sacred historian, habitually "called on Christ's name," that is, worshipped him. Stephen kneeled down, and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The disciples, after he had ascended to heaven before their eyes, "worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem." Nor is this the employment merely of the church on earth. The voice of many angels round the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them is ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, all unite in the inscription, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive blessing, and honor, and thanksgiving, and glory!" Nor are these mere acts of civil respect, and not of religious worship, as Unitarians would fain have us believe. They are greater honors than can possi-

bly be due from one creature to another. The most exalted angel can, with no more propriety, require such homage than the meanest reptile. And yet heaven and earth pay this homage to Christ. *No honor* which men or angels pay to God may be withheld from Christ. We can conceive of no tribute of respect to the Father which does not belong to the Son. Those garments of light and beauty which deck the divine nature are his; those royal splendors which surround the eternal throne belong to him. All belong to that distinguished personage, whom the Scriptures call the Son of God. They belong to him essentially; they belong to him eternally. The time never existed when he did not possess them, and the time never will exist when he will not possess them. The essential glory and properties of the Father and the Son are the same.

To show more distinctly the bearing of this illustration, we proceed in the next place to draw the chords of our argument together, and to prove, THAT FROM THIS ASCRIPTION OF THE PREROGATIVES OF THE DEITY TO JESUS CHRIST, THE INFERENCE CANNOT BE AVOIDED THAT HE IS TRULY AND PROPERLY GOD. This is perhaps too obvious a proposition to require proof; yet we will venture to say, in regard to it, that the following thoughts deserve consideration.

In the first place, the question very naturally

suggests itself, Do the Scriptures ascribe the same prerogatives to a *mere creature*, which they ascribe to *God*? By whatever excellency of nature or dignity of station any mere creature may be distinguished, he falls infinitely below the Eternal Creator. There is an immeasurable distance between *all* creatures and the ever-living God. A beggar is a creature, and so is a king. Both are of the dust; both must lie down alike, and the worms cover them. Both are born in sin, and responsible to the bar of Eternal Justice. A worm is a creature, and an angel is a creature, as truly as the worm. The one soars and burns in its created splendor in heaven; the other grovels on the earth. God made them both, and in this they are alike. Yet is the distance measurable between the loftiest seraph, and the meanest worm. But who shall measure the line of difference between the seraph and the Creator? "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the winds in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?"

If uncreated, then is he the independent, eternal First Cause, and therefore God. If a creature, then do the Scriptures ascribe to him the same existence, properties, claims, and honors—the same in kind, the same in variety, the same in degree—

which they ascribe to the great Creator. Will any man seriously affirm, that a revelation that comes from God, does in sober verity, justify and demand the ascription of equal honors to a mere creature, with those which belong to the living and true God? Do they affirm that any mere creature is self-existent, and from everlasting to everlasting? Do they appropriate the characteristic *names and titles* of the Supreme God to a mere creature? Can any mere creature be said to be the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Blessed and only Potentate, the king of Kings and Lord of lords, the great I AM, the wonderful Jehovah? Would the Scriptures attribute the *same attributes* to a mere creature, that are ascribed to the Creator? Can a mere creature be said to be immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and eternal? If the Son himself existed before *anything* was created, how can he be a creature? Would the Scriptures ascribe the *same works* to a mere creature, which in a multitude of places they ascribe exclusively to God? Can any mere creature be the Creator, the Preserver, the Governor, the Redeemer, the Justifier, the Judge, the Rewarder, the Disposer of angels and men? And finally, can the Scriptures consistently require the *same duties* to be paid to a mere creature, that they demand for God the Creator? Is it right in itself or is it con-

sistent with the law of God, that the same love and confidence, the same worship and obedience, enforced by the same rewards and penalties, should be challenged for a creature, that are required only for the Lord God?

If there is a Supreme Being, one who is so much superior to creatures, that they are all as a drop of a bucket before him; it is reasonable to suppose that there are honors by which he is exclusively distinguished. And if a mere creature, a being no matter how exalted, yet infinitely inferior to the Creator, is distinguished by the uncaused existence, the names, attributes, and works of the Deity; by the love, confidence, and worship that are due to him; what then are the distinctions of the Supreme, unequalled God? And if, as we have seen, all these are attributed to the Son, is not the inference irresistible, that he is no mere creature, but "very God of very God."

In the second place, if the Son be not truly and properly God, then do the Scriptures *furnish the strongest temptation to idolatry*. They not only justify, but require the same honors to be given to the Son, that are given to the Father; and require them as the reverence and homage which are due from all intelligent creatures to their Creator. An idolater is one who worships the creature instead of the Creator; and if Christ be not God, this is gross idolatry. To this sin of idol-

atry, be it remembered, men are peculiarly exposed; in every age of the world they have exhibited a strong and almost invincible propensity to worship them that are no gods. Hence, no sin is more frequently, or more severely reprobated in the word of God. The God of heaven has done more to discountenance and condemn this sin, than any other single sin of man. In his law he says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me, there shall no strange god be in thee, neither shalt thou worship any strange god." And his providence enforces the precepts and prohibitions of his law. By all his kindness to the children of Israel in the wilderness he taught them, that "the Lord *alone* was with them, and there was no strange god with them." And when he saw their exposures to this sin, very often did he remove the sources of temptation from before their eyes. When they became mad upon their idols, and would not abjure the worship of false gods, he desolated their city, prostrated their Temple, and carried them away into captivity to a pagan land, where they became surfeited with the idols of Babylon and cured of their idolatrous spirit. And when he commissioned the gospel of his grace to be published to the pagan nations, it was to "turn them from idols, to serve the Living God." And

hence Cornelius refused to receive any act of religious worship from the Centurion ; and Paul and Barnabas refused it from the Lycaonians ; and the angel in the Apocalypse refused it from John. Whence is it then, that this book of God should so universally sanction the divine claims and this worship of Christ, if he be not God ? The great Founder of our religion uniformly accepted and approved the worship paid to him. When the Cyrophenician woman worshipped him ; when the two blind men worshipped him ; when his disciples on the lake, and after his ascension, worshipped him ; when Paul and the martyr Stephen worshipped him ; they were not reproached as idolaters. Nor are those his heavenly worshippers, whose number is " ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," reproached for their idolatry, who cast their crowns at the feet of the Lamb and worship him day and night in the eternal temple. If he be not God, then has Christianity established a system of idolatry, unspeakably more dangerous and plausible, than that which it came to destroy. If he be not God, then has the whole Christian Church been an idolatrous community from its establishment to the present hour. Then has the God of heaven, notwithstanding his *promise and prediction* that *under the reign of the Messiah* his people should worship him *in spirit and in truth*, left his Church for eighteen

centuries to this most dark apostasy. Then was the religion of the gospel unknown and unpractised until the days of Arius and Socinus, and these men stand out to the world as the rare examples of Christian piety! Nor are we slow of heart to believe, nor doubtful to assert, that if the worship of Jesus Christ be apostasy, it is an apostasy from which the Church will with difficulty be recovered. So far from condemning, the Bible justifies it, demands it. I know not how it could furnish stronger temptations to idolatry than in the worship it allows to Jesus Christ, if he be not God. If the writers of the New Testament did not intend to exalt their Master to an equality with God, and give him divine honors without restriction, and of the highest kind; then can I form no other judgment than that the language of the Bible was framed to deceive. I remark,

In the third place, the account which the Scriptures give of the honors ascribed to the Father and the Son is *utterly inconsistent with itself and perfectly contradictory and absurd*, unless the Son be truly and properly God. If we concede to the Bible what we concede to the productions of mere uninspired men, we must believe it to be consistent with itself. No interpretation should be admitted which makes the Holy Spirit contradict himself, and renders what he says in one place at variance with what he says in another. This is a principle

of interpretation so important, that we may never consider ourselves as possessed of the true meaning of any passage, until we have given it a construction that is not inconsistent with other passages, and with the general scope and design of the sacred writings. It is a rule of interpretation among men never to vitiate an instrument for any *apparent* inconsistencies; and it is founded in sound sense and moral honesty. And much less ought we feel at liberty to set aside the sacred record, if there be any possible construction that will make it consistent with itself.

Now in relation to the character of Christ, we are free to confess there are some *apparent* incongruities in the Bible. This book informs us that there is but one Being whose name is Jehovah: yet they attribute this name to the Father and the Son. It informs us that there is but one Being who is eternal, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; yet they affirm that these perfections belong to the Father and the Son. It informs us that there is but one Being who is the Creator, Preserver, Governor, Redeemer and Judge of men; yet they declare that the appropriate work of each belongs both to the Father and the Son. It informs us that there is but one Being to whom are due supreme love, unreserved confidence and worship, and to whom these high and peculiar honors are ascribed; yet it

affirms that "all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." The Scriptures also speak of the Son in language that is *apparently* incongruous and inconsistent with itself. At one time they speak of him as *God*, at another as *man*. At one time they speak of him as the *Son of God*, at another as the *Son of man*. In the same sentence they say, "Unto us a *child* is born, and his name shall be called the *mighty God*." They say that he was *born* in Bethlehem, and that his goings forth were *from of old*, from *everlasting*. They say that he is both the *root* and the *offspring* of David. And he himself says, "I and my Father *are one*;" and also says, "My Father is *greater* than I."

Now here are *apparent* inconsistencies; and they either vitiate the divine record, else is there some principle of fair and honest and sound interpretation on which they can be reconciled. It is conceded that they do not vitiate the divine record; all agree that it is the word of God and consistent with itself. And with this concession, we call on Arians and Socinians, and Unitarians of every class, to reconcile them. The whole history of the Unitarian controversy, from the days of Faustus Socinus to the present hour, shows with how much diffidence they have attempted it; so much that they have not even attempted it at all; and for the best of all reasons. The inconsistencies must

stand, and deface, and pollute the revelation of God to man, unless it be conceded that in the scriptural descriptions of Christ, there is a union of supremacy and inferiority, and that he is there exhibited in the two opposite characters of humanity and Deity. This principle adopted, and no part of the sacred record is rejected. Here we see that Jesus Christ is God as well as man; that he was made of the seed of David, *according to the flesh*, and declared to be *the Son of God with power*; that as *concerning the flesh*, Christ came, who is over all, *God blessed forever*; and that being in the *form of God*, he thought it *not robbery to be equal with God*, but made himself of no reputation, took upon him the *form of a servant*, and was made in the *likeness of men*. There we learn that great is the mystery of godliness; *God manifest in the flesh*. But without this mystery, there is no consistency in the Bible. In the Bible I hear the God of heaven say, "I am the Lord that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone*, that spreadeth abroad the heavens by *myself*;" and at the same time I hear him say, that "all things were made by the *Word*," and that the "*Word* was made flesh." Which of these declarations is true, and which shall I adopt? To this we reply, you may not reject either of them. One deserves your confidence as really as the other. If there is a principle of reconciliation and harmony between them, you are

bound to adopt it. Take the strong declaration of Christ, "I and my Father are one," and compare it with the declaration, "My Father is greater than I." We affirm, that if there is a ground on which both these declarations may be consistently believed, since both are supported by the same evidence; on every consideration of fairness and candor, this is the ground we ought to stand upon. There is one such principle, and only one. With the humanity, admit the divinity of the Son, and with his essential equality with God, admit his mediatorial and official subjection, and the representations are harmonious. It certainly requires little argument and no sophistry to reconcile all such representations with the true and orthodox notion of the deity of Christ. Reject this truth, and the Bible is a mass of contradictions. These seeming inconsistencies become absolute and irreconcilable; the way of life, no longer plain to the wayfaring man, becomes a dark, impervious way. I may add,

In the fourth place, that if Christ is not God, there is no proof *from* THE SCRIPTURES *that there is any God at all*. The Scriptures assert the being of a God; they assume it as one of the great truths of natural religion. But they do not simply *assert* this truth; they *prove* the divine existence by referring to his works. They tell you that the act of bringing this world into existence; of establish-

ing the harmony and design which pervade all the operations of nature, and of preserving and governing all things, furnishes incontestable proof that the being who performs these things is God. This then is the evidence on which the Scriptures rely, and on which they say all ought to rely, for the existence of God. But we have proved, that he who created, upholds, and governs this world, is Jesus Christ. And if any will still say, that he who does this is not truly and properly God; we ask them to show us the evidence they have of the divine existence. The Scriptures furnish the same evidence that Christ is God, which they furnish of the existence of any Supreme Deity. And the evidence is worth just as much in the one case as in the other. If it does not prove that Christ is God, it does not prove the existence of any God whatever. What do we mean by that great word GOD? Do we not mean the intelligent, eternal First Cause, who has created, and upholds, and governs all things? Is not this the notion the Bible gives us of the One who *is really and truly God?* This is what God means by himself; and what he has proclaimed himself to be. Yet these same Scriptures say, that that Great Personage whom they call THE SON is all this. They speak of him in the same language, in the same acceptation. If we have any ideas of God at all, the Scriptures require us to transfer them all to Jesus

Christ. What shall that Great Being, the Supreme God, *be and perform* in order to prove his existence and justify his claims; if they be not such as we have spoken of? Yet all these are attributed to Christ. And if any still say Christ is not God, we call upon them to prove from the Bible that there is a God. Are not these rash violators of the Redeemer's glory in danger of becoming Pantheists or Atheists? This is the tendency of some late German and American disquisitions. Everything is God! God is in the clouds; God is in the atmosphere; God is in the wind, and in the green grass, and in the cup of water which I drink, just as God is in Christ! Miserable sophistry! miserable paganism! worse than disgraces the pages of Roman and Grecian mythology! And is it not a fact, that such men are fast becoming so? Most true is it that they are far on the way to Atheism. If the Son be not God, then the Bible knows no God; with all its moral instructions, all its paternal counsels, and tenderness, it actually leaves us "without God and without hope."

Thus have we instituted the inquiry, What are the appropriate and peculiar properties of the Deity; have shown that they are ascribed by the sacred writers to Jesus Christ; and that he is therefore truly and properly God. There are many other sources of argument and a multitude of Scriptures not mentioned in the argument here

presented. But we have given as extensive a view of the subject as a single discussion allows.

We have only to say, in concluding the present chapter, that we see abundant and conclusive reasons for adhering to this fundamental article of the Christian faith. Pluck who dares, the diadem from his brow who hath on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written, *KING of kings* and *LORD of lords*, and on whose head are many crowns! The Christian must surely feel a heart-thrilling satisfaction in those bright marks of divine glory which beam round the Saviour on whom God hath caused him to hope. This is the great glory of our redeeming God and King,—the “brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his Person.” His being is infinite; infinite his power; infinite his rectitude; infinite his knowledge; infinite his goodness, justice, and mercy. Everything that he is and does has the seal of divinity upon it. There is nothing we can contemplate so vast as the infinite glory of Christ. Here human reason, in humble and adoring silence, submits to the authority of a divine faith, nor does she presume to question God’s word upon a subject so far above the reach of her comprehension. The rays of his infinite majesty dazzle and overpower us with their splendor. Glorified spirits in heaven fall prostrate, and lay their crowns at his feet, when they approach his throne. What glory greater

than the glory of Christ belongs to God himself? O it is a delightful thought, that there is no perfection that adorns the Deity, but it is also the adornment of God our Saviour; no views of God so high and adoring, no sentiments that wake the soul to admiration and praise, as she surveys the richness and fulness of the divine loveliness and beauty, but may be appropriately excited in view of God manifest in the flesh. If there be those whose eyes are closed to this great glory, we may well remind them of the Saviour's words, when he rejoiced in spirit and said, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The knowledge of the Redeemer's personal and divine glory has much to do with the believer's confidence. Strong and immovable is the basis of those hopes which have this divine Saviour for their foundation. It is the anchorage for eternity. What marvel that Paul should say, "Which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil, whither the forerunner hath for us entered." What marvel to hear him say elsewhere, "I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that I have committed to him!" There is no fact better attested, and no truth in the Christian

system in which good men take more delight than the true and proper Deity of the Saviour in whom they trust. Veil the divinity of the Redeemer, and the Sun of righteousness sets in total eclipse. "SUCH AN HIGH PRIEST became us, who is holy, harmless, separate from sinners, and was made higher than the heavens." To a thoughtless sinner, it may not be so important a question whether this Saviour be divine or human. But to a man who has seen his sinfulness and trembled at his exposure to the wrath of God; who has felt that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of unmitigated justice; who has been perplexed in spirit to ascertain how it could be right and just to extend forgiveness to the chief of sinners, and whose perplexity has well nigh sunk him into total despair of mercy; to such a man it is a point of unutterable moment to be directed to one infinitely above all created helpers. Never, till he knows that the Saviour who solicits his confidence is the MIGHTY God, can he cast himself into his arms. No truth pours a purer or deeper element of joy through the countless bosoms of the redeemed, than the true and proper equality of the Son with the Father. Poor indeed are the consolations of that religion which blots out from its affections, its hopes, and its experience this unequalled glory! Blessed be God, his church is built on this imper-

ishable, this eternal Rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

What, then, shall I say to those who have no interest in the love and faithfulness, the deity and propitiation of this Son of God? What but repeat his own all-sufficient invitation, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth, for *I am God* and there is none else." He is the way in which all must walk who would enter in through the gates into the heavenly city. He is the truth which all must believe who would not come into condemnation. He is the life which all must attain who possess the great salvation; for there is no salvation in any other, neither is there any other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. So that, at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that he is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST GLORIOUS IN HIS INCARNATION.

It is no denial of the true and proper divinity of the *Son of God*, to speak of him as the *Son of man*. The great Personage, whose divine glory fills so wide a place in the system of revealed truth, became incarnate and dwelt among us, as a man with his fellow-men.

That he had an existence previous to his incarnation is distinctly taught in the New Testament. His own language to the Jews was, "Verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of heaven is *He* which cometh down *from heaven*, and giveth life unto the world." This is a truth which his disciples themselves did not at once receive; nor did they ultimately receive it without caution. When he perceived that they "murmured" at it, he said to them, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up *where he was before?*" He subsequently commends them be-

cause "they believed that he *came out from God*." In order to confirm their faith in this great truth, he afterwards instructs them, if possible, in still plainer language, "*I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world*."

Our object in the present chapter requires, in the first instance, a *brief statement of the DOCTRINE* of Christ's incarnation. This we shall endeavor to make as plainly as we can, and divested of all technical phraseology.

Man is a complex being, consisting of a body and a soul; both which were alike necessary to constitute the humanity of Christ. It was not his *divine and spiritual nature* united to a *body* that is human that constituted him incarnate; this would have been a change from Deity to humanity. It would have been the Deity clothed in a corporeal form; the semblance of man, but not the reality. The human, in distinction from the divine and angelic natures, is human because it possesses a human soul as well as a human body. Christ's humanity consisted in his assumption of man's entire nature, and so uniting it with his divine nature, as to become *both God and man*. The divine nature became partaker of flesh and blood; human nature belonged to him as truly as the divine. God did not in any way *alter* his divine nature in order to become man; his divinity sustained no change; it was susceptible of none. Nor was it mixed or

blended with his humanity, so as to form out of the two a compound nature which should be neither human nor divine. The natures were united, yet distinct; he was God, but became man, and he became man without ceasing to be God. He was more than human, yet was he human. His divine nature existed from eternity distinct from his human nature; his human nature never existed distinct from his divine nature. His human body and his human soul both subsisted in the Person of the Son of God. He brought the divine nature from heaven; his human nature was an assumed nature on earth; there were "two distinct natures and one person."

This statement, if we mistake not, distinguishes the Scriptural doctrine of the Incarnation, not only from the fabled incarnations of Paganism, but from the erroneous views which have been given of it by different writers in different ages of the Christian Church.* It is a simple and truthful state-

* *Cerinthus*, of the first century, maintained that Jesus was a mere man, sprung from Joseph and Mary, in the ordinary course of human descent. This opinion was adopted by the Cerinthians and Ebeonites, and was defended by some writers toward the close of the second century. This is substantially the opinion of modern Socinians, Arians, and Unitarians. This opinion was condemned by the Council of Nice; and the Nicene Creed, after violent agitation, became the received creed of Christendom. Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople, subsequently taught that as in Jesus Christ there were two *natures*, so also there were two *persons*, the

ment that in Christ Jesus the divine and human natures were united, and that the same person is both God and man.

We proceed, in the next place, TO THE PROOF OF THIS DOCTRINE. The truth of the statement we have just made will at once occur to every careful reader of the Scriptures. We are aware there are those who will listen to no proof of such a statement, because, in their judgment, it involves an *impossibility*. We confess that it stands among the *inexplicable* facts revealed in the Scriptures; yet, inexplicable as it is, it is not among impossible things. If the union of matter with spirit in the person of every human being is not impossible, there is no impossibility nor absurdity in the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. Heathen mythology favors the idea of gods incarnate, which it would scarcely have

one divine and the other human; that Christ was distinguished from God, and that there is no union of nature or of persons, but only of will and affection. This error was condemned by the Council of Ephesus. The Euticheans ran into the opposite extreme, maintaining that as there was but one Person in Christ, so there could be but one nature, and that the divine so absorbed the human, as to leave scarcely a susceptible blending of the human with the divine; the human being rather a name, a phantom, than a reality. This error bore no small resemblance to the error of the ancient Docetæ, whose views participated largely of the Gnostic philosophy. It was condemned by the fourth general Council held at Chalcedon in the fifth century.

done had the thought been so preposterous as some philosophical infidels affirm. Ancient and modern pantheism are but an implied recognition of the reasonableness of the doctrine of the incarnation. If philosophers have seen nothing preposterous in the doctrine that God is the soul of the material universe, and the material universe the body of God; where is the absurdity of supposing that God was in Christ? The alleged impossibility of the incarnation arises from erroneous views of the doctrine of the incarnation itself. If the doctrine were that the divine nature was *changed* into the human, or was in any way altered by being united to the human; if it taught that God is not still a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; it would be a preposterous doctrine. But if the doctrine be that though united to humanity, it is the divine nature still, in all its undiminished, unaltered glory; we see not why it should be charged with absurdity.

There were some early foreshadowings of this incarnation of the Deity under the patriarchal, Mosaic, and prophetic ages. God appeared to Abraham in human form when he promised him Isaac, and when he renewed his promises to him in the person of the angel of the covenant. He appeared in the form of man to Jacob when the patriarch wrestled with him and prevailed. He

appeared to Moses in the burning bush at Horeb. He appeared to Gideon, and announced himself as the deliverer of his trembling people; and to Daniel in the night visions, when "One like the Son of man" came to the Ancient of Days. These and other appearances of the Deity were, if I may so speak, the prefiguration, the commencement of that incarnation which was to be more real and sensible and permanent.

The *predictions* of his incarnation are also abundant. So unequivocal are they, that the Jews were in expectation of that great event, and looked towards it as the *great promise* of the Old Testament. Christ was foretold as the "mighty God and everlasting Father;" as the one "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;" yet is he most distinctly foretold as "the seed of the woman," as "the desire of all nations," as the "Son of the Virgin;" as the "Prophet whom God would raise up to the Jews from among their brethren;" as the "light beheld by the people that walked in darkness;" as one who would "open the eyes of the blind, unstop the ears of the deaf, and cause the tongue of the dumb to sing;" and as one who was anointed to "preach the gospel to the poor," to "feed his flock like a shepherd," and to "sit as king upon God's holy hill of Zion." These, and other intimations like them, allude not only to a promised, but to an incarnate Saviour; and they

prepared the Jewish mind, and prepare our own for the affecting narrative of the incarnation which is given by the evangelists.

By adverting to this narrative, we learn that Christ's human nature commenced from his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It was miraculous, and altogether beyond the laws of nature. It was the immediate creation of God himself, and by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost. It was human, not because he descended from earthly *parents*, but from an earthly *parent*. There was a literal fulfilment of the promise which had respect to the "seed of the WOMAN. He was made of a *woman*," and therefore of human descent and stock; commencing his being at the lowest point of human existence, and thus clothing himself with flesh, bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, who gave him birth.

The narrative of these events is beautifully simple and touching. Four thousand years after the first apostasy, when the fulness of time for man's redemption was come, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin whose name was Mary, for the purpose of announcing to her that she was the highly favored and blessed among women who was to become the mother of the long-expected Messiah. The dignity to which she was thus destined was altogether unexpected to herself. She was troubled at the angel's word, "and cast in

her mind what manner of salutation this should be." And the angel said unto her, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his Father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." To relieve her mind from all embarrassment, he also declared, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Mary no longer doubted the mystery, but meekly replied, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word!" She conceived, and in the fulness of time brought forth her son; Immanuel, God with us. And then it was that the angel of the Lord made the announcement to the shepherds of Bethlehem. "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy; for unto you is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!"

This child of Mary thus possessed the two essential ingredients of humanity—a *human body* and a *human soul*. The Father prepares, the Holy Ghost forms, and the Eternal Word assumes a *human body*. When he cometh into the world, he saith, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,

but a *body* hast thou prepared me." To have assumed the angelic nature would not have accomplished the objects of his incarnation. "Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." His body was like the body of other men. "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." The shepherds of Bethlehem were told, that they should "find the *babe* wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." He grew as other children grew, and by the same means of food, exercise and repose, increased in stature as they increase.

The evidence is equally clear, that he possessed a rational, human *soul*. He not only increased in stature, "but in wisdom;" which he could not have done had not his intellectual nature been human; for the divine mind knows no advancement. So rapidly did he increase in wisdom, that at twelve years of age he was able to maintain successful argument with the teachers of the law in the temple; and such was the evidence of his intellectual progress, that his enemies exclaimed, "How knoweth *this man* letters?"

Not less indicative of his humanity was his *perfect dependence*. He was dependent on his parents, and indebted to their watchfulness and love, and labors and bounty. He was dependent on divine

providence, and looked to its daily supplies. He was a man of prayer, and this alone is proof that he was sensible of his dependence on God. He made the frank avowal, "I can do nothing of myself." So absolute was his dependence, that he could promise himself nothing but what his heavenly Father chose to give him from day to day.

He was also *responsible to law* in the broadest acceptation of the phrase. He felt and recognized his responsibility to *human* law, which he would not have done, had he not been human. "No law can bind any but those to whom it is given." Whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law. He was also responsible to the *divine* law, just as other men are. As God he was not thus subject, but was himself the lawgiver; as man he was God's creature, and owed him allegiance. The law of God claimed his whole heart and service; he was bound to render it a perfect and sinless obedience. He was under no obligation to *assume* man's nature; but when he had voluntarily assumed it, he was necessarily "*made* under the law," and responsible to its claims. He was made under the law as a covenant of works; the law demanded perfect obedience from him as the condition of life, and without a perfect obedience he would neither have obtained heaven for himself nor for his followers. The law relinquished none of its claims on account of his dignity when he was

once made under it, but in every view treated him as its subject. And what stronger expression of his humanity than this, as well as of the glory of that humanity, that he himself gloried in this responsibility, and honored its claims in such redundant plenitude.

The scriptural doctrine of the incarnation goes the whole length of this statement, and teaches that the Son of God thus assumed all the properties of humanity, and was the "seed of Abraham," the "Shiloh of Jacob," the "offspring of Jesse," the "Son of man."

With this statement and proof of the humanity of Christ, we proceed, in the last place, to speak of HIS GLORY IN THIS INCARNATION. How glorious was the Son of God in this assumption of human nature! We may not dismiss this thought without some enlargement.

The impression is vivid on our minds that his incarnation is *glorious, in the first place, in its very mysteriousness*. That it is a fact involved in mystery appears from the mere statement of it; and it is still more so the more it is contemplated. Though the statement in the Scriptures is not obscure, but perfectly intelligible, yet does it excite our wonder. It is among "the deep things of God." It is revealed to man as a fact utterly beyond his comprehension. The lofty mind of Paul himself, inspired as he was, was constrained to say, "With-

out controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh!" We bow before it as an inexplicable fact. We believe the statement as we believe mysteries in the work of creation, and in the economy of divine providence; but there are things pertaining to it which surpass the comprehension of all, except the mind of God himself. How the eternal Son should be the omnipresent God, yet personally united to the man Christ Jesus; how the Deity, the whole Deity, should be in heaven, and at the same time in the manger of Bethlehem; how the divine nature could be imparted to the human nature of Mary's son, and be the inhabitant of Palestine, while at the same time it is in heaven and every part of the universe, is more than can be explained by creatures. We know, indeed, that as God, he is present everywhere, and this itself is a fact sufficiently mysterious. But if he was not present with the man Christ Jesus, in a higher sense than he is everywhere present, his incarnation is a fable. By his incarnation he was personally united to the human nature of Christ and one with it. In the strong language of the New Testament, he is said "to have *come down* from heaven" for this purpose; while he himself at the same time declares that he is the "Son of man which *is* in heaven." He did not cease to be God, when he became man; nor lay aside his divine nature in order to assume

the human. In his divine nature, he possessed all the attributes of God; in his human nature, all the attributes of man. As God, he was the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person;" as man, he "took upon him the form of a servant. As God, he was rich in the possession and enjoyment of the universe; as man, he became poor and had not where to lay his head. As God, he was rich in the love and adoration of angels; as man, he was "the scorn and derision of the people." As God, he never slumbered, nor slept, nor was weary, but his eye run to and fro throughout the earth, strong was his hand, and high his right hand; as man, he slept on the lake in the storm, he was weary and sat on the well, was weak and bound and scourged by his enemies. As man, he hungers; as God, he feeds the five thousand. As man, he thirsts; as God, he is the Fountain of living waters. As man, he wept, and died, and was laid in the sepulchre of Joseph; as God, lives and reigns for evermore.

These things are all mysterious to us; we exclaim, as we contemplate them, "Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" O it is high as heaven and deeper than hell; the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea! We cannot comprehend *how* the divine and human natures could be thus personally united; it is

enough for our faith to know that God has told us they *are* united. We may not affirm that it is a presumption in its favor that it is mysterious; while we may affirm that its mysteriousness is no presumption against it, because we may well look for mysteries when we contemplate the incomprehensible Godhead. God himself would not be so glorious if he were not incomprehensible: he would not be infinite, if finite minds could comprehend him. Christianity glories in this great mystery. It may be foolishness in the judgment of a proud and reasoning world; but the foolishness of God is wiser than men. It is the glory of Christ that he is man as well as God. The mystery does but enhance the glory; if the mind of man could perfectly comprehend his mysterious nature, its glory would be unveiled and creatures would cease to wonder and adore. When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priests *could not enter into the house of the Lord*, because the glory of the Lord filled the house. So when a greater than Solomon dedicated to God the temple of his human nature, there were, and still are, unutterable glories in that union which the mind of man cannot look upon. The light is too dazzling; they are not scattered, but condensed and concentrated rays; it is the brightness of the divine glory, and its profusion perplexes us; its insufferable splendor baffles alike the mightiest and

meanest intellect. The human faculties may be forever employed in contemplating, yet never be able to penetrate its unsearchable mysteries. Every new thought and discovery of them possesses a freshness and excites astonishment which no other subject possesses and excites, and as we gradually unveil these combined and contrasted glories of the Great Emmanuel, we exclaim, "O the depth both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" It is delightful to lose ourselves in the contemplation of such a theme, as the ineffable glory of the Saviour incarnate. God is above creatures; nor does he ask counsel of creatures. "He holdeth back the place of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it." The doctrine of the Incarnation is just like God; and like him, is the more glorious because it cannot be brought within the sphere of our comprehension.

Christ is glorious in his incarnation, in the next place, for the *endearing properties of the divine nature which he thereby unfolds*. God is a Spirit, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. He is the King, eternal, immortal, and *invisible*. Yet the incarnate Son affirms, "he that hath seen *me* hath seen the Father." Men have a strong propensity to invent for themselves gods which their eyes can look upon, and their ears hear, and their hands handle. In doing this, they have filled the world

with idol-worship, and made them gods altogether like unto themselves. To meet this universal weakness of humanity, God has become "*manifest in the flesh*." That man of Nazareth *is God*. There is God's power, God's wisdom, rectitude, justice, love and mercy. In the intellectual and moral properties of his nature, what Jesus of Nazareth was, that the eternal God is; yes, *he* is the Deity, the Deity in the most intimate relation to humanity. The union is absolute and indissoluble. It is God in human form, living among men; sympathizing with men, conversing with men, exerting his godlike influences among men, taking out the very heart of God and showing it to men. Mysterious as is this union, it is the great fact which unveils the world of mysteries; which dissipates the cloud from his pavilion who has said that he dwells in the thick darkness; which throws a flood of light upon the divine character, purposes, and government, which would have been otherwise inexplicable; and leaves nothing in obscurity to a mind which would acquaint itself with God. God here stoops in his *condescension* to men, not as he stoops to them in the daily walks of his providence, caring for them and visiting them, but in making man's nature his own; "forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself likewise took part of the same."

Men might have trembled at the thought that

the great God was about to come and dwell on the earth. When he descended on Sinai, it was a day of terror; the mountain quaked because the Lord descended upon it. When he will descend to it in future ages, men there will be who will call to the rocks and to the mountains to fall on them to hide them from his presence, because he will come in his uncreated and unveiled greatness and majesty. But behold him as the word becomes flesh, and dwells among us full of truth and grace! What wonders of the Godhead are here! The last beings in the universe which one would think of ever being united are God and man. Strange unity! heaven and earth in one! Strange condescension! earth refusing to ascend to heaven, heaven stooping to descend to earth! The Creator becoming a creature, the eternal First Cause, by whom all things consist, uniting and becoming one with the effect which he himself produces and upholds! The Son of God *born*; born, not of a princess, but of the wife of a carpenter; not in the palace of a king, but in a stable! What wonders, what surpassing glories are these! His native dignity laid aside, in order to give lustre to humanity, and to the Deity loveliness! Well may we dwell on the endearing properties of the divine nature that are unfolded by this incarnation. He who exists in eternity, born in time, and dwelling in mortal flesh; he who is God blessed forever,

becoming partaker of man's lowliness and man's sorrows, and making them all his own—what exhibition of the Deity is this! The God immortal putting on mortality—the uncreated One, the omnipotent One taking man's weakness—the holy One so obscured and eclipsed in his glory as to take the likeness of sinful worms—what mingled emotions of admiration and grateful homage, what sublime and subduing thoughts come over our spirits as the wondrous fact strikes us! The Lord of glory, once the associate with cherubims, now taking upon him the form of a reptile sinner; not as a prince to reign, but as a servant of servants! O this surpasses all things, that he should stoop thus low to raise rebellious man so high! How full of blessing was the advent of this incarnate Deity, and what a pledge of blessing from the court of which he is the elected ambassador, and from the mighty King of heaven whom he represents!

It was an auspicious promise when God said, "Behold the days come that I will dwell in them, walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people." It was an auspicious declaration when he said, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." It was the high privilege of the children of Israel, that in their journeying through the wilderness God himself was with them, and the cloud by day

and the pillar of fire by night departed not from them. The Church of God under the new economy has higher privileges than these. The Saviour's incarnation was not the token, nor the symbol, nor the pledge of God's presence with men; man's body was his tabernacle; he dwelt with man more intimately even than the Shekinah dwelt in the Temple, and in all the tenderness and plenitude of his love.

He could not stoop lower than thus to become a man. We look upon our race, and are mortified and humbled in view of its abjectness. Each one of us looks upon himself and exclaims, "Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him!" Yet have I this comforting thought, that all abject, all vile, all nothing as I am; I am a *man*, and my Saviour is a *man*. He is the friend of *man*, because he is one of them. We would not make light of this "precious humanity," this endearing brotherhood by which he links himself to the race. God has interests in common with man, that man may have interests in common with God.

Nor is this all. The glory of Jesus in his human nature appears, in the next place, in the fact that his incarnation is *the foundation of the whole Christian system*. "Behold, I lay in Zion," says the God of all grace, "a stone, a chief corner-stone, elect, precious." The humanity of Christ, in union with his divinity, constitutes that "sure founda-

tion," which bears up the pillars of the redeemed church with all its principles, all its laws, and all its immense interests. It was a memorable occasion on which Jesus put the question to his disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" and the answer was memorable, when Simon Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Nor was the rejoinder less memorable, when Jesus uttered the words, "Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Man had fallen, and was therefore at variance with God. God also was at variance with man, and by all the purity of his nature and the justice of his government was bound to curse him as a rebel. Whether he would save, was a question to be decided by himself alone; because he alone had the right of deciding it, and he alone had the wisdom to devise, and the power to effect man's salvation by a method that should be consistent with his justice.

That method was *mediatorial*, and recognized the interposition of a third party between the parties at variance. The unquestioned characteristics of impartiality, ability, integrity, and kindness were demanded for such a service. He must be a mediator by nature, as well as a mediator by office, and must sustain such a relation both to

God and man as puts his qualifications for the responsible office he bears beyond suspicion.

Such a Mediator we behold in the person of God manifest in the flesh; in every view a fitting Mediator; sustaining the same relation to both the parties; the same impartial kindness; the same integrity, and invested with a character and ability to conduct his mediation to safe and honorable issues. He is the only being in the universe who is qualified thus to stand between the two; to answer for God and to answer for man. He is the great Emmanuel, God with man and man with God; uniting the two extremes, and pledging before the universe his wondrous and perfectly unique character and influence, be the consequences to himself what they may, for the success of his perilous, yet great and glorious enterprise.

That he is and must be *God*, we have already shown in the preceding chapter. There is no other being sufficiently good, sufficiently powerful to effect this mighty work. The most pure and perfect seraph has no righteousness beyond his own necessities. No obedience, or suffering of any mere creature, or combination of creatures, could "make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness." He would have no pretensions to be heard, and no rights of advocacy. He could but answer for himself, and for all that such a one could do or suffer, he must look on this race of criminals

as without hope. And therefore it was that "God spared not his Son," whom all the angels worship, and "by whom were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible." And for reasons equally fitting and imperative, he must be *man* as well as God. Man was the subject of law, and the Mediator was to stand in man's place. It was man's obedience which the law required, and the Mediator was to stand in man's place. If the law was broken by man, man's punishment alone could satisfy its claims; and the Mediator was to stand in man's place. When man became the actual culprit, and deserved to die, the Mediator was to stand in man's place. Man was an exile from the divine family and kingdom; helpless and alone in this dark and friendless world; temptation and trial, grief and sadness, enemies and fear, distrust and despondency, were his destined allotment all through his earthly pilgrimage; and the Mediator was to stand in man's place. And therefore he became man's kinsman, his kinsman-Redeemer, his *goel*, who, according to the Hebrew law, had the right of redemption. "It became him, that both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, should be all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*." He had all the sympathies of a man, and has them still; and what his human nature now knows not of man's condition, *that* his divine nature commu-

nicates to the human, so that "he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust." He is touched with the feeling of man's infirmities; man's grief and sadness he makes his own; the sharp temptations which assail man remind him that he was once tempted in all points as man is, though yet without sin. He is gentle toward man, as a nurse cherisheth her children. He gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom. He is accessible to man when "the overawing splendor of his divinity alone" might crush his hopes. His gentle voice breaks not the bruised reed; his breath of tenderness quenches not the smoking flax; his eye of pity looks upon the wanderer, and reclaims the lost sheep.

We add, in the last place, this union of the divine and human natures is that which constitutes his **FULNESS** *as the appointed and accepted Mediator*. He thus fills the chasm between heaven and earth which was made by sin, and those who are afar off are brought nigh. Both natures bear a part in the great redemption in order to make it full and complete. They form the elements of his unchangeable Priesthood; so that he "is able to save to the *uttermost* all that come unto God by him." Whatever influences are necessary for the accomplishment of his gracious purpose *for* men and *in* men, whether they be of providence, or of grace,

are at his command. The Father "giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him," because it hath pleased him, "that in him all fulness should dwell." The fulness is complete. Whatever the sinner wants, he shall find in Christ. Be it life, light, power, pardon, sympathy, hope, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; they are all wrapped up in the union of his two natures. This mystery is the envelope which contains wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is able and willing to suffer, to endure, and to bestow. He is a storehouse that can never be exhausted; full of grace and full of truth; full of promises and full of authority to fulfil them; full of glory and majesty, and full of heaven. He is Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God. No burden of sin is so heavy, but he removes it; no fears are so agitating, but he gives them relief; no weakness is so depressing, but it makes his strength perfect. Hope and expectation are never defeated that centre in him. He is filled to overflowing with all that man can become and enjoy, and God impart. Blessing, and glory, and honor, and power are his. Expand as the faculties of the human soul may, they can never become so enlarged, and never drink so freely of his fulness; but the streams will still flow, and the fountain still be full. Augment man's unworthiness and ill-desert to an unmeasured infinity; multiply his wants to

countless ages; and there is yet room in the mansions he has prepared, and bread enough and to spare. Angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, in all their primeval and ever-growing beauty and glory, do not rise so high as the lofty eminences of glory and blessedness which the God-man Mediator bestows upon every sinner that repenteth, filled as he will be with "all the fullness of God," and satisfied from those rivers of pleasure which flow at God's right hand.

But we may not further pursue these illustrations. Such is the loveliness, the beauty, the glory of Christ in his human nature. Glorious truth! "there is but one Mediator between God and man, the MAN CHRIST JESUS." This is the keystone of the arch which binds together the great edifice of man's redemption, setting forth its divine symmetry and beauty, its strength and safety, and bearing the indelible inscription, "The foundation of God standeth sure."

And is not this feature of the Redeemer's glory one that ought to interest us as sinners—as *men*? It is honor enough for an otherwise degraded race, that Jesus of Nazareth was human. There is no such lineage and no such brotherhood in the universe as that redeemed line of spiritual descendants of which he is the progenitor; that Christian household of which God is the Father, and Mary's son the elder brother. I love to think that

my Saviour is not only divine, but *human*; there is endearment, there is palpableness here, and something that appeals to my weak senses as a man. The day is coming when, if I am even less than the least of all his followers, I shall see him as he is. It is not too much to look for from this mystery of godliness, that these eyes shall see him, these ears hear him; these arms hang upon his bosom, this heart be filled with his love, these lips vocal with his praise.

Yes, "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him," and "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Woe to the man who shall have remained till then, the despisers of this God-man Redeemer! Whose is that heart of stone that breaks not as he stands at Bethlehem's manger, and sees the "child that was born?" Whose is that icy bosom that melts not, and is not filled with glowing love, as he looks upon him who is "fairer than the sons of men, and whom God hath anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows?" Whose is that obdurate unbelief, to whom this mysterious truth, so full of goodness and so full of comfort, is so repulsive that it claims homage in vain, and in vain solicits the proud and aspiring sons and daughters of earth to receive and trust in it? "Behold he stands at the door and knocks." It is not he who dwells in light inaccessible, encompassed with the glories of his majesty

and the terrors of his justice; it is he who once "dwelt among us," not to fill us with fear, but to invite the guilty to come to him, without distrust, without timidity, and even with joy. Were he now on the earth, you might approach him. You might approach him as the sinner's friend; you might approach him as your counsellor and helper; you might approach him in your abjectness and poverty and sorrows; you might approach him as the poor, the halt, the lame, and the blind approached him in the days of his flesh, and without the least distance or reserve. He is *man* still, though exalted at the right hand of God; the same meek, humble, condescending *man*; the "same yesterday, to-day, and forever," and still inviting the lost to come to him that they might have life; the weary and heavy-laden, that they might have rest; the exile and the orphan, that he may guide them by his counsel and afterward receive them to glory. "*This man*, because he continueth ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood, is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." You have his sympathy on earth, and you may have his influence in the court of heaven. It was for no trivial object that he left that high and holy place, and descended to this low earth. It was to seek and to save that which was lost. It was to convince you of sin, and lead you to repent-

ance. It was to emancipate you from bondage, and introduce you to the glorious liberty of the children of God. It was to make the conquest of *your heart*. Has he made that conquest? Have you given him that heart? And, with a mind absorbed in the greatness and condescension of this incarnate One, can you appreciate the wondrous truth, that "without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE HUMAN CHARACTER OF CHRIST GLORIOUS.

WE have already seen that, in his divine character, the Son of God is every way equal to the divine Father, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." Since, however, he possessed a *human*, as well as a divine nature, so did he possess a distinct and purely *human character*. What was it? and wherein consisted its true glory? These inquiries it is not possible for us fully to answer. We cannot portray the perfect character of the man Christ Jesus. We are imperfect and sinning men, and encompassed by imperfect and sinning men. It is no easy matter, burdened as it is by the heavy consciousness of its own, and unrelieved as it is by its associations with human wickedness, for the mind of man to *conceive*, much less *describe* a character that is spotless. The efforts of the most instructive and ablest writers, on this topic, are a failure, as all efforts of a like kind must be. There is no theme, unless it be the infinite love of God, on which we

feel ourselves so utterly at a loss to speak worthily as this. We can affirm that the character of Christ *is a sinless and perfect character*; but much more needs to be said, and more than we can utter, in order to illustrate and impress this comprehensive truth. It has depths we cannot fathom, heights we cannot climb, and truths so luminous that our eyes are dazzled in looking at them. A sinless intellect and a perfect heart are the only true interpreters of a perfect character. It has often been said that great and good men go through the world without being understood; and this is emphatically true of him who "is the First-born among many brethren." The age in which Jesus lived did not understand him. His own apostles did not understand him; and required "the Spirit of Truth," to dictate to them the little they have recorded concerning their Divine Master; and though they have recorded enough for all the purposes of a supernatural revelation, they themselves were deeply sensible of the deficiencies and baldness of the record. The most instructive of the Evangelists, at the close of his gospel makes the acknowledgment, that "there are also many other things, which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

We would look around us, and into the history of the past, for some bright models of human ex-

cellence, to assist in this illustration. But we have nothing to guide us save the one great original. When the celebrated Zeuxis painted the Grecian Helen for the temple of Juno, he selected five of the fairest women, and copied all that was most beautiful in the form of each. It is no pagan temple, and no pagan deity that we honor; nor is it by any assemblage of human excellencies that we would fain contribute to some just conception of his loveliness who is "fairer than the sons of men." To group them all, and in their highest adornment and perfection, could only present them as faint resemblances to him who is the great model and archetype of goodness, and to whose reflected beauty the great and good of every age owe all their excellence.

Our method shall be, in the first place, to furnish some *general outline of his excellence*; and in the next place, a *brief specification of those particular characteristics* which constituted his great worthiness.

In presenting SOME GENERAL OUTLINE OF HIS EXCELLENCE, it may not be forgotten that he was "made under the law." We speak not now of the mediatorial law, which he obeyed unto the death; nor of the ceremonial law of the Jews; but of the Moral Law as summarily contained in the Ten Commandments. This is the great and only standard of human character. He is a perfect man who,

without intermission, obeys this law of God with all the strength and ardor he is capable of exercising. We do not know of what degrees of holiness the mind of man is capable. But we see it now in the man Christ Jesus in all its richness. The most general and at the same time the most exact description of his character, is that he *perfectly obeyed the law of God*, extending as it does to every thought, word, and deed. In his inward emotions, and his outward conduct, he was not recreant to any one of its precepts or prohibitions. He felt the *obligation* of governing his conduct by this great and unerring rule of action. It is pleasant to hear him speak as he so often does of the authority of God as the great Lawgiver; of "the will of the Father;" of the "commandment which he received from God;" always averring that "he came, not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him." There was infinite disparity between himself as the Son of Mary, and himself as the great Lawgiver of the universe; a disparity as great as between the Creator and the creature; nor did he ever allow himself to call in question God's right to command and his own obligation to obey. In his divine nature, he claimed equality with God; in his human nature, there were no such equal terms with his Maker. "My father," said he, "is greater than I." God's supremacy was absolute; he would

not set aside even the least requisition of his law, but received with thankfulness and obeyed with promptitude all the intimations of his Father's will. He stopped not to inquire into the reasons of any particular command; God's will was reason; it was enough for him that God had spoken. His whole intelligence and heart united in this voluntary homage to the supreme and indestructible authority of the all-wise and all-perfect Lawgiver. God's will, with him, was above everything else. He felt the obligation and fulfilled it; he fulfilled it spiritually, and he fulfilled it to the letter; he fulfilled it affirmatively, doing what the Law requires, and he fulfilled it negatively, abstaining from what the Law forbids.

The sum and substance of the law is contained in the two precepts, "Thou shalt love the Lord *thy God* with all thy heart, and *thy neighbor* as thyself." In the character of Christ, the *love of God* was ever supreme and ever constant. He could not love God more fervently or more constantly than he did. His intellectual and active powers had their limits, but to the full extent of them he loved. He had no other, he knew no other God. There was not an idol in his heart, nor an idolatrous thought or desire. When we read his biography, the delightful impression everywhere comes upon us, that he enjoyed a constant sense of God's presence. God was in all his

thoughts; nor did such a sin ever lurk in his bosom as *forgetfulness* of his Father in heaven. His affections toward him were affections of love in all its sweet combinations of esteem, attachment, gratitude and joy, and so cheerfully indulged, that communion with him was his great solace and comfort, and the hiding of his face was the bitterest ingredient ever mingled in his cup. He had but one heart, and that heart was God's—a whole heart; a pure heart; a heart never debased by an unworthy thought; a throne that was never usurped by a rival deity; a marble tablet, pure and burnished from its native quarry, on which was never engraven any tale of shame, and where suspicion never threw its doubtful shadow.

Here his religion began; it was heart-religion. He himself was an unsullied exemplification of that great truth which first fell from his own lips. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He was no more a formalist than he was a dissembler; as ardent as he was honest, and as quick-sighted and jealous for his Father's honor, as though he felt himself to be its only guardian and vindicator. None, so much as he, ever delighted themselves in the diligent study of the divine nature and glory, or so much enjoyed the divine love. His affections toward God were eminently *filial*. He was the only begotten Son, who "lay in the bosom of the

Father ;" the everlasting arms were his refuge and his home. His first and best thoughts, his first and warmest affections, his most delighted admiration, his most peaceful confidence and profound reverence were attracted toward his Father which is in heaven.

Nor is it a small matter that he was so scrupulously observant of *all the institutions of religion*. Men sometimes trifle with them because they originate with mere positive laws, and have respect to outward observances. We have not so learned Christ. His heartfelt respect for all the divine institutions was not less remarkable than his respect for their author. It is written concerning him, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." When John demurred at baptizing him on account of his superiority to ordinances, his language was, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it behooveth us to fulfil all righteousness." He had vast concerns committed to his trust, more important than the urgent necessities of poverty, the exacting demands of wealth and fashion, and the weighty responsibilities of kings and cabinets; but they never interfered with his reverence for the Sabbath and the sanctuary. Nor was this a superstitious reverence: for he taught his disciples, both by precept and example, that whenever positive institutions come in collision with moral duties, "God will have mercy and not sacrifice."

In the social relations of human life, he was the bright and finished pattern of excellence. There is no relation, whether superior or subordinate, the obligations of which did not find in his example a living and most persuasive sanction. He neither overlooked nor trifled with any social claim ; nor did he take refuge in any "higher law," in order to shield himself from "rendering to all their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." There were manifold abuses, and palpable wrongs in the government under which he lived ; but his refuge was not in revolt, nor in inciting the spirit of revolt. His maxim was, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." No one was ever so well qualified to question the wisdom and authority of the government, and to sit in judgment upon its laws ; and never was one more cautious in refraining from all such interference. He did not look for infallible laws among fallible men. He lived in a world where men are governed by their passions ; nor would he, either by precept or example, give countenance to the ambitious, the bold, the discontented, or the disloyal. The history of our race would have been far more mournful than it is but for his uniform and stringent example on a subject of such deep interest both to the church and the world.

If we descend to other relations, we find every-

where the same blameless deportment. He revered age, encouraged youth, took childhood in his arms, and pressed infancy to his bosom. He honored the ascendancy of talent, while he rebuked its pride; he gave wealth its influence, while he exposed its snares and vanity; he acknowledged the eminence of rank, while he did not spare men in high places who abused their trust. That wonderful framework of human society, arranged and put together with so much wisdom, where the strong cannot do without the weak, nor the weak without the strong, and where the sympathy is so universal, that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it; found in him an advocate so intelligent and unfaltering, that the Socialists who watched for his halting, went confounded from his presence, and "durst not ask him any more questions." He honored his parents, and under circumstances when parental authority seemed to countervail the dictates of conscience: even when in the Temple about his heavenly Father's work, at the bidding of Joseph and Mary he "came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." His filial obedience is a most beautiful gem in the bright crown of his human excellencies; it shines even in the midst of his sufferings. Those touching words uttered when hanging on the cross and by which he commended his mother to the care of the disciple whom he loved, were like apples of gold in pictures

of silver. Notwithstanding all that the deistical writers of the last century have alleged against the unsocial character of Christianity and its chilling influence upon the friendships and attachments of private life; never was one more capable of strong and tender attachments, or manifested them more than he. So far from dissocial, there never was a more luminous and beautiful exemplification of the social virtues. High as his calling was, he did not separate himself from his fellow-men, but lived among them, and as one of them. He was a guest at their festive boards, and a mourner at their funerals. His first miracle was to change water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; and almost his last words were the expressions of effective sympathy for her who gave him birth, and for her comfort when he himself was deposited in the tomb. He was communicative where wisdom demanded it; and where wisdom demanded it, he was cautious and reserved. He founded no monasteries, and gave no instructions for the orders of Christian knighthood, of the sisters of the Sacred Heart. He was a spotless man, not *of* the world, but everywhere *in* the world, as he meant his followers should be.

Dissocial! was there ever a greater slander upon the character of Christ than this? Who does not see that love, gratitude, tenderness, private friendship, and even patriotism found in him a faultless

advocate? Where is the man on the page of history who preserved so pure and inviolate, yet so kindly and amiably to the last, the laws of social intercourse? If to love as he loved, and live among men as he lived among them, be indications of a dissocial and repulsive spirit; where shall we go to find that which is social and attractive? Those interesting scenes in which he is beheld *washing the feet of his disciples*, and in which the *disciple whom he loved leaned on his bosom*, evince a sensibility and tenderness which no mere didactic lessons could convey. Would you see him taking part in the sorrows of those who were endeared to him; retire with him to the village of Bethany, and there read the words: "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." It was an humble village, and they were humble persons. But it was there, away from the tumult of the world, and in the quiet, sweet intercourse of private friendship, that he forgot the strife of the city, the malignity of his enemies, and found the solace his loving heart sought after. What tenderness and love were there! I know not where to look for such another example of human dignity, propriety and affection combined. "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." Well may the church exclaim, "This is my Beloved, and this is my friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem!" And was he not forgiving toward his *enemies*? Let

this inquiry be answered by that ever-memorable prayer uttered for men whom his curses might have swept from the earth, and uttered amid infuriate malignity and bitter revilings, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" There is no relation of human life, in which he was not as far above the thought of wrong or negligence, as the heavens are above the earth. He was a "man, in all points as we are;" yet with every thought and imagination sanctified, every sense controlled, every word seasoned with grace, every association hallowed, every enticement to sin resisted, and avoiding the appearance of evil. He was content with his destined allotment; "though the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, and the Son of man had not where to lay his head." There was no rashness, nor want of wisdom in his intercourse with men. His truth was never questioned, his honesty and honor never tarnished. "No *guile* was found in his mouth." When you read his life, you will be impressed with the cautious agreement between the words of his lips, and the thoughts of his heart. There was no coloring in his statements; no unguarded expression, and no suppression of the truth. Where the whole truth ought to be spoken, he spoke it fully, and without concealment; freely and without fear; clearly, and without obscuring it; sincerely and kindly, and for proper ends.

Unfounded assumptions, evil surmisings, careless misconstructions, unlawful detractions, artful flattery and malignant slander are human, but they are not like Christ. Nor did he know one covetous desire. He had no grief that others were rich; no mortified pride because he was poor; no envy, no disquietude, no inordinate wish, no corroding anxiety, and none of those sinful passions which arise from a corrupt and rebellious heart. The "commandment is exceeding broad;" but he was obedient to the whole law. Even the vile traitor who delivered him to the hands of his enemies, was constrained to confess, "I have betrayed innocent blood." He alone of all the children of Adam need not confess himself a sinner. Not a single trace of sin can be detected in his whole history; even succinctly written as it is by the Evangelists, it is the most wondrous biography in the world.

If we mistake not, this general view of his excellence will be the more appreciated if we pass, in the next place, to a brief delineation of THOSE PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS IN WHICH THIS EXCELLENCE STOOD SPECIALLY PROMINENT. There are graces and virtues which distinguish this unblotted excellence, and which, like the angel standing in the sun, gives the sun itself a superadded brilliancy.

One of these was his *active benevolence*. His character was an energetic and effective character.

His mind and heart and hands were not only perfectly consecrated, but brought into action, and perpetually contributing to enlighten the ignorance, alleviate the sorrows, purify the character, and ennoble the destiny of his fellow-men. During his short life of thirty years upon this earth, he achieved more for man, and cheered more hearts than the accumulated philanthropy of six thousand years. His whole spirit was directed to this end. His peculiar character is most emphatically written in the words, "He went about doing good." It was an art he had studied well, and it was the care and business of every day. He aimed to be harmless, but he had higher aims. The infinite God was his example; he was perfect as his Father in heaven was perfect. Wherever he went he wrapped himself in the mantle of that love, the very fold and hem of which were a refuge for the wants and woes of men. He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and never was man so intent on this delightful service as he. He possessed an *intensity* of character as far above other men as his active benevolence was above theirs. His emotions were strong; his object engrossed all his faculties, and stirred up the very depths of his soul. The love of doing good was a flame not only perpetually burning in his bosom, but with intense radiance. All his thoughts, all his life, were at the bidding of this high impulse.

The world thought him a madman. He did not seek occasion to be singular, but he could not avoid it. He stood alone, and men wondered at him. So intent, so dominant was his purpose, that he made the first and the last end of his existence to labor for God and man.

If we would have adequate impressions of this feature of his character, we must better understand such declarations as these: "I delight to do thy will, O God; yea, thy law is within my heart." "I must work the work of him who sent me while it is day; the night cometh in which no man can work." I have meat to eat which ye know not of; my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and finish his work." He would have failed in his object but for his pure and ardent zeal in doing good. It was not one department of human wretchedness to which his mind was directed, but every department. It was not restricted to any particular class of human society, but extended to all classes, comprehending all the evils of suffering humanity, sympathizing with its griefs, and not overlooking its perplexities and cares. Whether they were the diseases of the body, the sorrows of the mind, or the embarrassments of the outward estate, not one of the miseries to which sin subjects fallen man escaped his notice. The vilest of the race had an advocate in the tenderness of his compassion; nor did his detestation of their sins shut

up his compassion toward them as sinners. He did not wait for opportunities to do good, but went in search of them. When men were far from him he sought them, and when they could not ascend to him, he descended to them. He often went so far out of his way, in order to express his kindness, that his disciples wondered at his course; while the event showed that his object in so doing was to give sight to the blind, vigor to the lame, cleansing to the leper, hearing to the deaf, to raise the dead to life. Or perhaps it was to cause some widow's heart to sing for joy, or to convince and enlighten some lost sinner as he sat upon the well. With most affecting condescension, he sought the society of the benighted, the self-righteous, the self-deceived, and even infidel men. Their sufferings were the magnet which drew him forth from his retirement; while with winning wisdom and discernment, did he attract them within the sphere of his influence. Nothing could hinder or weary him; if he was persecuted in one place, he went to another. His own inexhaustible benevolence furnished the impulse to pursue, without relaxation, and with immovable constancy, this career of mercy. He did not seek to be great, but he sought to be useful. All places, all society, from Bethlehem to Calvary, were witnesses of his benevolent spirit and beneficent life. There is something truly affecting in this feature of his character. It ap-

pears to us more than human ; yet *he* was human, in whose bosom this unequalled spirit dwelt. It belonged not to earth, was never found on earth, except as exemplified by Mary's Son. Heaven was its native dwelling-place, yet had it this one tabernacle in the heart of Jesus of Nazareth.

Another of these particular characteristics was his *perfect self-denial*. It was to the last degree important to the objects of his mission, that it should be seen and confessed that he had no mercenary aims. If wealth, or honor, or power had been the ruling principle of his conduct, he would not have differed from men, who have been the founders of false religions. It is no marvel that the Scriptures bring his character to the test of a self-denying and self-sacrificing spirit ; because this is the true test. There is reality and strength in moral virtue, when it will cheerfully do and suffer for the principles of rectitude.

How much of this sterling excellence is found in the best of men, let their conduct declare. How little compared with that which shines in the life of Christ. The more attentively we read his history, the more we shall be convinced that his life was one of incessant self-denial. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs ; when he deserved to have been the happiest of the race and the most beloved. He bore the weight of scorn

and obloquy, when he deserved the highest honors. He was poor and abject; he was as great a sufferer as a sinless man could become; yet was it for the good of others, and not his own. These sacrifices were necessary for other reasons; but were they not necessary in order to bring out his perfectly holy and transparent character? We should never have known his true excellence but for those depths of darkness and sorrow when it shone with such matchless beauty. He did not teach a self-denying religion without practising it; nor an humble and self-abasing religion, a religion that crucifies the world with its affections and lusts, without exemplifying it everywhere and always, from the manger to the cross. He acted out his own principles, and carried his self-denial as far as self-denial *can* be carried. It was not for himself that he lived, it was not for himself that he wept; it was not his own sorrows that he bore, when, at the close of a long life of sacrifices, he terminated his course by that great act of self-denial, that last sacrifice, which human knowledge knows not, human imagination cannot conceive. Pure, innocent, without spot, he freely renounced all and delivered up himself the victim of God's justice and man's cruelty, asking nothing for himself and gaining nothing but the gratification of his self-denying love. He asked, indeed, that men should become his followers, and love him, but he never bribed

their love; and when he left them, bequeathed them no earthly inheritance, but the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and the cross on which he hung.

Men of a supremely selfish mind, and who offer incense on the altars of pride, ambition, and pleasure, know nothing of this noble characteristic of Jesus Christ. Those who have never learned to sacrifice their own weal for the relief of others' woes; who have never renounced their own comforts from love to the miserable; whose time, and labor, and repose, and pride, and pleasure, and gold have been devoted only to themselves; cannot sympathize with the moral greatness that throws such a lustre around the man who taught and exemplified the religion of the cross.

Another characteristic was his *meekness and humility*. There are not wanting some beautiful specimens of meekness and lowliness in those who have named his name in different ages of the world. The Apostle John was his most beloved disciple and friend, for nothing so much as his resemblance, in this feature of his character, to his divine Master. The Mary who came behind him weeping, and washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, expressed a spirit more lovely than she would have expressed if she had decked his head with a crown. Moses was styled the "meekest man on the face

of the earth," because he maintained his gentleness amid so much that tried and provoked his heaven-born and humble mind. But these holy persons were servants, and their meekness and humility, the cringing spirit of slaves compared with that softness, and mildness, and gentleness of Christ which all his adversaries could never gainsay, or resist. There was not an emotion in his bosom that savored of anger or rashness. Injury, reproach, and provocation assailed him in every form and degree; while the only protestation he made against them was his mild and unresisting gentleness. Denounced as impostor, stigmatized as the enemy of Cæsar and a conspirator against the government, ridiculed as a wine-bibber and a friend of publicans and sinners, charged with being a madman and possessed of the devil, seized by the hands of violence, convicted by perjured witnesses, scoffed at, spit upon, buffeted, scourged, and nailed to the bloody tree; his whole course of conduct betrayed not one complaining, or angry thought. He was not capable of a thought for which conscience could reproach him. He knew well how to stand forth the protector of others, and to shield insulted and slandered excellence; but when his own person and character were assailed, he was speechless, and quietly left them in the hands of God. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he

opened not his mouth." When "he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." What beautiful consistency and harmony did this spirit to the more grand and elevated expressions of his excellence! He was lofty in his views; there was everything within him that elevated him above an unworthy action; yet pride and ambition had no lurking-place in that elevated mind; a haughty spirit found no aliment there, and no being. All this is far from man's nature; but it was the uniform and beautiful spirit of the man Christ Jesus. He had virtues that were more brilliant; but none more lovely. Here his character shines in the very beauty of holiness. This was the most transparent gem in that bright diadem where every gem is transparent. He was a "perfectly meek and humble man." He of all his race was justified in saying, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." His whole life was the most persuasive and eloquent appeal in favor of this spirit; it was the most beautiful and sublime exhibition of it, while the difficulties and trials it encountered seemed only to make it more affecting.

Combined with these characteristics, he also possessed great *moral courage*. Meek and humble as

he was, he was a stranger to weakness and timidity. Never was man so undaunted, and never was there such a demand for vigor of purpose, and promptness, and energy, and endurance. He was born for high and holy ends, and was early made acquainted with the purposes for which he came into the world. Nor did he ever take a changeful and unsteady view, nor a slight and cursory one of his great object. It was constantly upon his mind, and drew toward it all its vigor and fervency. There was no such thing as fear in his bosom, be the dangers that assailed him what they may. He was never intimidated from uttering what he ought to utter, and doing what was necessary for him to perform. If there are instances of his conduct which seem at first view, to savor of precipitancy, it is only because our minds fail to sympathize with a courage so exalted as his, and are not imbued, as his was, with the greatness of his aims, and his intuitive perceptions of what was right and fitting under the circumstances in which he was placed. He could sting the Jewish people with the most keen and lacerating reproaches; he could scourge the changers of money out of the temple; he could send a sarcastic thought through the conscience of the subtle Herod; but it was because such severity could no longer be withheld. "When the oldest and most presumptuous of his disciples would fain have dissuaded him from going

up to Jerusalem, he could reply, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men;" and when his hour was come, and Judas delayed the execution of his fell design, his language to this arch traitor was, "What thou doest, do quickly!" There were a resolution and fortitude about him, which it does not seem possible that one so meek and lowly could possess. Nor did they fail to rise with every fresh demand upon them, however exacting, waking up and invigorating all his powers of body and mind, and stimulating him, now to action the most fearless, and now to endurance as brave and inflexible as Christianity. When the lamented Evarts was dying, he said to one who stood near him, "Be bold *for Christ*; there is nothing else worth being bold for!" Christ himself was the boldest of the bold. He was "Captain of our salvation," and it behooved him to be bold. They were fearful foes with whom he was contending, and he advanced to the contest with undaunted breast. They were stormy skies, and days and nights of peril; he was deserted and desolate; but he was ever steadfast, ever immovable.

To these characteristics must be added a *perfectly devotional and heavenly spirit*. If ever there was a man of too heavenly a mind to be born for earth, and to dwell on earth, and engage in the toil and

pursuits, and hallowed strife of earth, Jesus of Nazareth was that man. It is not enough to say that he lived above the world, and was a stranger and pilgrim here, and that his heart was fixed on heaven; he was the spirit of heaven itself, living and moving among men. A worldly mind was the rock on which the devil vainly conjectured he might be tempted to shipwreck the great enterprise with which he was intrusted. Artfully did he spread the snare early in the public career of the Son of man, by the offer of all the kingdoms of the world, if he would fall down and worship *him*; but the temptation passed over his mind "like the idle wind." When, in a more advanced stage of his progress, he became for once the idol of the people, and the multitude offered him the crown and the throne of David, he gave them to understand that crowns and thrones had no charms for his heavenly mind. He avowed before Pilate that he had royal claims, but that it was not the royalty of earth that he sought. He sought nothing from the world but his daily bread; nor would he allow himself to be any further embarrassed by its concerns than to treat this earth as the theatre on which he was acting so mighty a part for eternity. He sought no other earthly home than that provided by the hand of charity. A home he had, but it was above, where his conversation was, and where he was so soon to go to provide a place for

all his followers. His life was one of peculiar intercourse and near communion with God. Many a time did he rise up a great while before day, and retire to some selected mountain, or sequestered brook, or grove, there to enjoy solitary intercourse with his father in heaven. Whole nights he often employed in prayer. Forty days of fasting and prayer were his preparations for his public ministry. He loved to be alone with God. No employment, no society, no trials ever prevented his intercourse with God and heaven. He and his Father were one, if for nothing but the uninterrupted fellowship which existed between them. Things unseen and eternal were the things he looked at. He often spoke of them, and of the beauty and riches and glory of them, and of heavenly thrones and heavenly joys. With intense interest and delight, he spoke of them, and with pensive thoughts that they were at a distance, and with sweet anticipations that in a little while he should go to the Father.

If we would see the excellence of this wonderful man shining by its own light, we may intermingle with these general excellencies and these brilliant characteristics the thought that *this perfect character was maintained with unbroken constancy from the commencement to the close of his career*. He had no native sinfulness, but was born as sinless as he died. The law of Paradise which entailed

the curse of original sin upon the race, did not affect him, because, though born of a woman, he had no paternal lineage. He was an infant without the selfishness of infancy, and with none of its exacting and tyrannical claims. Was there ever so beautiful a sight as the holy infant Jesus! He was a youth, without one taint of frowardness; a man without one stain of human depravity, from Bethlehem's manger to Joseph's tomb! An inhabitant of this fallen world, yet "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners!" One who possessed man's nature, yet who "did no sin!" Nothing diverted him from perfect rectitude; nothing discouraged him; nor was his progress broken by a faltering step. There was no coldness, no inconstancy; and his character shone the brighter as he drew toward the close of his mortal career. As he began, so he closed his work; and as he was about to close it, he could "lift up his eyes to heaven and say, Father, the hour is come; I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do!"

We are far from forming just conceptions of the character of the man Christ Jesus. Unspeakably below the reality is the faint picture we have exhibited. We love to contemplate human virtue even in its inferior forms. The history of man furnishes here and there a splendid exhibition of it, and while we do not extol the excellence less, we extol

its author more. We mark it as a rare character, and a rare expression of Almighty grace. It is like a stream of water in a dry place, a green spot in the desert, a bright star twinkling on the dark cloud. The character of Christ has no such inequalities, and does not strike us by its occasional and novel excellencies. It is like a broad river steadily tending to the ocean, and making the desert bloom as it goes. It is like the moon walking across the heavens, and obscuring the stars by her brightness. The history of man would be barren of reproachless excellence, but for this one record. This one only moral phenomenon stood forth to the men of his age, stands forth to us, and will stand forth to all future time fresh and beautiful, ever retaining the novelty that attracts, and the beauty that charms. Penetrate into the history of the past; search the records where fame has preserved the names of the illustrious, or where private worth is embalmed in delightful memories; and between the Son of man and all other men there is such a distance, that the character of the best of our race is an indivisible point, a particle of vapor compared with this ocean of excellence. During the lapse of sixty centuries, and since the day of the first apostasy and the first promise, there is but this individual born of woman who could look his enemies in the face and say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Nations have come

into existence and passed away; millions crowded upon millions have been ushered into being and gone to their graves; patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, men and women largely baptized with the Holy Ghost, have shone as lights in the world, and now shine as the stars forever and ever. Heaven has been moved with love to man to make him holy, to inspire him with immortal hopes, and to urge him, not in vain, to aim at his high calling; but it was reserved for the Virgin's Son to receive the Spirit without measure, and to become the only example of perfect excellence. What sublimity and beauty are here! What a halo of moral glory encircles the head that was once entwined with the wreath of shame! Christ is glorious; glorious as holiness, glorious as truth, glorious as love, glorious as joy, shining, beaming, and never ceasing to shine with a splendor that is unspeakable and full of glory.

We do not marvel that so many beautiful arguments have been founded on the perfect character of the man Christ Jesus, in favor of the truth of Christianity. We cannot be too thankful that there is this one perfect standard of true religion. We have no other; we profess not to appeal to any other. The world would never have known what true religion is, nor what it can achieve in the formation of character, until it was taught by the character of Christ. It is not fiction, for fiction

never could have invented it; it is something which is embodied and realized in actual existence. Without any of the adventitious distinctions of earth, he possessed a splendor which eclipsed them all. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom; nor does it surprise us to learn that the righteousness of this *One Man* Christ Jesus, saves from worse than the flames of Sodom, "a great multitude which no man can number."

To what extent are we under obligation to *imitate the example of Christ*? There can be no doubt as to the answer that must be given to this question. The obligation is perfect; it never ceases; it is never violated without sin. There never was any reason why men should not be as holy as Christ, either in the nature of holiness, or their own nature; either in the binding force of the moral law, or the precepts, prohibitions, and spirit of the gospel. There is a cause for the imperfection of Christians, but there is no reason for it. The cause is their own sinful nature and love of wickedness; and this, so far from excusing them, makes the matter worse, and leaves them self-condemned. Men complain that God is a hard master for requiring them to yield a perfect compliance to his law, because the thing is impossible. We grant that it is impossible; to deny this fact were the grossest ignorance and the wildest fanaticism. But *why* is it impossible? If their hearts were

right, it would not be impossible. If their state of mind were such as Christ's, it would not be impossible. Let us therefore lay our hand upon our mouth.

But do we expect perfectly to imitate the Saviour's character, or that it will ever be perfectly imitated in the present world? It is indeed a melancholy truth that we despair of equalling such excellence; we shall fall far short of it, until "we see him as he is." Yet we may not overlook this bright example, as though we were strangers to it, and were never impressed, and charmed, and humbled by its beauty. Christ is everything to the Christian, as the foundation of his hopes, and the source of supply for all his spiritual necessities. Nor is he less precious as his *example*. The injunction is still inscribed on the sacred page, "Let the *same mind* be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It is not enough to contemplate his example merely for the purpose of admiring it, and of exciting within our bosom something like the transports of Christian enthusiasm. It is not enough to contemplate it merely for the purpose of seeing how far we come short of it. Rather should we contemplate it with the earnest desire, and prayer, and effort ourselves to attain to a purer and loftier devotion to our heavenly Father's will. Where is our Christianity if we have *none* of the spirit of our divine Master? Where is it,

if we imbibe not more and yet more of his spirit? How else shall we know that "when he shall appear we shall be like him," unless what we now behold of him progressively transforms into his image?

Let us bring these general inquiries more closely home to our own bosoms. What Christian can allow himself in indifference to the claims of the God of heaven, when the Son of man was so exquisitely alive to them? What Christian will give way to the spirit of murmuring and complaint, when he sees the Saviour of men so uniformly putting his will into the hands of God to be moulded according to his own? Who will be negligent in his observance of the Sabbath, when the Lord of the Sabbath was so punctilious in its observance? Who will not be circumspect in all the social relations, when *he* protected them with such purity and care? Who will allow himself to become intoxicated in the pursuit of wealth and fame, when his Lord and Master had not where to lay his head, and when, the more he surveyed the "poms and vanities" of time, the more did they disappear and sink away beneath him? See him in all his lowliness and poverty, and then say, of how much worth is all the glitter of the world? Who can be satisfied to revel in all the pride of life, when he thinks of *him* who consented to be numbered with malefactors? Who will cherish angry passions and

a revengeful bosom, when *he* could look with such love upon his murderers? What shall be said of the Christian who refuses one drop of that bitter cup which Jesus drank to the dregs? What will the listless, inactive Christian think of himself when he thinks of him who went about doing good, and never wearied of his work? Who will be prayerless when Christ was the man of prayer? Who will rest contented to travel thus tardily towards heaven, when *his* pilgrimage was so bright and rapid? Humbling inquiries are these, both to the writer and the reader. Christianity does indeed live in our world, but it has never been fully exemplified since Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives. Just conceive of a score of Christians like Jesus Christ within this single city, and how would this moral wilderness blossom! If we love Christ, we shall love to imitate his example; and the more we love him, the more we shall love to imitate it. What he said to his early disciples he says to us, "Follow thou me." Mark his footsteps, Christian, and *follow him*.

A single word to those who are not Christians. Would that there were not so many of this unhappy and guilty character! Yet, who would not be a Christian, if it only were to tread in the steps of Christ? To what more elevated and amiable character, to what hopes more precious, what associations more desirable, what higher usefulness,

and brighter and more enduring glory can fallen man aspire; than to receive the truth and confess the name of Christ, bear his image, follow his example, promote his glory, and enter into his joy?

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST AS A PREACHER.

THE great and peculiar work of Christ was to make an atonement for the sins of men. His priestly office was the great office for which he was anointed of God; which, as God manifest in the flesh, he so gloriously fulfilled, and to which all the Prophets bear witness.

But while we magnify his office as the great High Priest of the Christian profession, we may not overlook his office as the anointed Prophet, and the most distinguished religious Teacher. The predictions of the Old Testament speak of him as such; and if we look into the four gospels, we find these predictions abundantly fulfilled. We there learn that "he went about all Galilee, *teaching* in their synagogues, and *preaching the gospel* of the kingdom;" and that "he went throughout every city and village *preaching* and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God." The *first* employment indeed upon which he publicly entered, was that of a religious Teacher. No sooner did he

emerge from the retirement of domestic life and receive baptism from the hands of his distinguished Precursor, and the visible anointing of the Holy Ghost, than he commenced his public ministry. Aside from those portions of the Evangelists which record his genealogy, birth, miracles, death, and resurrection, these writings are altogether occupied in recording his *religious instructions*. These records of his teaching are sufficiently copious; yet must they, from necessity, be incomplete and compendious; for in the highly hyperbolical language of John, "if they should be written every one, the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Of the pre-eminent excellence of Christ as religious teacher, we have abundant evidence. John his forerunner, though the most distinguished of all the Jewish prophets, makes the humble, yet exulting confession, "He must increase, but I must decrease;" "there cometh one after me, who is preferred before me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." We are told that "the people were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes." The officers sent by the Jewish rulers to apprehend him, were so affected by his preaching that they could not execute their commission, and when called to an account for their negligence, could only reply, "Never man spake

like this man." But it is from his discourses themselves, that we are chiefly instructed in his pre-eminence as the Great Prophet of God.

From these we learn, in the first place, that he was a *most instructive* preacher. It is recorded of the greatest and wisest of the kings of God's ancient people, that "because the preacher was wise, he taught the people knowledge." The knowledge of God's truth is the germ and principle of all holiness. Spiritual life can neither germinate, nor be developed in the dark and cold bosom of ignorance. To overlook this great law of man's intellectual and moral nature, is to overlook what is primary and essential to the great end at which the gospel aims. There is no appeal to the conscience or heart, no obligation urged, no right emotions excited, and no practical conformity to God cultivated, except by presenting and believing the great doctrines of the gospel. Jesus Christ would have the roots of Christianity strike deep in the barren soil of this ungodly world; and therefore he taught that the "sower soweth the word." The great object of his ministry was to disabuse the minds of men of error, to unteach them where they had been taught erroneously, to enlighten them where they were ignorant, to set the great realities of a supernatural revelation before them, place them within their reach, and make them possessors of this rich inheritance. He

knew of no other means of disarming the powers of death and hell, delivering men from the empire of Satan and the bondage of sin, introducing them into the liberty of the children of God, and rendering them partakers of the life eternal. His Spirit operates only through the instrumentality of *truth*. It is one of the laws of his kingdom, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Richly was he endowed, and abundantly qualified to be an instructive preacher. He did not rush into the ministry until his mind was thoroughly furnished for his work. For a long time he dwelt at Nazareth, diligently preparing himself for this high service; and so well had he studied the sacred Scriptures, that at twelve years of age he astonished the doctors of the temple, "both hearing them and asking them questions." It was not until after his severe trial in the wilderness, where his faith and knowledge were put to the test of the most artful and severe of all opposers; nor until he was about thirty years of age that he began his wonderful career. From "that time," we are told, "Jesus *began* to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Besides this, he was God as well as man; the eternal *λογος*, who was set up from everlasting. When God prepared the heavens he was there; when the wondrous method of man's redemption was

devised he was there; and before the hills were settled, or the mountains brought forth, he engaged to occupy the prophetic office, and himself to become the preacher of that glorious gospel of which he was the author.

When he entered upon his ministry, therefore, the great subjects and objects of it, were those with which he was perfectly familiar, and which he well understood how to present. He made no display of human learning, but a rich and convincing exhibition of God's truth. It was not the philosophy of the schools of which he spake, nor did he amuse nor confound his hearers with dissertations upon the traditions of the elders, and the commandments of men; nor did he confine himself to a narrow circle of Christian truth and morals. He spake of *God* as no other had spoken; of the spirituality of his nature and worship; of the necessity of knowing him in order to attain eternal life. He spake of the *law of God*, in its unchanging obligations and searching spirituality; rectifying the errors of those who flattered themselves that one object of his coming, was to lower its claims to the level of human infirmity; and reading them lessons upon its holiness and inviolability, which taught them that he was not more the advocate of the true faith, than a sound morality. He spake of the *sinful character and lost condition of man*, everywhere

affirming that they were not the righteous that he came to call, but sinners to repentance. He largely insisted on that obduracy and strength of human wickedness, which, when thoroughly taught, aims so fatal a blow at self-sufficiency and self-glorying, as to throw the best as well as the worst sinners, upon the resources of omnipotent grace. He spake of the *necessity of the new birth*, or that radical transformation of character, by which the enmity of the carnal mind is slain, and the controlling principle of supreme love to God, is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. He discoursed largely of *the effects and evidences of this spiritual change*, on his inward and outward man. On the one hand, he set at naught the claims of a proud morality, and instructed men that "except their righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they can in no case enter the kingdom of heaven;" and on the other, he taught them that a religious sentimentalism is as far from true religion, as a lifeless morality, and that only those are his disciples, who "hear the word of God, and *do it*." No preacher ever inculcated a more devotional spirit; it was in one of his discourses that he taught men how to pray, and gave that great model of prayer, which so beautifully comprises all that true piety desires. When he spake of the *way of life* for the fallen, he taught that

there was but one. On this all-important topic his language is, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me:" "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." When he spoke of the obligation and duty of men, in view of this revealed salvation, his teachings are, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent;" "Come, for all things are now ready;" "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." He spoke, too, of the privilege and blessedness of those who receive this salvation; of the responsibility, and guilt, and doom, of those who reject it. As the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, he also *lifts the veil from future things*; tells of the resurrection, both of the just and the unjust; announces the final judgment, where he himself will sit and decide the destinies of men; brings life and immortality to light; unfolds the glories of that heaven where he dwelt from eternity, and premonishes the world of that place of torment, to which all the incorrigible are doomed, and which is "prepared for the Devil and his angels."

In every view he was the most instructive of preachers. Erase his instructions from the Bible, and you erase its most sublime lessons of wisdom, and those very lessons which the world most needs.

The Saviour sympathized with these wants, and drew from his own redundant resources those instructive truths which were best likely to lead men to repentance, and promote their holiness, happiness, and usefulness when they have become Christians. "Sanctify them through thy *truth*; thy word is truth." This was his prayer, and this involved the great principle on which he conducted his ministry. It was teeming with truth; rich in the doctrines of grace; resplendent with those great evangelical principles, which the Holy Spirit has ever employed for the conversion of men, which form the substance of the gospel, and constitute the great torch-light of the nations as lifted up from the cross of its Victim Teacher.

In the next place, he was a *bold and fearless preacher*. Though meek and gentle as a Lamb, his nature was bold and fearless. Well did this moral courage become him as a "Leader and Commander to the people," and as the "Captain of their salvation," called as he was to contend with deeply imbedded errors, with pervading vices, with subtle enemies, with torpid indifference, with flesh and blood, and principalities and powers in high places. The gospel which he preached was "to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness." Such were the fierce passions and hostile array of a world that lieth in wickedness, that not to oppose them would be to give false-

hood the victory over truth ; while to oppose them effectively, however meekly, would seem to be like sending division and a sword.

There is an indiscretion, and blustering foolhardiness in some preachers, which finds no warrant in his ministry. His counsel to those whom he early sent forth was, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Never was this complex character so beautifully exemplified, as throughout the whole of his ministry from first to last. It was early predicted of him, that as God's servant, "he should deal *prudently*;" that "the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, and the spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord." A recurrence to his preaching as given by the Evangelists is the best comment upon this prediction. In his selection of times and places of preaching, of men and classes to whom he preached, and the truths that were adapted to their state of mind, he was the wisest and most prudent of preachers. He would not put a "piece of new cloth into an old garment," nor "new wine into old bottles;" nor "cast pearls before swine." He would not allow himself to be ensnared by the subtle priests and elders ; nor by the shrewd lawyers of the Synagogue ; nor by the learned Pharisees who "took counsel that they might entangle him;" nor by the unbelieving Sadducees ; nor

ever led astray by the bigotry of his disciples. Except upon the great objects of his mission, he was a man of remarkably reserved and cautious habits, and was well apprised of the importance of his own injunction, "Beware of men!"

Yet did the work to which he was called make exacting demands upon his courage and faithfulness. There were truths which he preached, which, if he was not dismayed in the utterance of them, threw his audience into dismay; and which, though uttered without vehemence and without impetuosity, excited the vehemence of their hostility. The prediction just referred to which speaks of his prudence, affirms, that "he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." His words did not always descend as the dew of heaven; but sometimes, like the piercing hail, the sweeping whirlwind, the destroying sword, and the consuming fire. He was a tremendous preacher of those obnoxious truths which have thrown the world into consternation. There are those in the present age who are great sticklers for orthodoxy, who, at the same time, are not a little sparing of those great truths which he uttered so fearlessly that at one time his hearers led him to the brow of the hill in order to cast him down; at another, his nominal disciples went back and walked no more with him; and at another, the

Jews took up "stones to stone him." The Bible does not record any such preacher of terror as that divine Saviour, who, in one short discourse, thrice utters the words, "There shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth;" and in another equally short, thrice declares, that in that wretched world, "the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." The rulers of the Jewish people were no doubt jealous of his power, but they were still more embittered against his doctrine. The fire was long burning in their bosoms. Both the remote and proximate causes of the hostility which led them to nail him to the cross, was their enmity to the truth, and to him as its undaunted advocate. For nothing more than his faithfulness as a preacher did they become his infuriate enemies. They became weary of being thus goaded by the truth, and at length cried out, "Away with him! Crucify! crucify!"

He drew the line so distinctly between the righteous and the wicked, that he did not suffer men to indulge presumptuous hopes without rebuke. Were they as amiable as the young Jewish ruler, he convinced them of their self-deception; as loud in their professions of piety as the Jewish teachers, he unveiled their clamorous pretences; as self-righteous as the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, he hesitated not to blast all their self-righteous expectations. He had no desire to give offence; yet he would not divest

the truth of its repulsiveness to the carnal heart, nor rob it of its sting. He was not wanting in kindness, nor did he lack the boldness to call men and things by their right names. No religious teacher was ever so fearless in this respect, and so impartial in his personal application of the truth to all classes of men, whatever their condition in the church, or in the world. One great object of his preaching would have been lost, if he had so preached as to leave the impression upon the minds of his hearers that he had no special relevancy to one man more than another. There was no such indistinctness in his views, and therefore no such indefiniteness in his instructions. The great object of his sermon on the mount; of his parable of the ten virgins; of the good fish and the bad; of the tares and the wheat, was to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked; between the true and the false, the genuine and the spurious in piety, however men might be startled by the distinction, and however discouraging such preaching might be regarded. That which gave to his preaching its remarkable *directness*, was the fact that it concerned his auditors, and had immediate regard to their character and duty. When he uttered the parable of the vineyard, the "Jews perceived that he had spoken the parable *against them*." When he discoursed with the woman of Samaria, her own conscience extorted

the confession, "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did." When he said to the accusers of the offending woman, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her," they were "convicted by their own conscience, and went out one by one."

Not unfrequently he was more bold and personal. He said to the multitude who so eagerly and ostentatiously followed him, "*I know you*, that ye have not the love of God in you." He told the Jewish people that "they were of their father, the devil, and the lusts of their father they would do." To the Scribes and Pharisees he uttered these tremendous words, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Under circumstances which the fastidious taste of the age in which we live would have regarded as the claims of silence upon his courtesy, and when an invited guest in the splendid banquet-hall of a princely Pharisee; he could not suppress the rebuke, "Ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness;" "Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! Woe unto you lawyers, for ye lade men with burdens, grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers." No influence of men in power could dishearten, no danger intimidate him. He would not allow the customs of the world to em-

barrass him in the work which God had given him to do. This is boldness; calm, deliberate boldness. It was much to say of John Knox, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man:" but it is *not* much to say of him whom the fearful terrors of the cross could not appal, and whose words were soberness and truth.

Nor may the fact be overlooked, in the next place, that he was an *impressive and powerful preacher*. In the legitimate sense of the term, he was *popular*, and interested the multitude. He never preached to empty synagogues; and when he occupied the market or the mountain side, they were not hundreds that listened to his voice, but thousands. It is recorded of him, that "his fame went throughout all Syria;" and that "there followed him great multitudes of people from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." On that memorable day when he went from the Mount of Olives to Judea, "a great multitude spread their garments in the way, and others cut down branches from the trees," and all cried "Hosannah to the Son of David!" After he uttered the parable of the vineyard, the rulers "sought to lay hold of him, but *feared the people*." When he "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, there went out a fame of him throughout all the region round about," and he "was glorified of all, and

great multitudes came together to hear him." So much was he, for the time, the idol of the people, that the chief priests and Pharisees were alarmed at his popularity, and said among themselves, "If we let him then alone, all men will believe on him; behold, *the world* is gone after him." He was the man of the people, and advocated the cause of the people. We are told that "*the common people* heard him gladly." He was "no respecter of persons." He was the preacher to man, as man. He never passed the door of poverty, and was not ashamed to be called "the friend of publicans and sinners." His gospel was and is the great and only bond of brotherhood; nor was there then, nor is there now, any other universal brotherhood, than that which consists in love and loyalty to him. He was the only safe reformer the world has seen, because he so well understood the checks and balances by which the masses are governed. His preaching, like his character, bold and uncompromising as it was, was also in the highest degree conservative. He taught new truths, and he was the great vindicator of those that were old. All these things made him a most impressive, powerful, and attractive preacher. His very instructiveness, prudence, and boldness, interested the people. They respected him for his acquaintance with the truth, and honored his discretion and fearlessness in pro-

claiming it. This is human nature; men love to be thus instructed; they come to the house of God for that purpose. A vapid and vapory preacher may entertain them for the hour; a smooth and flattering preacher may amuse them; a mere denunciatory preacher may produce a transient excitement; but such is the power of conscience, and such the power of God and the wants of men, that, though their hearts naturally hate God's truth, they will crowd the sanctuaries where it is instructively, and fearlessly, and discreetly urged, while ignorance, and error, and a coward preacher, put forth their voice to the listless and the few.

Jesus uttered the truth with great simplicity and plainness. His thoughts were clear; the meaning of his words was manifest; his sentences were unaffected and artless; there was no complication of argument or illustration in his discourses; they were all the natural and simple expression of his own intelligent and pure mind. They were intelligible to the meanest capacity. He meant they should be intelligible; and would sometimes even make a pause in his discourse, and ask his hearers *if he was understood*. He would then repeat some uncomprehended thought in different forms. He was like a watchful shepherd leading his flock; he would retrace his steps, and go back again and again, until every stray lamb

was brought into green pastures. He took great pains to *interest* his audience; he knew they must be interested if they were profited by his preaching. Sometimes he would utter the substance of a discourse in a single sentence, so terse and striking that it could never be forgotten. You read a *sermon* in such a sentence as this: "Ye are the salt of the earth;" as this: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things;" as this: "The tree is known by its fruits; as this: "Where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also;" and as this: "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch;" and as this: "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Sometimes he would select a metaphor that would carry truth to the conscience like a thunderbolt. And sometimes he would adorn his thoughts, but with flowers, such as a child might gather among the grass, and lilies of the field.

It deserves remark also, that his preaching savors more of *illustration* than *argument*. He came to bear *testimony* to the truth, and as God's witness. It was his own truth, and needed not argument to substantiate it. Those who received him as God's Messenger, received his message; while those who would not receive the message on

the authority of the Messenger, would not be convinced by argument. But while he took comparatively little pains to demonstrate the verity of what he uttered, he felt the importance of *illustrating and impressing it*. Nor did he fail to do so by the most fitting and affecting methods. When he would rebuke the aspiring spirit of his disciples, he "took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said unto them, Except ye become as this little child, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." When he would read them the lesson of mutual condescension, he took a basin of water and washed their feet, and said unto them, "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, so ought ye also to wash one another's feet." When he would inculcate the danger of apostasy, he related the parable of the *Relapsing Demoni- ac*. To inculcate the vanity of riches and earthly hopes, he rehearsed the narrative of the *Rich Fool*. To impress upon the minds of men the aggravated sinfulness and danger of neglected opportunities, he uttered the parable of the *Barren Fig Tree*. Other preachers do not, in this respect, follow his example, for the obvious reason that they are unable to follow it. With the single exception of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, their attempts to do so, have been a failure. The design of all Christ's parables was to illustrate and enforce some great truth. The parable of the

Merchant seeking goodly Pearls—the parable of the *Talents*—the parable of the *Good Samaritan*—of the *Gospel Supper*—of the *King preparing for War*—of the *Piece of Lost Silver*—of the *Unjust Steward*—of the *Unjust Judge and Widow*—of the Pharisee and Publican—of the Laborers hired at different hours—of the *Thief in the Night*—of the Children in the *Market Place*—and of the *Strong Man keeping his House*, was each designed to present in living imagery, and strong and graphic characters, its corresponding and important truth. It was thus he held the attention of his hearers, and kept the avenues of their minds open to what would otherwise have been to them cold and uninteresting doctrines.

But it was the *ardor and urgency* of his preaching that gave it its greatest interest. His own mind and heart were intent on his ministry, and his whole soul absorbed in his work. There was no affectation of zeal, but the honest and strong emotions of a preacher who felt for the glory of God and the salvation of men, as never man felt. We cannot think of Christ as a cold and dull preacher; the thing was impossible. When we hear him say, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God;" "Strive to enter into the strait gate, for many I say unto you shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able;" "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" we know

what it was that made his discourses differ from cold dissertations on morality, and frigid philosophical lectures, and the tame preaching of many a Christian pulpit, that plays around the head, and never aims its arrows at the conscience, or the heart. It was *this* that made him eloquent. There was *heart* within him; there was heart in his preaching, and what he most desired was the hearts of those who heard him. It was the *soul* that he longed to gain, and to free it from condemnation and death. Honor he sought not, and was content that men should "turn away their faces from him for shame." Gold and silver he had none, nor did he seek them. He knew they would melt away; brilliant gems, and splendid palaces would all vanish. Literary reputation he did not ask for; science and the arts, after having accomplished their ends, would remain only among the treasures of earth. He was God's Minister, and set to watch for souls as they that must give account. He was the Minister of that gospel in which are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" which changes not with the discoveries and the convulsions of time; which saves the soul from death; and whose true value is known only when all things earthly pass away.

The preaching of Christ was also distinguished for its *affectionate tenderness*. There are favored moments in the preaching of almost every

minister, when he catches a portion of the spirit of his divine Master; it warms his heart, illumines his countenance, gives tenderness even to the modulations of his voice, and he speaks as one who has been in the mount with God. When the Proto-martyr Stephen preached in the presence of the blood-thirsty men who condemned him, "all that sat in the Council looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." What is so unusual with other preachers, was habitual, was uniform with the Great Teacher. The unequalled loveliness of his personal character was a pledge of his deep interest both in the truths he uttered, and in the salvation of men. This perfect holiness imparted a sanctity to the excellence of his *natural character*, and gave to it that heavenly sensitiveness and delicacy of feeling which rendered him so acutely alive to human joy and woe. The sins and miseries of men affected his holy mind, as no other mind was ever affected. His sympathy was perfect; "in *all* their afflictions, he was afflicted;" their joy filled him with gladness. One would think that the most obstinate rebel would have been silenced, and the most shame-faced and trembling penitent have been encouraged by those illustrations of divine compassion which are so strongly marked, and of such touching pathos in his ministry. The gentlest emotions dwelt in his bosom, and the gentlest words flowed from

his tongue. He shook the Tree of Life not for its fruit only, but for its budding *promises*. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." He would revive the spirit of the humble, and wipe away the tears from the mourner's cheek. The meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, the persecuted, and the reviled found in him the words of encouragement and consolation. He knew the character of men; and when he saw them, in all their disquietude, helplessness and misery, wandering and bewildered, and thirsting for good which they knew not how to obtain; often would he ascend some eminence from which he might command a view of the people, and there proclaim, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Those there were to whom he preached, who felt the burden of their sins, and were oppressed by remorse; whose spirit drooped and who found no relief from their anguish; who were un comforted and without a resting-place; and to them he would utter the soothing invitation, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Did some company of wretched sinners stand before him who had wandered far from God, and in the wilderness where they were wandering found only the husks which the swine do eat, and with no light to cheer, and no clue to guide them

back to their heavenly Father's house; he would paint before their eyes some prodigal youth and favorite son perishing with hunger, doubting, resolving, coming to himself, returning, welcomed, and weeping upon his Father's bosom. They were not unkind thoughts nor words of harshness when he said to the detected woman, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more;" nor when he said of her who stood behind him weeping, and washing his feet with her tears and wiping them with the hair of her head, "She loved much, and hath much forgiven!" nor when after the seeming severity by which he put another's confidence to the test, as though he would crush the dog that crouched at his feet, he said to her, "O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee, even as thou wilt." How beautiful a scene was that when, with the love of heaven beaming in his countenance, and the grace of heaven flowing from his lips, he turned to the captious Pharisees, and taking little children into his arms, said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven!" Look too at the picture so delightfully exhibited by John, where Mary and Martha tell him of the death of Lazarus, and Mary falls down at his feet weeping. The depressed and afflicted spirit of these bereaved sisters excited the workings of that compassion which was all tenderness and love. He entered into their sorrows, and mingled his tears with theirs. "When

he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit and was troubled." With memorable solemnity he had just said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die;" yet as they led him to the grave of Lazarus, "Jesus wept." He often wept, but we do not read that he ever wept for his own sufferings. When he was going to the cross, he turned round and said to the women who followed him, "Weep not for me." A tear trembled in his eye when he looked upon fallen Peter; the look that melted and rebuked this hasty disciple, was the mingled look of rebuke and love—love which even the perjured denial of his Lord could not extinguish. And when after his resurrection, he would have his Apostles meet him on the mountain in Galilee, and feared that this fallen disciple might not deem it fitting for him thus to meet his Lord; what tenderness was that which condescended to mention him by name, "Go tell my disciples and *Peter*, that I go before them into Galilee, there shall they see me!" Yet was he as holy as he was kind. His knocks at the door of the human heart are at first gentle, and never wax to the thundering voice of terror, except when his long-suffering is exhausted. When he stood over Jerusalem, it was not in stern and ill-omened si-

lence, but in the burstings of grief. It was the place of his fathers' sepulchres; the glory of the Hebrew people; the pride of the world; the Mount Zion that he loved. He gazed long on that ill-fated city and wept over it. Next to Gethsemane and Calvary, it was his hour of sadness. They were not angry words that he uttered; they were wrung from his bosom. His lips proclaim his emotions, and his voice well nigh fails him, as he exclaims, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!" How august the scene, yet how unutterably tender! Was there ever such a preacher! The incarnate God—Mary's Son—humanity in Deity, preaching the glorious gospel to this lost and miserable world!

There is one more characteristic of Christ as a preacher, which gave him still greater pre-eminence and glory. I mean the *perfect consistency between his preaching and his character*. In this he stands alone, the single polar star of the moral hemisphere. Every truth he uttered had its antetype in his own thoughts; every holy affection he inculcated had its counterpart in his own heart; every duty he enjoined shone out in faultless perfection in his own life. The most captious of his enemies could, in no instance, turn upon him and say, "Physician, heal thyself." There was no such preaching as

his holy life everywhere and always exemplifying, and thus enforcing the gospel he uttered. He once said to the multitude and to his disciples, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not." This reproach, to some extent, belongs to every preacher of the gospel the world has seen, save one. Though in this he is most fitly the object of our imitation, yet how imperfectly is he imitated! Compared with his, the lives of the best of ministers neutralize, if they do not countervail their teaching. Yes, this is an humbling and abasing thought; but its verity and the force of it are too obvious, and sometimes too startling to be denied. And while we despair of successfully imitating his personal excellence, let us honor him by the effort to become more and more like him. It should have an effect upon us as ministers and as hearers, to keep his glory as a preacher more steadily in our view. O that we could see more of Christ in our ministry, and more of the power of his gospel in those who attend upon it. It was not for want of power in him as a preacher, that his ministry was so ineffectual in the conversion of men. "He came to his own, and his own received him not;" he "was rejected of that generation." And while this is fearful demonstration of their obduracy,

and shows how the men of Nineveh, and the Queen of the South, and Sodom and Gomorrah will rise up in the judgment against that generation and condemn it, because a greater than Jonas or Solomon were there; it is at the same time among the proofs that the days of his ministry on the earth were not the days of his triumph, but of his humiliation. He was not as yet to be the conqueror, but to travel in chains to the cross and the grave. Influences there were which he was yet to control. The day of his exaltation was coming, in which he would lead captivity captive, and give gifts to men that the Lord God might dwell among them; influences which would manifest more brightly than ever his glory as a preacher, and a day of glory when all nations should bow before him. There were truths also he *could* not inculcate, because they were not as yet truths. While he *lived* he could not inculcate them, because they were the great moral lessons of his *death*. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it *die*, it bringeth forth much fruit." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," saith he, "will draw all men unto me." Herein is *our* privilege above his, and those who hear us above those of the people to whom he preached. We preach Christ actually crucified. It is not Christ the *preacher* alone of which we preach and you hear, but it is Christ the

sufferer. The most impressive lessons he ever taught were those when, in silent agony, he hung in Calvary. I bow my knee before that cross. I thank God that he allows me to preach "Christ crucified." This is the lesson he himself is now reading to you, to me, to all, from his throne in the heavens. This mighty healer now looks down upon this hospital world, to cheer and revive it; upon this dungeon world, to break the chains of its spiritual bondage; upon this vast dormitory of sin and sepulchre of death, to bid the sleeping awake and the dead live. He is Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S MIRACLES.

SOME writer has remarked, that "it would have been the greatest miracle of all, if the world had received the Christian religion *without* miracles." If there were those who were authorized by God to bear the messages of his truth to men, it would seem to be altogether a reasonable and proper thing, that they should have been able, in the first instance, to attest their divine mission, by signs and wonders such as God only can perform. God himself recognized the reasonableness of this expectation, when he sent Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh, and Moses and Elijah to ancient Israel. It was not to be expected that the divine mission and authority of JESUS CHRIST would be acknowledged by the Jews, unless he brought with him these high credentials. He was a man of humble origin and life, with no adventitious honors, alike destitute of wealth and power, and promising no earthly reward to his followers; yet did he reveal a system of faith and practice so

foreign to the habits of the Jewish people, and so hostile to a world that lieth in wickedness, that if he could not have appealed to his miracles as evidence of his divine mission, there is no reason to believe he would have been acknowledged as a Teacher sent from God. The heaven-born religion which he came to teach, had, indeed, very many and concurrent credentials; but, whether they were external or internal, or partook of these mingled characteristics, they all indicated the immediate interposition of the Deity. Prophecy is a miracle; and even the self-evidencing power of the gospel on the hearts of those who receive it, so widely extended and so uniform, is itself miraculous. Christ himself, who "hath the key of David, and openeth, and no man shutteth," is the greatest of all miracles; while the mighty works he wrought, form the foundation on which the gospel rests. And it is a foundation girt round with strength, more firm than that which girds the mountains. The church rests upon it, and has risen, and will continue to rise, when the everlasting mountains are scattered, and the earth and all that is therein is burnt up. Miracles must hold up Christianity, or it cannot stand. The history of the Deistical controversy shows, that there is no one class of arguments against which infidels have combined their forces so strenuously, as the argument from miracles. Some have maintained

that miracles are *impossible*; and some, that if possible, they are so *improbable* as to be incapable of proof.

These remarks evince the importance of the subject to which the present chapter is devoted. Though we do not propose to speak at large of the *doctrine of miracles*, but only of the MIRACLES OF CHRIST, yet we cannot do this intelligently, without submitting a few observations at the outset, on the subject of miracles generally.

What is a miracle? Much depends upon a true answer to this question. Is it merely an event which is extraordinary and marvellous, and out of the usual course of nature? or is it an event or occurrence, which *to us is unaccountable*, and for which we can assign no sensible cause? Or will you define it to be an event wrought by the *immediate power of God*? Or will you say, it is an event which is *contrary to the established laws of nature*, and one which involves a *reversion, or suspension, or violation of those laws*? We are not satisfied with either of these definitions. *Extraordinary events* are not miracles; for then would every earthquake, every monstrous birth, every resuscitation of suspended animation in the human frame, be miraculous. Extraordinary events are not supernatural, but rare occurrences, which accurate inspection and a patient investigation of their causes, show to have existed without any immedi-

ate interposition of divine power. *Effects that are inexplicable by us*, are not miracles. What is an unaccountable event to one man, may be easily accounted for by another; and what is the obvious effect of physical causes, in the view of one man, may be miraculous in the view of another, who is ignorant of those causes. There are effects which are the result of trick and necromancy; of sorcery and magic; of art and deception; where the machinery by which they are produced is understood by those who produce them, and their causes are perfectly simple and easily explained.

Such have been the advances in natural science, that what is spoken in the ear in secret, may be almost instantaneously communicated across mountains and continents, through rivers and seas, without any other reliance than on natural causes. Medical science has made such progress in the knowledge of the human frame, and in its acquaintance with natural causes hitherto unknown; that within its own well-defined limitations, it produces results that astonish us. Yet none of these are *miracles*, nor are they attributed to miraculous power. Pretensions to miracle there have been; there were in the magicians of Egypt; but the effects were confessedly the result of "enchantment," and produced either by the agency of natural causes known only to the initiated, or by demoniacal power, given by God, and given to *prove*,

and not *disprove* the divine commission of those whose authority they were intended to oppose. There have been and are still such pretensions in the church of Rome; and in modern mesmerism, and in the agency of certain spirits whose invisible knocking is supposed to convey responses from the unseen world; but it were difficult to say of such fictitious and ludicrous claims, which is the greater, the wickedness of the deceivers, or the weakness of the deceived. Miracle is not ignorance; it is not necromancy; it is not nature and science; it is above and beyond them. Nor is it every miracle that *reverses, suspends, or violates the established laws of nature*. It is no violation of the laws of nature that a sudden calm should succeed a storm; or that a sudden storm should succeed a calm; though, under supposable circumstances, such events may carry with them the irresistible evidence of miracles. This definition of a miracle exposes the subject to unanswerable difficulties. A miracle is not a violation of any law of nature. The laws of nature are neither violated, nor altered, when a new effect is followed by a new and inadequate cause. They are violated only when the cause being exactly the same, a different effect is the result. This is Mr. Hume's definition of a miracle, and one which evinces the subtlety of his reasoning when he affirms that a miracle is incapable of proof. But what violation or alteration

of the laws of nature is it that God should be the author of a miracle? It may be out of the common course of nature, but is not contrary to that course. It may be a new and extraordinary effect, resulting from a new and extraordinary cause; while the laws of nature are no more violated by it, than they were when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." A miracle *is an event which is above the power of the natural agent, and produced by the immediate power of God.* Whatever event is demonstrably above the power of the immediate and visible agent, is miraculous. It may perhaps be more definite to say, that *a miracle is a supernatural effect produced by the immediate power of God, for the purpose of attesting the divine mission of those who are sent to communicate his will to men.* This is the view which the Scriptures give of miracles. The miracles there recorded are not only ascribed to God alone, but were wrought in proof of the divine mission of those who performed them. Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "There is a *God in heaven*, that revealeth secrets; but as for *me*, this secret is not revealed to me, for any wisdom that I have more than any living." Joseph said to Pharaoh, "It is not in *me*; *God* shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." We are told that "God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul;" and that through all the ministrations of the Apostles "God bore

them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles." These holy prophets were scrupulous in disclaiming this power, and in attributing it to God. "Ye men of Israel, why marvel at this? or why look ye so earnestly on *us*, as though by our own powers and holiness, we had made this man well?" The *God of Abraham* hath glorified his *Son Jesus*; and his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man whole." When the Jews saw the works performed by Christ, they made the confession, "No man can do the miracles which thou doest, except God be with him."

It is not unimportant to remark that miracles are performed by the *immediate* power of God. Natural causes have no influence in producing them. Like the rod of Moses and the blowing of the ram's horns around the walls of Jericho, and the branch cast into the waters of Marah, and the smiting of the rock in Kadesh, and the clay upon the eyes of him that was born blind, and the touching of the bier of the widow's son, natural instrumentalities are the mere *indices* and exponents of God's omnipotent will. In every instance of miracle it is the finger of God, it is the voice of God that produces it. Every miracle speaks for him, and bears the signature of his power.

Miracles have an object. The uniformity with which God governs the physical and the moral world, is not thus disturbed without good and

sufficient reasons. The capricious interpositions of his power, deviating from the ordinary course of nature, and producing effects which contravene the established method of his agency, would not only destroy the confidence of men in the uniformity of his government, and thus put all human calculations adrift upon an ocean of uncertainty, but would be unworthy of God himself. There must be a demand for this interposition, and there was a demand for it. And that demand consisted in the necessity of attesting the divine mission of those who were sent with the messages of God's truth to men. There have been "vanity and lying divination" in the world; there have been "signs and lying wonders," which Satan and wicked men may be able to produce; but they *profess* to be the work of creatures. They are expressly said to be "after the working of Satan." They are not performed in attestation of the divine mission of those who perform them, but are got up for the purpose of producing the false conviction that there are other powers that are miraculous beside the power of God. They do not, therefore, make any pretensions to such *attestation*. The miracles narrated in the Bible, as performed by Moses and the prophets, and by Christ and his apostles, all have this great and distinguishing characteristic. They are marks of supernatural interposition in giving to the world the revelation of God's will.

Their object was not to excite admiration even in beholding the footsteps of him who doeth wonders, and whose ways are unsearchable ; but to throw a strong and irresistible beam of conviction upon the eye of men, that those who addressed them were sent of God.

With these few observations on the general subject of miracles, we may, perhaps, be the better prepared to take a view of the *miracles of Christ*.

The first remark which here most naturally presents itself is, that *they were actually performed*. There can be no doubt of the fact that there appeared in Judea, eighteen hundred years ago, a man called Jesus of Nazareth, who wrought the miracles of which we have an account in the New Testament. This was never denied in the earlier periods of the Christian era, even by the enemies of Christianity. There was no *impossibility* in these miracles, unless we set bounds to the divine omnipotence ; there was no *improbability* in them, if we consider the high ends they were designed to promote. Improbable events may require stronger testimony than those which are probable ; but the most improbable, so long as they are possible, are *capable* of being satisfactorily attested. It was a most improbable event that the Israelites should pass through the Red Sea, as on dry land ; but it would have been a more improbable, nay, an impossible event, that they themselves should

not know if they did or did not thus pass through it; and if they did not, equally impossible was it that that whole nation should have conspired to palm the falsehood upon the world, and should have done it so successfully that contemporaneous nations, so far from challenging, confirmed their testimony.

The confidence placed in human testimony does not depend on the nature of the facts attested, but on the credibility of those who attest them. If it be conceded that the miracles of the Saviour were not impossible events; the only question which presents itself to a fair mind, relates to the credibility of the witnesses who attest them. Their testimony ought unquestionably to be severely scrutinized, and the force of it deliberately estimated. Circumstances not a few enter into this question, and such as demand grave consideration. Who are the men, and what was their object in bearing testimony to these events? What interest had they in substantiating them? and what were the circumstances in which they declared their conviction of the reality of what they saw and heard? Were they bad men and deceivers? Were they weak, credulous men, and easily deceived? Were the miracles which they attested, in favor of a religious system that consulted their national or individual prejudices? Were they few in number, and men that had little opportu-

nity of being acquainted with the miracles themselves? Is their testimony discordant, and at variance with itself; and if not so, was their harmony the result of preconcerted arrangement? Were they gainers by their testimony, and prompted by any considerations of personal interest? Were the miracles they attested wrought privately, or in secluded places, or by night, and in the presence of a few? And were there other concurrent witnesses and testimonials, confirming their simple narrative, and placing their testimony beyond dispute?

We have the most satisfactory answer to these inquiries. The character of these witnesses was never impeached, even by their bitterest enemies. They were plain men, but shrewd and sober men; and one of them so incredulous, that he refused to believe in the testimony of his companions, until he had seen the facts with his own eyes. The religious system in favor of which the miracles they attested were wrought, frowned on all their prepossessions, and was established on the subversion and ruins of their own system, so venerable for its age, and for its splendor so flattering to their national pride. They were twelve men who were Christ's companions for the three years of his public ministry. There was just enough incidental variety in their testimony to preclude the possibility of preconcert, and just such a concurrence

as establishes the great and essential facts. They were, in every view, disinterested witnesses. Their Leader instructed them that they must forsake all and follow him; and though some of them vainly imagined that he came as a temporal Prince, and would elevate them to dignity and power, yet when they came to be thoroughly disabused of these imaginations, and found by experience that they were no regal honors they attained to; they firmly adhered to their testimony, through poverty, contempt, and a persecuting malignity, that was quenched only with their blood. They were martyrs, not to a set of *opinions*, but for their testimony to *facts*. One word of recantation—a *doubt*—would have delivered them from this barbarous doom; but they “would not accept the deliverance.” The miracles they attested were performed in the open light of the sun, in the presence of enemies as well as friends, in the streets and in the Temple, in the city and in the villages, on mountain and plain, inviting observation and scrutiny, and open to detection, if there were any appearance of fraud. Concurrent testimonials also, and concurrent witnesses there were, in the standing effects of this miraculous power, in established and perpetuated memorials, and in the testimony of the enemies of Christianity. It is a remarkable fact that their testimony was *uncontradicted*. It was not contradicted *at the time*, even by their

most violent persecutors; in solemn council they confessed "they could say nothing against it." The chief priests and Pharisees made the confession, "This man doeth *many miracles*." Peter appealed to "the men of Israel, and told them that they themselves knew, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved by God, by wonders and miracles which he did in the midst of them." Josephus, the enemy of Christ, records in his Jewish antiquities, that the man Jesus "performed many wonderful works." The Jewish traditions called the Talmud, while they vilify Christ as a seducer of the people and a sorcerer, acknowledge that he performed numerous and wonderful works. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, gave an account of his miracles to the Emperor Tiberias. Suetonius, Tacitus, the younger Pliny, Ælius, Lampridius, and other Roman historians, as quoted by Dr. Lardner, in his "Heathen Testimonies," and by Dr. McKnight in his "Credibility of the Gospel History," all confirm the narrative of the four Evangelists. Celsus, Porphyry, and the Emperor Julian, the first living in the second century, the second in the third, and the last in the fourth, did not deny the miracles of Christ, though they ascribed them to magic. The fact also is patent as the day, that thousands of Jews and Pagans, who were once the bitter persecutors of Christ and his followers, were, by this and other concurrent tes-

timony, won over to the Christian faith; cast in their lot with the despised Christians, and with them, "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and at last sealed their testimony with their blood. These conflicts and triumphs of the early disciples and martyrs to the Christian faith, stand forth to the world as proofs of the miraculous power of Christ, which cannot be resisted. They arrested the attention and attracted the admiration of an admiring world. These early converts, also, like the first apostles, did not suffer martyrdom for their *opinions*, but for *facts* which forced themselves upon their conviction. And may we not demand, did this cloud of witnesses testify falsely? Would not this have been a greater miracle, less probable, and more in opposition to the established laws of human conduct, as confirmed by observation and consciousness, than the miracles of Christ themselves? We affirm, therefore, that the miracles were actually performed. To the men of that generation, one would think the testimony was sufficiently convincing. We are not surprised that the acknowledgment was extorted from the lips of the Pharisees, "Behold, the whole world is gone after him!" and only wonder that the whole world did not become Christian.

In the next place, the miracles of Christ were *many and various*. There was no needless multi-

plication of them, and no parade in the selection of their objects; yet were they more various in their character than a careless reader of the Gospels would imagine, and more in number than could be well recorded. There was no ostentation in performing them. It was at no stated hour and in no selected spot, and by no published programme by which the multitude were assembled to witness his mighty deeds. There was no trumpet sounded and no national flag to salute him; no military, or civic pageant, no thunder of cannon, and no triumphal arch to greet his quiet progress. It was in the ordinary course of his ministrations that he performed these mighty deeds, and as "he went about doing good." Many, very many instances of his power are specified by the Evangelists; but they constitute a very small part of those which actually existed. We read of his "healing *great multitudes*;" of "*great multitudes* coming to him and his healing them all;" and of people flocking from all parts of the country, and bringing to him those who suffered under the varied maladies which flesh is heir to, and many of them utterly incurable by human power. The whole course of his three years' ministry was thus employed. Wherever he went, the people followed him in order to solicit his healing power. It was a wonderful period of the world while he was upon the earth; and wonderful scenes were they that were exhibited in

Palestine during the years of his active ministry. Just think of a man appearing in the Holy Land, unostentatiously manifesting these miraculous powers, and wherever he goes attracting the multitude by his mighty deeds. What days of power were these, and what days of glory to the Son of man! Everywhere, throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee the scene is repeated. They come from far; they would know the Great Teacher and hear his voice, and see his wonders. And when one crowd of applicants after another retires, with one voice they exclaim, "When the Messiah cometh, will he do greater things than these?"

Though the *variety* of his miracles could not be as great as their *number*, yet was it as great as can well be conceived. When the enemies of God's ancient people were overcome, they attributed their defeat to their ignorance of "the manner of the God of the land." They encouraged themselves with the thought that he is the "God of the valleys and not the God of the hills." To rebuke their presumption and convince them of his universal power, God varied his miracles; he caused the sun and moon to stand still in their orbits, that for once they might see that hill and valley, earth and heaven were alike under the control of Israel's God. I have tasked my own imagination and have endeavored to think of some expression of miraculous power which might have been made

by Christ, that he did not make ; and I have done so in vain. I cannot think of one, unless it be some capricious manifestation, and one that has no object but a mere parade of power. Make the experiment for yourself. What shall the miracle be ? Shall it be to *change the elements* ? at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, he changes water into wine. Shall it be to *heal the sick who are ready to die* ; Jesus said to the nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum, "Go thy way, thy son liveth," and at "the same hour the fever left him." Shall it be the *cure of the raving demoniac* ; "Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and he came out of him." Shall it be the *healing of the leprous* ; the *restoration of the paralytic* ; the *recovery of the infirm and impotent* ; the *withered hand restored* ; the *blind* recovering their sight ; the *deaf* their hearing, the *dumb* their speech ; the *dropsical* made whole ; the *lame* walking, and the perished and lost limb of the maimed created anew, and grown out afresh ? All these things Jesus did. Shall he *still the tempest* ; hear him rebuking the winds, and the sea, and making them calm, and then listen while the witnesses exclaim, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him ?" Shall he *walk upon the sea* as confidently and securely as upon dry land ; "in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them walking on the sea, and when they cried out for fear, he said to them

Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid." Shall he, from a few barley loaves and small fishes, so multiply them as to supply the wants of thousands; he not only does this, but the fragments that remain are more than the food originally provided. Would you see greater things than these; go to the village of Nain, and see him raise the widow's son to life by touching the bier; or stand by the grave of Lazarus, and hear him say, "Lazarus, come forth," and he that was dead comes forth bound in grave clothes. What other acts of miraculous power can the most skeptical mind require? What other can he *think of* which these do not imply, and which are not less expressive than these? Do you say, he might have removed mountains, and dried up rivers and oceans; or turned in the sea upon the solid land; or sunk cities; or created and peopled them in the desert; or transformed the sandy desert into verdant fields; these things, and others like them, he could have done; and while they would have demonstrated his power, they would not show forth his wisdom. They were not called for; they would have been worse than useless; and if he had performed a thousand such miracles, they would have been no more convincing than those which he actually performed. What more than this, does the skeptical Jew, or the infidel Gentile demand? What is there that is more demonstrative and significant? Is there anything?

There is *one act of his power* greater than all these. What if he himself should sicken and die; what if you should see him even suspended from the gibbet, or nailed to the cross, and there, after his blood had trickled down, drop by drop, taken down and laid in the sepulchre, and then come back from the abodes of death, and once more dwell, a living man with living men. You shall see it all. The sun had crossed his meridian and was going down, when Jerusalem is emptied of its inhabitants, and they stand gazing on his cross. Many a long hour had he hung there the sport of Jew and Roman, till at length he cries, "Father, into thine hands I commit my spirit," and then gives up the ghost. A Roman soldier rudely plunges his spear through his heart, in order to make sure that the murderous deed was *done*. The quaking earth, the reeling city, the veil of the Temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom, the midnight darkness that came over the land at noonday, the silent and retiring multitude, all bear witness that Jesus of Nazareth is no longer among the living. His lifeless body sleeps in the garden in a new sepulchre. In the mean time, unwonted scenes take place within the city; the dead came forth from their graves and appear to many of its horror-stricken inhabitants. And on the third day after his crucifixion, this same Jesus, armed with the terrors of a second

earthquake, rises from the grave, according to the Scriptures, and appears to his disciples, who went forth and preached through Jesus, the resurrection of the dead. And to crown the whole, this same Jesus, who thus expired on a cross between two malefactors, and rose again on the third day, after having lived forty days on the earth, left the earth which despised and rejected him, and went back to his Father's throne. There was a small company of Christians, consisting of somewhat more than five hundred, who were assembled on Mount Olivet, who were witnesses of his ascension, when, by his own Godlike omnipotence, he made the clouds his chariot, and walked upon the wings of the wind, and the distant heavens received him out of their sight. Is it easy to conceive of a greater variety of miracles than this?

We remark, again, the miracles of Christ were all of a *benevolent character*. Inspect them all, from the first which he wrought at the marriage in Cana, of Galilee, consecrated to social joy, to the last, by which he ascended to heaven; and you will perceive that they are striking manifestations of his love and mercy, as well as his power. They were the applications of human want to which he responded; and the cries of human misery and helplessness which reached his ear. It was the courtier's appeal for a suffering servant; it was the father's appeal for a dying daughter; it

was the cry of the prostrate lunatic, or the foaming demoniac to which he listened. It was the orphan sisters weeping at the grave of their only brother, and the lonely widow broken-hearted for the death of her only son, with whom he sympathized. He did not seek the rich, nor overlook the poor. What he did was without fee or reward. He asked only that these beneficiaries of his benevolent power should receive the greater gift of the gospel of his grace. See that wretched demoniac, naked and bleeding, "howling with agony as a wanderer among the tombs." "Evil spirit, I command thee to come out of him," says Jesus, and the man is "sitting at his feet, clothed, and in his right mind." Go to the lake of Genesaret, and see that loathsome and frightful form, shut out from the society of men, because "his flesh is putrefied, and inch by inch is dropping from his bones." He had *laid himself* down to die; but roused by the tumult of the multitude, and told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he uttered the cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" Every eye was fixed on Christ, and every ear heard the prompt reply, "*I will*;" be thou clean!" Look, now, at that dense crowd of human beings, pressing on every side, tossed as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. It is a "perfect sea of faces, and rocked as if it stood upon

the sea ;”* but it is composed of the helpless and those who help them. They are parents who were once the pride and glory of their children, and children who were once the pride and glory of their parents ; the rich and the poor, the maimed, the halt, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the palsied, the leprous, and the maniac. As fast as one is healed, another steps in his place. The more distant and helpless begin to despair ; and as they give utterance to their despondency, Jesus responds, “All things are possible to him that believeth ; go in peace !” Such was the benevolent character of his miracles ; they were not wrathful, nor omens of wrath.

We remark again, the miracles of Christ were *strongly indicative of those greater cures which he came to perform for the souls of men*. They were so in their nature, in the means by which they were effected, and in the prescribed conditions on which they were wrought. If we look at their *nature*, we perceive that they were bright omens of good to lost men, blind, deaf, diseased, and dead as they are in trespasses and sins. One of the most effective methods by which the minds of Jew and Gentile were arrested, their prejudices subdued, and their prepossessions enlisted in favor of the gospel, was the fact that these miraculous cures of the body preceded the cures which Christ

* See Croly's Salathiel.

came to effect for the soul. Men everywhere needed to be convinced that Jesus Christ was their best friend, and that he had no other object than to promote their best interests for time and eternity. There was great wisdom and love in his selecting the most distressing diseases of the body and the mind as the medium through which his miraculous power was manifested. It showed the benignity of his heart, and was fitted to disarm their suspicion, win their confidence, and indicate the nature and objects of his heavenly mission.

This thought demands more enlargement than we can now give to it ; and we must content ourselves with merely selecting a few examples. The miracle of *giving sight to the man who was born blind* happily illustrates the *spiritual illumination* of men when they are brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. They are *born* spiritually blind. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Jesus anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam ; and when he had done so he was restored to sight. So the dark and benighted sinner, who obeys the voice of Jesus Christ, and washes in Siloam's fountain, is cured of his blindness by God's effective grace ; sees spirit-

ual things as he never before saw them, and becomes a monument of the Redeemer's glory. He may not be able to describe the process of the work of grace in his soul, nor how this happy change was brought about; but he is conscious of its effects, and can say with the restored Jew, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see." Those instances in which Christ cured men of the *leprosy* are among the most illustrious miracles which he wrought; and most beautifully illustrate the power of his grace in cleansing the soul from the defilement of sin. Just as the leper forfeited his privileges, under the law, of approaching God in his sanctuary, has the sinner forfeited his legal right of drawing nigh unto God. Just as the leper was defiled and unclean and loathsome, so is the sinner defiled and impure, and covered with the wounds and sores and plague of sin. Just as the leper was threatened with a slow and lingering death, so is the spiritual disease of the sinner of the most alarming and dreadful kind, diffusing itself throughout all the faculties of his mind and heart, and everywhere spreading its malignity. Just as the leper was required to have a just sense of his loathsomeness, to lay his hand upon his mouth, and cry unclean! unclean! so is the sinner required to have just apprehensions of his vileness, a deep sense, and a humiliating conviction of his malady. Just as the leper fell at Jesus' feet, cry-

ing "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean," so is the guilty and perishing sinner's only refuge and hope in the sovereign and almighty grace of the adorable Saviour; and just as the leper, in his application to the great Healer, found himself a recovered and new man, so the sinner, in thus committing himself to the hands of the Redeemer, is washed from his filthiness; and though the remains of his distemper cleave to him, its deadly poison is extracted, its power broken, and he lives. The most emphatic miracles of Christ, and those which excited the most admiration, were his raising to life the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus. They were not only diseased, but dead; the lamentations of the mourners had begun; one of them was being borne to his sepulchre, and the body of one had become putrescent and lain in the grave four days. But at Christ's command the departed spirit came again to its earthly tabernacle, and they went forth into the world among the living. So fallen man is not only diseased and far gone in his spiritual malady, but *dead* in trespasses and sins. Nor is there any power that quickens him but the power of Christ. "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." By him there is a complete resurrection from the death of sin to a life of righteousness. Christ is their life, and his mighty power it is that quickens them. It is worthy of

remark also that the prescribed *condition* on which Christ wrought his miracles was *faith* in him. "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" "According to your *faith* be it unto you!" So *faith* is the revealed condition of the gospel salvation. "He that *believeth* shall be saved." Christ "is the power of God to every one that believeth." The Saviour, also, as the great Healer, was accessible to all; no matter what their condition in the world, nor how inveterate and hopeless the malady, they had the privilege of applying to him. So have men everywhere the same privilege and the same access. There are no legal obstructions; no adamant or fiery walls of justice to exclude them from entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The blood of Christ is a sovereign antidote, and "cleanseth from all sin." No sinner that desires it but may be admitted to his mercy. He need not pine away in his iniquities, for "there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there."

We remark, in the last place, the miracles of Christ were *always effective*. We know they are so, in regard to the diseases of the soul. He "saves his people from their sins." They are no longer alienated from God, but he is their chosen portion. They are no longer led captive by Satan at his will. Outwardly and inwardly, they are new creatures. They are no longer odious in God's sight, but the people whom he loves. His

wrath no longer abideth in them, nor are they exposed to the arrest of his justice. There is perfect relief in Christ, and he frees the soul "from the law of sin and death." So did his miracles while he was on the earth, accomplish their object. He performed no partial cures, and left no relics of the old malady which he attempted to eradicate. He spake and it was done. Whatever the malady was, no sooner did it come under his treatment, than it was removed. The remedy was complete and permanent. Filthiness was washed away; shame was covered; fear removed; health, comfort, and joy, restored to the abodes of despondency. Not one goes away disappointed and in sadness. The eyes of the blind saw; the lame leaped as a hart; and the tongue of the dumb sang. They were effects which transcended the power of man; and in those cases in which they were effected by means, the means were not only inadequate, but even adverse; while for the most part they were without the intervention of means, and were effected by a touch, a word, or a look. They were always instantaneous, and never unsuccessful. In this respect they differ from the whole class of cures effected by the skill of men, and give the Great Physician the everlasting pre-eminence. We do not disparage the skill of man; nor are we unmindful of those advances in science, which, under the reign

of the great Prince and Saviour, have contributed so largely to the relief of human suffering. Wonderful cures are effected even of the deaf and dumb; but in no case is the recovery effected by a look, a word, or a touch, and in none is it *complete*. Medical skill, through the power of natural causes, may give vigor to the torpid nerves of the ear; but it cannot perform what the Saviour did, "touch the tongue," so that the recovered deaf, without the aid of that culture which so gradually produces articulate speech, can "speak plainly." And it deserves remark, that Jesus invoked no higher power, in the wondrous works he wrought, than his own. It was not in another's name and by another's power that he did these things; but by his own power and authority, for he himself was God, and competent to perform the God-like work. The question which he put to the two blind men that came to him was, "Believe ye that *I* am able to do this?" He did it, and he did it effectively for the objects of his compassion, and for his own mighty prerogative, and for the introduction and extension of his kingdom among men.

Such is a compendious view of the miracles of Jesus Christ; and do they not bespeak him *glorious*? Yet this is the Personage whom that wretched generation nailed mangled and bleeding, to the accursed tree. How true is the record,

"They hated me without a cause." They could see no virtue where all virtue was. "Many good works," saith he, "have I done among you; for which of these do you stone me?" This is the man for whom they mingled such bitter waters, and on whom they wreaked their pitiless malignity. There was nothing in his character, nothing in his deeds, nothing either in his influence, or his object, that ought to have provoked them to this cruelty; yet the deed was done, that deed of infernal malignity, which shook their city and their Temple; which, in accordance with their own solemn and fearful imprecation, brought his blood upon themselves and their children, and superinduced over that blinded and wretched people, the midnight darkness of eighteen centuries. No marvel that as he stood over against that ill-fated city, he wept. They were but the convulsive throes of his own divine tenderness, when he bathed his face in his hands, and exclaimed, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!"

Take ye heed how ye reject this Great Healer. The men of that generation had nearer and more obvious testimony of his divine mission, from the miracles he performed, than is possessed by the men of this distant age. But the proof of his miracles is not less *real* to us, than it was to them. We have the testimony of apostles, because we have their own record, and such abundant proof

of its genuineness and authenticity. No question has been more thoroughly scrutinized and sifted than this, both by the enemies and friends of Christianity, and none more satisfactorily settled by the laws of evidence. Christianity cannot afford to be credulous. The human mind cannot demand greater evidence of a divine mission, than is furnished by the credibility of the original witnesses to the miracles of Christ, and the genuineness and authenticity of their recorded testimony. Death has called them away; their dust is perished, and no man knoweth the place of their sepulchre; but their memorial remains. Their evidence is not weakened by the distance of time and place, because it is supported by facts, and facts do not lie. We feel an interest that links us to these bygone generations, and these entombed witnesses, because we have the same faculties of judgment, the same responsibility, the same wants, and the same immortality. Our gospel was theirs; our faith was theirs; our hope, our salvation, rest on the same basis with theirs. We believe in Christ, "for his works' sake." The appeal which he made to them, he makes to us: "The *works* which the Father hath given me to finish," says he, "these same works do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." Here we rest our confidence, and here they rested theirs, when in the depth of their solitude, they entered the

prison from which they went out only to bare their neck to the axe of the executioner. The life-giving power of that gospel which gave them victory, when Roman lictors threw off their headless trunks from the scaffold, and cast them to Nero's lions, cheers us with the light of immortality, even as they were cheered. Jesus said to the Jews, "If I had not done among them the *works* which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." He came to be the Saviour of men; nor will he now cast out any that come to him, any more than he cast any who came to him in the days of his flesh; no, NOT ONE! "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." He still heals the broken heart, and binds up the prisoner's wounds. He still preaches the forgiveness of sin, and cures the ills which sin has caused. He still enters the strong man's house and spoils his goods, and destroys the works, and breaks the chains of that Great Enemy who leads men captive at his will. He still raises the dead in trespasses and sin, and quickens whom he will. "Verily I say unto you, the hour is coming and *now is*, when they that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and they that hear shall live."

I would not turn away from such a Healer. I would not reject such evidence of his mission. I would not refuse to inquire and satisfy myself of

the foundation of his claims. Nor would I be long in prosecuting that inquiry, nor slow of heart to believe in him, lest he should come suddenly and shut the door of hope. The remedy is simple: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You will be won over to him, if you once see him in his true loveliness and glory. There *is* form and comeliness in him, and beauty, and everything to make him to be desired.

"Ne'er in heaven's mansions, calm and bright,
Did his immortal brow
Send forth its pure, celestial light,
More gloriously than now."

Great Physician! Almighty Healer! come to us from thine own mansions, and show us thy glory here, in this low, dark world. Every one who, having seen the Son, hath believed in him, hath everlasting life. Say not, I know he can heal me, and save me; but I am unworthy! So thought the suffering paralytic. But Jesus said to him, "*My son!*"—they were strange words, but they opened the sufferer's mind to new views, and new confidence in the Divine Healer—"My son, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURATION.

MOUNTAIN scenery makes a strong, if not the strongest appeal from the world of nature to religious emotions. It is not the valley, nor the plain, where all is sweetness and tranquillity, which speaks most emphatically to those sentiments within us that are waked up either by the sublime or the beautiful. It is not the ocean, now breathless, now swelling under the soft breeze, and now tossed by storms. It is not the crowded city, nor the lonely desert, skirted though it may be with rock and tower, and many a memorial of bold adventure. It is rather the mountain range, rising above plain and city, desert and ocean; sometimes crowned with clouds and sometimes brilliant with light; while here and there some bold and lofty peak shoots upward, glowing in azure beauty, clothed with majesty, and struggling for ages with the lightning's blast, and the fury of the hurricane.

Mount Tabor stands alone. It is a lofty mountain nearly three miles in height, in the northern

border of the plain of Esdraelon, and not far from fifty miles north of Jerusalem. Both ancient and modern travellers speak of the view from the summit as one of the most beautiful in Palestine. A late writer says of it, "From the summit of Tabor, the eye wandered over the whole glory of the Land of Promise. To the south extended the mountains of Samaria, their peaked summits glowing in the sun with the colored brilliancy of a chain of gems. To the east, lay the lake of Tiberias, a long line of purple. Northward, like a thousand rainbows, ascended, lit by the western flame, the mountains of Gilboa where the spear of Saul was broken, and the first curse of Jewish obduracy was branded upon Israel in the blood of their first king. Closing the superb circle, ascending step by step, the south-eastern chain of the mountains of Lebanon were seen soaring into the very heavens." On this mountain Barak encamped with ten thousand of the men of Zebulon and Naphthali, on the eve of the battle with Sisera, in which Israel were the conquerors, and sang that song, "So let thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength." It was from this mountain, that in our own day that great conqueror that made Europe tremble, descended upon the fierce Turk, and routed his army on the plain below. And here, on this lofty eminence, if un-

contradicted tradition may be relied on, was the wonderful scene of *Christ's transfiguration*. This scene is the subject of the present chapter; it is THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURATION.

There were scenes in the life of the Saviour, in which the lustre of his divine glory broke through the dense veil which enveloped it by his assumption of our abject nature. Such was that exhibited at his baptism; when the Spirit, like a dove, rested upon him, and a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Such were the scenes of his miraculous power; when "the God shone gracious through the man," and in his own name, and by his own authority he performed what none but the Deity could perform. Such was the scene on Tabor, when he "took Peter, James and John, and brought them up into an high mountain apart, and was *transfigured* before them."

So peculiar and impressive was this manifestation, that it was made only in the presence of *three* of his disciples. It was not on this occasion only, that he thus distinguished these three apostles. When he raised the daughter of Jairus, he permitted only these to follow him. When he endured his agony in the garden, these three only were allowed to be its witnesses. So great indeed was the distinction he conferred upon them that they were regarded as the chief in the apostol-

ical family. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, speaks of James, Cephas and John as those who seemed to "be pillars." The scene about to be exhibited was not to be disclosed until after his resurrection; and it may be that Christ thought it safe only with these three trusty men. We do not know all the reasons for this distinction; but it is enough for us to know, that he wisely selected those whose united testimony might substantiate this great fact for the edification and comfort of those who fear God in all future time. In order to give additional interest to this transaction, *Moses* and *Elias*, long acquainted with each other in heaven, came from that blessed world to witness this wonder on the earth; and themselves appeared *in glory* to converse with Christ concerning his approaching death. It was a scene of deep interest, when these favored disciples, absorbed in their own thoughts, thus accompanied their master to this Holy Mount. They knew not why it was that he led them thither; but no sooner had they reached its summit, than unearthly glories shone around them, and unearthly sounds came upon their ear.

We may well approach this scene with religious fear, and holy admiration. *Nine* of the chosen apostles were prohibited from beholding it; the *three* who did behold it, are long since fallen asleep; and it were presumption in *us*, now, at

the distance of eighteen centuries, to hope to draw aside the veil, and disclose all its wonders. It suggests to us the four following thoughts.

Of all the great realities which this scene discloses, the first is *the glory of the God-Man Mediator*. The low and abased condition of the Son of God, during the period of his Incarnation, was an unnatural condition. It was a humiliation voluntarily assumed; a stoop from his original dignity; a descent from his previous elevation; a condescending resignation of his superior claims; and a renouncement of the pre-eminent station which he had before occupied. Heaven was his primeval residence, and there he possessed "the glory of his Father before the world was." No being was more exalted, for he "was in the form of God." "He *made himself* of no reputation, and *took* upon him the form of a servant, and was *made* in the likeness of men." He was emphatically *transformed and transfigured* by his *assumption of our nature*; and in the scene before us, he is transformed *again*; he lays *aside* for a while his *condescension and humiliation*, and rises to some faint exhibitions of the majesty with which he was originally invested. The fulness of the Godhead which dwelt in him, for a little time shines forth in his humanity.

When the prophet Daniel in vision beheld him, his "garment was white as snow, and the hair of

his head, as pure wool;" of such "exceeding whiteness, that no fuller on earth could whiten them." That glory which had been covered and hidden, now for the first time was manifested to men, as it is to the blessed in heaven. That visage, "marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men," was luminous, and shone as the "Sun, and his raiment was white as the light." He threw off his low attire, and put on his unearthly robes. He rose to something of his true grandeur, and manifested himself in a majesty and glory that made him the object of admiring adoration, both to the living and the dead. Moses and Elias, with the three selected disciples, no longer looked upon him as in the fashion and likeness of a mere man, but worshipped him as in the form of God.

There are some incidents in this transaction, which would lead us to conclude that for a part of the time, these three disciples were *asleep*; and that when they awoke to see this strange spectacle, like Jacob in the open field, they were constrained to exclaim, "the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." Their surprise was the greater, in that, though they came alone with Jesus into this desert mountain, they now beheld him in company with two others, who were also covered with unearthly glory, and conversed with Christ. These apostles had never seen them; did

not know them, except as distinguished strangers, and perhaps some angelic visitants. Yet nothing was more simple, or more natural, than that, as they heard Jesus converse with them and identify them, they should recognize them as the two most illustrious prophets of the Hebrew race, since its foundation to the coming of the Messiah. It was altogether a most wonderful exhibition. Their divine Lord concealed this exhibition of his glory from the world. "The world knew him not," and knows him not now; but the eye of sense then beheld, and now the eye of faith beholds him, as "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The import of this appearance of the Son of Man, in the shining figure of a glorified body, and the Father, from the bright cloud that overshadowed him, proclaiming him to be "his well-beloved Son," *no man* can understand who questions the Saviour's Divinity. Like his incarnation, it is glorious for its mysteriousness. It was as beautiful in its objects and aims, as it was unexpected and marvellous. It was indeed scarcely in keeping with the low condition and humble views of him who was born in the manger, and who had not where to lay his head; who entered into this world as the theatre of his humiliation, and who was going up to Jerusalem to meet the death of the cross; to aspire to the inexpressible

dignity of this wonderful hour. But it was kind to his disciples, kind to his church, and, in the dispensations of the divine government, unspeakably kind to *him*. It was his more formal consecration to his work of suffering. It was the lighting up of his course before he descended into the dark vale of his approaching sorrows. It was heaven's "anointing to his burial." It was the attestation of his Father's love, not to be forgotten when he hung in agony on the cross.

But this was not all its object; there is another truth suggested by this scene. We are told by the Evangelist, that as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged the three disciples to "tell no man the vision, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." There were disclosures on the mount which the Saviour knew could not fail to irritate the Jewish rulers and people, and which therefore were to be kept secret until he had accomplished the vision and prophecy by his death and resurrection. The Jews believed that their law would remain in full force under the gospel. The strength and extent of this popular prejudice was one of the most formidable barriers to the dissemination of the gospel among a people whose pride it was that they were the descendants of Abraham, and who so often exulted in the superiority of their own Lawgiver. It was the design of the Saviour to "take away the first

covenant, that he might establish a second." The ceremonial law formed altogether of positive institutions, and founded on mutable and not immutable reasons, was of such a nature that it might be abrogated, whenever it was no longer necessary to preserve one nation distinct from all the nations of the earth as a religious community. It was plainly predicted in the Old Testament, that this dispensation should be abrogated by another, and more mild and life-giving dispensation. And this abrogation, the Saviour intimates, should actually take place at his death and resurrection.

The ceremonial dispensation is revealed and enforced in "the Law and in the Prophets." But what do we behold on the Mount of Transfiguration? Moses, the great Lawgiver, and Elijah, the great Prophet, the two most distinguished ministers of the old dispensation, miraculously called from heaven for the express purpose of bearing witness to the Messiah; of paying their homage to the more illustrious Author of the Christian dispensation, and to lay down their authority at his feet. It was a constant and prevalent tradition among the Jews, that both Moses and Elijah should appear in the times of the Messiah; and to this tradition the disciples refer after they came from the Mount, when they inquire of Christ, "Why then say the Scribes, that Elias must first come?" The character and history of Moses, as

the great Jewish Lawgiver, were famous for ages, and in almost all countries of the world. Elijah was scarcely less distinguished, as the chief of the Prophets, as the founder and head of the school of the prophets which God instituted under Samuel; as the favored individual who was translated to heaven without tasting of death; and whom the Jews supposed to have appeared on the earth in the person of Christ. Yet these two greatest and most honored of God's ancient servants descend from heaven to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord, and to speak of his death as the end of the Law and the great subject of all the predictions of the Prophets.

When Moses was about to depart from the children of Israel, he told them, "A Prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto thee of thy brethren, like unto me; unto *him* shall ye hearken." *Here* on the Mount of Transfiguration is that great Prophet, according to the divine word. When Moses died, the cloud of glory which had overshadowed Israel in the wilderness, departed; now it is restored, and a voice out of that cloud testifies, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him!" The three disciples would fain have detained Moses and Elijah upon the Mount, to listen to their instructions still; but a voice from heaven suppressed the untimely thought, and spoke to them out of the cloud, and said, "*This is he*; hear

ye *him!*" It is in *him* that I have delighted. He is now your Lawyer and Prophet. Hear *him!* Moses and Elias were my *servants*; he is my well-beloved Son. He is the way, the truth, and the life; and no man "cometh unto the Father, but by *him.*"

What greater evidence of its kind, can there be of *the abrogation of the Old and the confirmation of the New Covenant*, than is here given by Moses, the great prophet of the Jews; by Elias, the great prophet of Jews and Greeks; by Christ, the great Author of the Christian dispensation; and by God the Father, the great Lord of all? Moses and Elias come from the world of spirits to wait upon their divine Lord. His own power brought them down upon Mount Tabor, to confess that a greater than Moses, or Elias, was there. This is the reason why these two men, above all the race of Adam, were called to act a part in this wonderful scene. Christ converses with them, recognizing their authority and honoring their office, but giving them their proper place. They converse with him, but it is concerning his "*decease*, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," by which the great end of their mission was accomplished, and no longer had any binding force, or obligation.

These dispensations differ only as the "letter killeth and the Spirit giveth life;" as the old is

the shadow of the new, and the new the light of the old; as the old is the new under the thick, dark cloud, and thundering of Sinai, and the new is the old under the bright sunshine and heavenly voice of Tabor. Christ is under a cloud in the one, he is in his glory in the other. "The law is but the shadow of good things to come." The Old Testament is the text of the New, and the New is a commentary upon the Old. "The whole revelation of God is here wrapt up and rolled together in itself, showing Moses, Elias, and Christ talking *together* upon the mount." Let us be thankful that our allotment is cast, not under the dark cloud and burning lava of Sinai, but under the mild and clear radiance of that illumined mountain, whence the voice, not of the mere lawgiver and judge, but the voice of our heavenly Father utters the language, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." "Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The day-spring from on high has dawned upon us, a flood of light from Tabor and Calvary is poured upon our path. If the Jews were favored above the heathen, how much more are we favored than the Jews! and "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

This scene also suggests another thought, and of a different kind. The *reality of the world of*

spirits, and the immortality of the soul; the resurrection of the body, and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, are truths that are substantiated by a great variety of evidence. The varied testimony by which the Scriptures are demonstrated to be a plenary revelation from heaven, prove these truths on the testimony of that great Being who cannot lie.

But there is one species of testimony not to be resisted even by the most skeptical and unbelieving mind. It is that which results from his own *experience*. If these doctrines are true, every man *at death* will find them to be true. The moment his soul leaves his body and he enters the world of spirits, he will see for himself that *there is* such a world. The righteous will see this the moment they enter heaven; and the wicked will see it the moment they enter their gloomy prison. They will have the most perfect conviction of the truth of a future state, and of all the realities of an unchanging eternity. Allied to this species of testimony, would be the testimony of those who have already died, and who should be permitted to come back to this world and bear witness to us of what they themselves have seen and heard in regions beyond the grave. Were the intercourse between this and the future world more frequent; could we travel into eternity as we can travel into foreign lands, and see its wonders, and

then come back and dwell on the earth, we should no longer doubt the reality of the world of spirits and a future state of rewards and punishments. Or could those whom we have often seen, and with whom we have engaged in the common business of life, and who have eaten at the same table or slept in the same bed with us, return from that world for a short period, and walk these streets, and visit our dwellings, or even appear to us in the night watches, and whisper to us that the revelations which God has made in his word are no cunningly devised fables, and that there is in truth a heaven and a hell ; it *seems to us* that we should be no longer faithless, but believing. One of the difficulties men profess to have in not believing these solemn realities, is that so few who die ever return to this world. Our friends pass away, and we see them no more ; we hear of them no more. Age after age, and generation after generation passes away, and none come back to tell us where they have been, or where we shall go. No, not one word have we heard from that distant country for these eighteen hundred years ! Eighteen hundred years ago, he who inhabiteth eternity, gave the command, *Seal up the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

The rich man in the parable who went to hell, is represented as soliciting Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house, that he might "testify

unto them, lest they also come to the place of torment." Abraham makes no other reply than this: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them;" and when still importuned, he replies, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they hear, though one rose from the dead." The request was unreasonable, and it would be unreasonable now. It were impossible to repeat this sort of testimony frequently enough to satisfy all the demands of a skeptical mind, without breaking down all the barriers between time and eternity, and throwing this world into a state of trembling and consternation which it could not endure. And it would be utterly useless. Men who do not believe the Bible would not believe even such testimony as this. The true difficulty lies not in the want of evidence, but in a corrupted heart. Let pure and holy spirits come down from heaven, or let the dark and scathed sufferers be evoked from their deep abyss; and no sooner would the terrors of the moment be over, than a skeptical mind would find a thousand reasons for uncertainty and doubt.

It were reasonable to look for this testimony to some extent; and to this extent men already have it, in the word of God. What they could not endure to hear, God has revealed. He *has* called up the miserable tenants of the world of woe, and taken their narrative and copied it out in his

word. He has called down the bright spirits from heaven, and received and recorded their testimony. There is the son of the Shunamite raised by Elijah; there is Lazarus raised by Christ; there is the rich man in the parable narrating his bitter woes; and there are Moses and Elias descending on the top of Tabor, hidden from the gaze of the curious multitude, but leaving their testimony to the realities of the eternal world, as well as to the sufficiency and perfection of the Sacred Writings.

Moses had been *dead* upwards of fourteen hundred years; and Elias had been translated near nine hundred years before. Yet they were still *existing*. They appeared on the mount. They conversed with Christ. They had a corporeal form; Elijah, the same body he had while here on earth, and Moses with a body raised from the dead, as a pledge of the great resurrection. Where had they been; what portion of the universe had they occupied; what had been their employments, and what their state, during the long centuries in which they had been absent from this earth?

Is there then no world of spirits—no immortality—no resurrection—no reward and punishment beyond the grave? Does death chill and freeze forever the current of human existence? Shall that cold clay bloom no more? and that eye

never more beam with lustre? and no voice be ever again heard from those lips that moulder in the tomb? Go to Tabor, and see and hear, while the bosoms of the long since departed glow, and their eyes kindle, and their lips are fervid, as they speak of the decease which their Lord should accomplish at Jerusalem. No, it is not in vain that we wander along the shores of that unseen world. A sound does reach us over this vast abyss of waters. The waves of eternity will give up their dead. The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, as he came on Tabor to his astonished and adoring disciples.

The scene on Tabor made such an impression on the mind of Peter, that long after it we hear him saying, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were *eye witnesses* of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And this voice which *came from heaven*, we heard when we were *with him* in the Holy Mount." Let such be our impressions of the vivid realities of the coming world! It is but the pretext of unbelief, that we cannot see and hear these things for ourselves. Never will another return from these invisible regions, to confirm our faith. No, never! The

next audible voice we hear from that world, will be the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; the next ocular demonstration of the realities of that world, will be the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father.

But the most important thought suggested by this scene, remains to be considered. What was it that thus attracted these glorified men from their abodes of light, once more to visit this lower world? It was to have a personal interview with their adorable Saviour, whom they had so often beheld on Mount Zion above; with whom they had so often held sweet communion there, and at whose feet they had so often cast their crowns. And what was the subject of their interview, and what the subject of their delighted colloquy? It was a most affecting, amazing theme. They "spake of his *decease*, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." They knew it was to be accomplished, for they had spoken and written of it, and had announced it to the world.

It would be unnatural in us not to have some desires to know the substance of their conversation. But as it was for wise reasons hidden from the *nine* disciples who were not permitted to ascend the mountain, so it is wisely concealed from us. From what we know of their intellectual and spiritual character while they dwelt among

men; from their familiarity and interest in the theme; from their augmented knowledge and holiness, perfected by their long residence in the heavenly world, and from the immediate presence of their Lord; we have reason to believe that their discourse upon this great subject, was the most instructive and tender, the most pure and holy, that ever fell from the lips of men. But not one word of it is left on record. They did not narrate it to the other disciples; nor were they allowed even to mention the vision itself, "until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead."

We can only conjecture what it was. Was it the expression of their sympathy with the approaching sorrows of their Lord? Amid the lustre of that memorable scene, did they foresee the terrors of his death, and the rising tempest that was about to burst on his guiltless head? Did they speak of the sadness of the garden, the clamors of the infuriate populace and their scorn and spitting, the iniquitous trial, the barbarous sentence, the crown of thorns, the bitter passion, the splendor of his present glory between the two greatest prophets, contrasted with his approaching infamy between two thieves, and the awful moment fixed from eternity for the righteous One to be stricken by the hand of justice, and for the Author of life to die? Were thoughts like these present to their

minds; and while they marked his heavenly submission and calm serenity, would they fain have soothed his sorrows, as both he and they turned their eyes toward his cross? Or did they dwell on the necessity and efficacy of his death as the only foundation of pardon and life to penitent and believing men; as the consummation of all the scenes through which he had passed for the purpose of "making his soul an offering for sin;" and as giving the finishing stroke to his character as the *mighty Saviour*, the great and glorious *Deliverer* of his people? Or did they indulge their strongest and most admiring expressions of his *marvellous love* to this sinful and perishing world, and tell how it was "stronger than death." Or did they glance at its great and glorious consequences, and speak of the attraction and conquests of his cross; of the travail of his soul which he should see; of the multitudes who would "be turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven;" of the "gathering of the people" unto the predicted Shiloh; of the thousand channels through which the healing waters of life should flow; of the Jews and Heathens who should be raised to a partnership with him on his throne; of the concurrence of all the arrangements of divine providence, and all its resources, with the designs of his redemption; of the effusions of his Spirit, and the subjection of the world to his dominion;

of the place which his accomplished decease should occupy in the history of time and the developments of eternity, when heaven should be filled with the brightness of its glory, and every holy creature in the universe shall say, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" We do not know; and only know that the subject of their discourse was the greatest and most affecting that ever employed the lips of men, the song of angels, or the thoughts of Deity. It was the great mystery of the Divine mind before the foundations of the world. It was the song of angels when he was born, their sympathy when they appeared to strengthen him in the garden, their wondrous vision when he died. Men had read, and heard, and thought of it; philosophers had discussed it; the nations had been agitated by it; and when the mournful scene was realized, we are told, that "all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote upon their breasts and returned!" The "decease accomplished at *Jerusalem*," imparts a portion of its own grandeur and solemnity to the very spot where it was accomplished. Even now, "trodden down as it is by the Gentiles," there is no such spot as that ancient "City of our God," consecrated by this Great Sacrifice; rendered memorable by the most solemn and affecting spectacle in earth,

or heaven; and marked, even at the present hour, with the scarcely retired sackcloth and darkness that first veiled it when this mighty sufferer said, "*It is finished, and gave up the ghost!*"

We linger about such scenes, and are reluctant to turn away. The favored disciples selected to be with their divine Lord on the Mount, naturally desired to prolong that affecting and transporting interview. Peter exclaimed, and said unto Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here! If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." Many a time since, has the Saviour manifested his gracious presence to his people, when they have revered and adored him, and enjoyed his love. Like Aaron, when he led Israel to the door of the Tabernacle, to hear the responses from between the Cherubim; and like Solomon, when he had made an end of prayer at the dedication of the Temple; they have seen the glory of the Lord filling the house, and bowed themselves and worshipped. So it was on the Day of Pentecost; so it was at many a memorable season, when the early Christians met in solemn convocation; and so it has been at many a season since, when the adorable Saviour has been found walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and unfolding his glory to the churches which he has redeemed and bought with his own blood. Moses and Elias in

a short time, disappeared from the transforming scene, and Peter, James and John "were left alone with Jesus." *Alone with Jesus!* The world shut out—*alone with Jesus!* Heaven and earth shut out, and *alone with Jesus!* No; *heaven* is not shut out, when the soul is *alone with Jesus*. What Christian does not feel that to be *alone with Jesus* is to enjoy heaven upon earth! It is in fellowship with him, that his people are changed into his image; that they have a foretaste of the coming blessedness, a glimpse of the glory to be revealed. Such seasons give great vigor to faith, and to hope great and precious assurance. They have the "inward witness" then that their title to the heavenly inheritance is clear; and like Moses, they go up into the Mount to take a view of the promised land. "Lord, it is good to be here!" There is a refuge here, from the storms of earth; from the fiery darts of the adversary; from perilous times and from seasons of spiritual darkness. Who would not watch and pray, lest this ensnaring world and the sin that dwelleth in him should exclude him from those consecrated hours when he might be *alone with Jesus!*

Mount Tabor is a most impressive and affecting preacher of the gospel. How unspeakably interesting to us as sinners is that memorable scene! What is the *momentous fact* which this scene on Tabor unveils? It is that "God so loved the

world;" it is that "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost." It is that "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Men were lost, but Jesus came to save. Men were obnoxious to the stroke of justice, but Jesus averted the fearful blow. The decease he accomplished at Jerusalem has lost none of its interest. Eighteen hundred years have not blotted it out from the memory of men, nor obscured its glory. It is still the most solemn and affecting event recorded in the history of time, or the annals of the universe. We are verging, in our series of subjects, toward that great event. Tabor throws its light across to Calvary; the transfiguration is intimately allied to the crucifixion of the Son of Man. In the midst of all this splendor, there are mournful thoughts, because, enveloped as we here are with his divine glories, we hear him speak of the "decease which he would accomplish at Jerusalem." Yes, that dark hour draws near. The death of God manifest in the flesh; of the great Teacher; of the great Healer; of him "whose glory shone on Tabor, and now shines on the mount Zion above! How infinitely interesting to the believer is the *death* of Christ!

"O, the sweet wonders of that Cross,
Where God the Saviour lived and died."

That Cross, Christian, is thy refuge; and it is

thy refuge, trembling sinner. It is all thy hope; it is thy peace; it is thy salvation. Thine all is identified with that sacred cross. The church of God, on earth and in heaven, casts her highest honors at the foot of that cross. You will not, you cannot forget the cross. No, never can you forget the cross.

Bring the question home, then. *What interest have I in the decease and glory of the once crucified, and now glorified Saviour?* Angels announced his birth as the "tidings of great joy;" but what cause of gladness has his wonderful condescension proved to *you*? His spiritual kingdom has been set up in our world, but has it freed *you* from the tyranny of sin? His name was revealed by an angel from heaven, and it is above every name; but do *you* "bow at the name of Jesus, and confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?" Men from afar have seen him, and he has been the object of triumph to Jew and Gentile; but have *you* learned to glory in this star of Bethlehem—this Sun of righteousness—this light of the world? From his baptism to his death, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs; he was "wounded for your transgressions and bruised for your iniquities;" his soul "was sorrowful even unto death." He suffered as no other could suffer. The daughters of Jerusalem wept over him, and Calvary heard him say, "I thirst,"

and saw his life ebb away, and the great sacrifice completed! But what is all this to *you*? He descended into the grave, and the mouth of the sepulchre was closed upon him, and the stone sealed, and on the third day, he rose by his own divine power from the dead; but to what lively hopes and consolations have *you* been begotten by his resurrection? He ascended on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men; but have *you* become rooted and grounded in a firm belief of rising and being happy with him in everlasting life? Shortly will he come again to judge the world in righteousness; and will *you* appear on his right hand, or on his left?

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS HUMILIATION.

THE career of the Son of Man on the earth was drawing to a close. From his wondrous transfiguration on Tabor, he "set his face to go to Jerusalem."

The annual Feast of the Passover was at hand, which all the males of the Jewish nation were, by law, required to celebrate. It was their most distinguished festival. Wherever they were dispersed throughout Asia, Europe and Africa, this feast called them together. It has been supposed, that at the celebration of the Passover, there were not far from *three millions* of people, including Jews and Gentiles; so that the events which here took place, would soon be known throughout the world.* One reason why Christ directed his steps from Mount Tabor to Jerusalem, was that he might keep this feast with his disciples: "With desire, have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." But he had another and higher

* For this estimate, see Milman's History of the Jews, and Croley's Salathiel.

object. He was about to consummate his earthly course, and himself to offer that sacrifice for the sins of men, which could never be repeated, and of which the Paschal Lamb was but the prefiguration. Everything that he had done was preliminary to this; all his plans and all his conduct, had been drawing toward the cross as their centre. In some views, his glorious transfiguration might have been the fitting close to his history; but if he had stopped here, he might as well have never come into the world. The most affecting and glorious scene was yet to be unfolded. That scene we propose to contemplate; may we be enabled to contemplate it with deep prostration of spirit! There is an awful sacredness in this deep humiliation of the Son of God.

Wherein did his humiliation consist; and in what consists its glory?

In the first place, WHEREIN DID HIS HUMILIATION CONSIST?

Christianity has great peculiarities. That in which it differs from all other religions, is that which constitutes its great excellence. Its great Founder came into the world, not simply as a Teacher, but a Sufferer; not merely to prove his doctrines by his miracles and exemplify them by his life, but to reveal his death as the great doctrine. It was with no small difficulty that his disciples were induced to believe that he would

be a Sufferer; it is with greater difficulty, that the tongue, or pen, or thought of man can set forth the intensity of his sufferings. The unaffected and graphic narrative of the Evangelists, has done all in this description, which can ever be accomplished. Calvary seeks no rhetorical adornment; it stands out alone.

The Redeemer's humiliation began when he was born in Bethlehem; nor did it cease until he rose from the grave, and ascended to the right hand of majesty in the heavens. But though he was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs," during the whole term of his Incarnation; yet were there days of deeper humiliation appointed him, than those which occupy the ordinary pages of his mournful history. The scene becomes more tragical, as it gradually draws toward the melancholy catastrophe. There were *peculiarities* in it that are strongly marked.

Of all that have suffered, from the beginning of time to the present hour, there is but this one Sufferer, who did not deserve the sorrows he endured. His humiliation constitutes an anomaly in law, an anomaly in morals, an anomaly in the divine government. The highest becomes the most debased; the most honorable becomes the most dishonored; the loftiest becomes a worm in this world of worms; the holiest is made the most miserable; and he who could claim most from

God and man, bears the rage of man, and the curse of God. It is not strange that Lucifer was banished from heaven; nor that Sodom fell; nor that Babylon sunk; nor that man is born to trouble, and that God should bend his bow, and set him a mark for the arrow. But that he who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, should be permitted to die as a malefactor, is a fact that indicates, either that the reins of government have been abandoned by infinite justice, or that some great moral problem is being solved, which demands a tremendous sacrifice.

This was the secret of his mighty woes. The fact that "Messiah was cut off not for himself," was ominous of terror. They were strong measures that were resorted to, in order to justify the great Lawgiver, burning, as his throne does with terrors to the guilty, in "justifying the ungodly." And what marvel that an arrangement, which comprised the substitution of the innocent in place of the guilty, when carried into effect, should fill the sufferer with fear and trembling; and that the sacrifice should smoke with God's heated indignation! Heart-sickening and withering consciousness was that when, in ways unknown to mortals, "the swift and stinging sense of condemnation" for the sins of myriads, forced itself upon him with such intense reality, that no ray of light, no hope, no sympathy of earth or heaven could reach

him ! He must be mighty to suffer, if he was mighty to save ; and since the Deity stood by to inflict the blow, the Deity also stood by, unsevered from his humanity, when the crushing blow fell. The sufferer was no mere man. No mere creature could have girded himself for the mighty conflict which the Son of God then endured. No ; Mary's son was not alone. Divinity itself conjoined with humanity, was necessary to consummate this fearful humiliation. Wondrous sufferer ! belonging both to heaven and to earth, yet by both disowned ! The Rock of Ages united to a fragile reed, and shivered by the storm !

He was in the garden of Gethsemane with Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, when he gave utterance to the words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." It was one of the darkest passages in his humbling pilgrimage. He knew not what to think or what to desire. "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ?" He had unequalled courage, but he shrank from the tempest which he saw just about to burst upon his head. Never was his obedience so put to the test as now. It was Satan's hour and the power of darkness. That pure mind of his was passing under the cloud. Temptation beset him on every side. He grew pale ; he trembled in every limb and nerve ; he sweat "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." No mind in

the universe but his own knew the horror of those internal agonies. The cup was bitter, and with a transport of terror, agony, and submission, such as never broke from human heart, he could only say, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as thou wilt!"

Judas had betrayed him into the hands of the Jewish priests and Pharisees, and the resolution was taken to execute him as a conspirator against the government. We will not speak of the foul and manifold outrage committed upon his person, and the symbols of indignity he bore, except thus to recall his profound abasement. Pilate delivered him to the Jews to be crucified. It was not lawful to execute him within the city; the soldiers led him without its walls, in solemn procession between two thieves. He was faint from watching, from fasting, from scourging, from solicitude and fear; yet they laid upon him his own cross. Was ever sight more humiliating than the eternal Son of God, thus associated, and bearing his cross to the place of punishment! Well did the daughters of Jerusalem weep when they saw him! What a triumph to the Jews to see him who professed to be their king, thus marching to his crucifixion between two malefactors! To what a low point of ignominy was Christianity then reduced, and what confusion and grief and shame covered the few followers of its Founder! It is scarcely to be won-

dered at that their faith was shaken ; and that, as the victim was thus being led to the altar, his own disciples, if they did not deny him the tribute of their affection and their tears, " all forsook him and fled."

There is remarkable minuteness in the Scriptural narrative of the closing scene. It was on the day of the preparation of the Passover, and at the sixth hour of the day, or at noon, that he was nailed to the cross. He was numbered with the transgressors ; the two thieves were crucified with him, and as though he were the greatest of the malefactors, Jesus in the midst.

This was humiliation as deep as God could inflict, or the Son of God could feel. There was nothing to mitigate it ; not one alleviating incident ; no hand of kindness near ; no consolatory voice of affection ; no tenderness to pillow that aching head, or assuage that burning thirst, except by the vinegar and gall. He was left alone. The Furies were let loose upon him. There was hissing and execration, and blasphemy. The utmost spite of hell was accumulated on that guiltless head. Angels that came to strengthen him in the garden, did not come to his rescue, or his relief on the cross. The presence and smile of Him he most loved were not there. God hid his face and spoke in tones of wrath. He smote his Fellow Shepherd ; and when the sword of the Omnipotent fell, the

last ingredient in his cup of misery was mingled. It was full; it overflowed. After a few words of blessing for the guilty and intimations of love for those he loved, he uttered that memorable sentence which man may read, but which the lips of man know not how to utter, and his heart sunk within him. One exceeding great and bitter cry, and he gave up the ghost.

They had taken off his garments, and there hung his poor, mangled, bleeding body, *uncovered*, for his enemies to abuse and scoff at. It was an affecting, humiliating spectacle even for the angry clouds to hover over, and satiated fiends to look upon; but it was indignation to the dead. It is impossible for mortals to sound the abyss of these mighty woes. It was the deepest depth of his intense humiliation. Never was there One in whom the prediction was so fulfilled, "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and *despised* of the people."

Behold the man! Was this *the Christ*? Was this the great Messiah promised long to Jew and Gentile? Was this the expected child, at whose birth angels sang, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good-will to men! Is this He who was separate from sinners? this the Great Teacher who spake as never man spoke? the great Healer whose fame filled Palestine, and at whose approach the very populace so lately

cried Hosannah to the Son of David? Is this He whom angels worship, and to whom the voice was so lately addressed from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" Yes, this is he. Behold the man! How changed from the bright glory that once filled heaven! He has not even the crown of thorns to protect his head, nor the purple robe to conceal his shame. O that lowliness, that indignity, that intense humiliation that covered this eternal Son of God.

But there is another side to this mournful picture. We speak of honor in the midst of abasement; of dignity in the midst of shame; of victory and triumph in death; of glory, rich and splendid glory in this deep humiliation. This thought may be amplified by the following illustrations.

Christ was glorious in his humiliation, in the first place, in the abundant attestations it furnished of his *unsinning excellence*. There are several interesting circumstances which occurred even at the time of his trial and condemnation which demonstrate the innocence of Jesus. He had been delivered into the hands of his enemies, by bribery, and by one of the members of his own immediate household; betrayed secretly, and amid the darkness of night, and in the seclusion of his own retirement. But no sooner did the traitor perceive that his perfidious design was accomplished, than conscience began her work of retribution, and

drove this hardened culprit to despair. He rushed into the presence of the men who employed him in this deed of death, threw down the thirty pieces of silver and exclaimed, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood!" And when he learned that it was all in vain, the righteous providence of God would not leave him to any more slow, or less searching trial than his own blood-stained conscience. Never did this vile traitor act a more sincere part than when he made this confession; and inexcusable as the act was, never did he act a more honest part, than when he "went out and hanged himself." And that "potters' field" where he committed the fearful deed, and which was the price of blood, stood for ages a permanent memorial of the unsullied glory of his Master's integrity.

Jesus also, stood before the tribunal of Rome, and at an age when Roman law commanded the respect of the world. He was brought before a Roman Judge, one who did not want motives to gratify the hostility of the Jews toward their victim, and one who from his well-known character, had no misgivings at the shedding of blood. Pilate was a monster of avarice and cruelty, and had so abused his power in the Province of Judea, that Rome had no subjects more seditious than the Jews. Yet in the criminal process against Christ, this man preserved a

moderation and integrity, which, had he persevered in them, would have gone far toward redeeming the honor of his official station. Again and again he bore witness to the faultless character of his prisoner, and expostulated with the Jews for desiring him to convict an innocent man. He conversed publicly with Jesus; he examined him privately; and then protested to his accusers, "I find no fault in this man;" why should "I crucify your King?" When he saw that it was no longer possible to rescue him, and from the tumultuous spirit of the people, unsafe to delay his execution, as though he called heaven and earth to witness that he yielded to their sanguinary demands, not of his own will and judgment, but in obedience to theirs, he took a basin of water, and in sight of them all, washed his hands of the blood they were so eager to shed. It is a remarkable fact, that a wise providence should so have directed the concerns of the Roman Empire during the time of the Saviour's trial and crucifixion, that such a man as Pontius Pilate should be the Procurator of Judea, and should have borne this uniform and persevering testimony to the Saviour's innocence. The only tribunal which was legally qualified to pronounce him guilty, thus solemnly pronounced him innocent. And it deserves remark, that this Roman Judge, caused his testimony to be inscribed in deep and legible

characters upon the Sufferer's cross. Christ had confessed himself a KING; nor did Pilate take offence at his confession when Jesus had unfolded to him the spiritual nature of his kingdom. And when he was crucified, the title which Pilate directed to be labelled on his cross was, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." The Jews entreated him to alter it, but the just Roman was immovable. "Write not," said they, "I AM the King of the Jews, but that he SAID, I am the King of the Jews." Still the imperturbable Judge remained firm. "Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written." And the inscription stood, declaring to all men, that in the judgment of high-minded and impartial Rome, whose eagle then cast its shadow over the world, the crucified One had no claims he had not vindicated.

On two occasions in his previous history, at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration, a voice from heaven was uttered, declaring, "This is my beloved Son!" There were heavenly voices heard just before Jesus entered the garden, and while he was in immediate apprehension of the bitter cup God himself spoke to him; pronouncing him glorious and glorified in the fulfilment of his great work. Just before the last Passover, the Sufferer had uttered the oppressive thoughts, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour! But for this

cause came I to this hour. Father, glorify thy name!" The appeal was public. There was wanting, just at this crisis, some strong testimonial of the divine approbation, which should arrest the attention of men, and go with *him*, and be remembered by *them*, when Satan's hour should come, and the powers of darkness should prevail. Scarcely had Jesus uttered the words, than a voice from heaven was heard in reply. "The people that stood by, said that it thundered; others said that an *angel spake*." The herald thunder passed away, and the words were uttered, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The eternal Godhead bowed his heavens to put this visible seal, this divine attestation, to the mission and character of his Son.

The *wonderful prodigies of nature* also, that appeared as he was passing through the deepest valley of his humiliation were attestations too honorable to him, and too emphatic, to be misunderstood. During the whole period in which he hung upon the cross, "from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land, until the ninth hour." The sun would not look upon that scene of ignominy; he turned away and bathed his face in impenetrable clouds. It was his Maker hanging naked on the cross; the Eternal Son of God receiving on his guiltless head the last phial of heaven's unmitigated wrath. Thick darkness covered the land,

and black tempests shook it, when He who is the light of the world was thus enveloped with ignominy. The "veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Its "massive walls shook to their foundation, and tore that sacred covering from the Holy of Holies," as a man rendeth a garment. There was an earthquake also which filled Jerusalem with terror. "The rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the *saints* which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many." They were fearful omens, and might have constrained even the murderers of their Lord to exclaim, *this is the finger of God!* We cannot attribute them to natural causes, nor account for their concurrent existence at the moment of the Saviour's giving up the ghost, unless they were miraculously commissioned to attest his glory who hung on the cross. They proclaimed to the astonished millions that the dying Jesus, the dead and lifeless Jesus, would yet shake, not the earth only, but also heaven. It was an invisible hand writing its destiny on the wall of corrupted and decayed Judaism; a voice from heaven consecrating the foundation stone of that kingdom which cannot be moved. The testimony struck that vast populace with awe; it opened their eyes to the innocence and glory of the Son of Man, so that

"all they who came together at that great sight, smote upon their breasts." The most unbelieving were convinced, and the most obdurate softened by the spectacle. The scene was suddenly changed. The shame of the Sufferer became his honor; his humiliation his glory. Admiration succeeded contempt and outrage; dark as the scene was, the day had dawned in which men began even to glory in the cross.

In the next place, Christ was glorious in his humiliation, *from the heavenly spirit and exalted attributes of character which he there expressed.* "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah! This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" What the Prophet here demands concerning Christ as the triumphant Conqueror over his enemies, may with perfect fitness be appropriated to him as the mighty Sufferer. In his lowest degradation, he showed himself to be a mighty Prince; and in his weakness travelling in the greatness of his strength. He was "treading the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him;" yet was there a moral greatness, a true sublimity of character, which is in vain sought for, except in his own godlike excellence, even when his Godhead was in almost total eclipse. We should never have known his true character but for his humiliation. This is the sphere in which all his loveliness

is manifested. His example required the cross to make it perfect. How fair with heaven's grace and loveliness was he then! What a spectacle of finished moral beauty to look at! What a beautiful portrait of heaven! His Divinity was veiled in clay; his apparel was human; blood was sprinkled upon his garments, and stained all his raiment; yet amid these adumbrations of the Deity, in this low attire, and in this deepest excess of humiliation, he presents the most perfect exhibition of moral greatness and beauty which the world ever beheld. There were gathered around it a loveliness, a splendor, an awfulness of moral virtue, which grew brighter to the last, and which have left behind them a lustre which shall survive the flight of time.

This humiliation could not have been *imposed* upon him without injustice. His life and his blessedness were his own; he had never forfeited them; and he alone had a right to dispose of them. "No man," says he, "taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself." We cannot conceive of a more disinterested and glorious trait of character than that which, in view of the claims of law and justice on the one hand, and the appeal of human helplessness and woe on the other, in order to meet the exigency, freely consented, rather than that man should suffer, to offer up *himself* on the altar of justice. He who *chose* the manger for his

birthplace, chose the cross for his pillow of death. When they challenged him to "come down," he chose to remain and die. When, by a wish, he could have been rescued by "legions of angels," he preferred to be left under the dominion of his enemies. When he might have arrayed himself in robes of omnipotence, he chose the crushing humiliation. There are other excellencies for which he is beloved and adored by angels and men; but this is his great excellence, and that which renders "his name above every name." It was a thought unutterably precious to him that his heavenly Father loved him for this more than for anything else. "*Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.*"

Not only did he go thus unreluctantly to the altar, but there was a *steadfastness of purpose and zeal in accomplishing* it, which had its impulse in his own unconquerable goodness. Never was there a work so great or so difficult; and never was there a mind so perfectly absorbed in it as his. At one time we hear him saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" And another, to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly." Mark the unvarying constancy of his purpose, the unabated ardor and resolution that distinguished him to the last; and was there not a moral sublimity in his

humiliation, such as the light of heaven has never beheld?

Then mark the *spirit*, the calm and tranquil spirit, the unresisting meekness and love with which he passes through this fiery ordeal. What a state of mind was that when he uttered the words, "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee!" This was the great thought with which he entered upon his humiliation, and which governed his deportment before the tribunals of Judea and of Rome. When the chief priests interrogated him concerning his disciples and his doctrine; to the question touching his disciples, he *answered nothing*: he would not expose these timid followers to the gathering storm. To that touching his doctrine, his reply was, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou *me*? Ask them which heard me what I said unto them; behold they know what I said." When one of the officers "struck him in the face," because he thus answered the high priest, Jesus calmly answered, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" When two false witnesses testified against him, and the high priest demanded what he had to say to their testimony, he was *silent*. When the high priest *adjured* him by

the living God to tell him whether he were the Christ, the Son of God; perceiving at once the object of this demand, and knowing well that such an avowal would seal his death, he at first eluded the question. "If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I question *you* ye will not answer me, nor let me go." The question was too decisive a one and might be evaded for the purpose of setting the answer in a true light.

Having made this remark, he replies, "It is as thou hast said; I AM THE CHRIST." The confession served only to seal his condemnation; and the Sanhedrim at once handed him over to Pilate, praying for sentence against him as a *blasphemer*. To the inquiries of Pilate he gave direct and unequivocal answers; and so full, that neither Pilate nor the Jews could misunderstand the nature of his claims. "Thou sayest that I am a King, but my kingdom is not of this world." I have no earthly throne, and no power of earthly princes. My kingdom is over the minds and hearts of men, whom I would fain subdue by the force of truth and the power of my grace. It was in the course of this interview, that he made that dignified and noble avowal, "For this end was I born, and for this end came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth." Paul in writing to Timothy, alludes to this "good confession" which Jesus Christ thus made before Pontius Pilate. A

noble confession it was, and worthy the King of Truth.

Pilate sent him to Herod; but in the presence of the infamous murderer of John the Baptist, he refused to *utter a word*. Herod asked him many questions, but he “answered him *nothing*.” He would not recognize the murderer’s authority, but would rather quietly submit to his indignities, and meet his doom. Herod sent him back to Pilate, and once more he stood, surrounded by the clamorous Jews, in the Roman Pretorium. Here he was accused openly, but *now* he “answered nothing.” Pilate marvelled greatly at his silence, but “Jesus answered him *never a word*.” He had said enough *before*. When after this, Pilate scourged him, and the soldiers plaited for him his crown of thorns, and mocked, and smote him; *not a word* escaped his lips. Pilate expostulated with him; still Jesus gave him *no answer*! There was profound humiliation in this shameful scene; but there was profound greatness. It was a triumphant hour when the children in the temple honored, and the multitude would have enthroned him; but it was not so triumphant as this hour of his deep adversity and ignominious degradation. He suffered all this outrage, without a tear, without a sigh, without one token of weakness, and with all his glory untarnished. And when from this deep opprobrium, he was being led to Calvary, bearing

his own cross; how affecting the scene, and how glorious the fulfilment of the prediction, "The government shall be upon his shoulder!" And when the women of Jerusalem followed him weeping; what beauty, what grandeur was in the thought, when he looked back upon them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children!" Numbered too, as he was, with transgressors, he manifested his converting and saving power, and at the same time that inscrutable and adorable sovereignty, by which the crucified One becomes a stumbling-block to those who perish, and to those who are saved, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Nor did he wait till the remembrance of the injury had passed away, and when it is comparatively easy to forgive; it was while they were driving the nails and affixing him to his cross, that he uttered the prayer, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" He saw at a little distance his mother and his beloved disciple; and what does he say? "Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother; and from that hour, that disciple took her to his own home." His greatness was put to a still severer test, when the insolent rulers and the licentious populace derided him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God, come down from the cross, that we may

see and believe !” How easily he could have done this, and how strong the inducements to do it when thus challenged ! But well he knew how useless such a demonstration of his power, would be to men who had remained immovable amid all the wonders he had done. If they would not believe what they had seen and now saw, neither would they, though he came down from the cross. The time had not come for his greatest miracle, when he would show that it was more worthy of his character and mission to rise from the sepulchre, than come down from the accursed tree ; and a more demonstrative proof of his power to break the chains of death, than to wrench the nails from the cross. Nor did he resign his spirit into the hands of him who gave it, until his work was done, his humiliation complete, and he could say, *It is finished !* Wonderful Sufferer ! Wonderful glory, amid such degradation !

As our last general remark, we add, that Christ was glorious in his humiliation, *through the fitness of that humiliation to accomplish the end for which he came into the world.* God alone is capable of selecting the highest and most worthy end, and so pursuing it, as to justify and demand the means by which it is accomplished. Dark, and perfectly mysterious in some views, as the scene is which has been thus faintly exhibited, it is the heaven-devised arrangement of glorifying God in

man's redemption. Man's redemption is God's greatest work. For the wisdom that devised, and the love and power that effect it; for the greatness of its objects, and the extent and compass of the means by which they are attained; for the sin and misery it abolishes, the holiness and blessedness it secures and perpetuates; for the obstacles it surmounts, the enemies it vanquishes, the moral lessons it inculcates, and the augmenting exhibitions it furnishes of the manifested glory of the Godhead; it is God's mightiest work. Of all that God himself has ever thought of, or ever accomplished, this is his greatest.

It was no ordinary Personage to whom the accomplishment of such a work was entrusted. It was not possible for any *finite* Being to make those progressive manifestations of the Deity who is *infinite*; nor was it just and right that in effecting man's redemption, they should be made in any other way than by *his* humiliation unto the death of the cross. Nor is there one feature of it, from the treachery of Judas to the last cry on the cross, that could be dispensed with, and that is not worthy of the mighty sufferer. "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." Expiatory suffering, vicarious satisfaction was emphatically the work to which he was de-

voted. And while he thus aims at man's redemption, his very humiliation shows how man's redemption itself is necessary to unfold the boundless resources and infinite all-sufficiency of that infinite Being who contains within himself the source of all things, and the manifestations of which produce all the forms of created good. Man's redemption is subordinate to him, and accomplishes its object, only as it subserves his honor and glory, who is before all, above all, and incomparably more worthy than all.

It need not surprise us therefore that the means by which this high end is attained should be among "the deep things of God." Finite minds would never have thought of the humiliation of his son; but it was worthy of God; it existed for God; it speaks for God; it was full of God.

And with what glory does this great truth invest this unequalled humiliation. It was a high-born thought, and worthy of a mind and heart like his, that by his humiliation, God would be forever exalted in the salvation of men. Anointed and baptized in tears and blood as he was, he is glorious in this apparel. It was a wonderful humiliation—unutterably wonderful. But its language is, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and power, honor and blessing." How little would God have been exalted, but for his suffering Son! Where had been the conformity to him in

this wicked world! What one faint ray of this divine resemblance had ever fallen on the minds of benighted men! How little had been known of him, except as a consuming fire? Who would have adored and praised him, and how silent the myriad of voices that now speak forth the honor of his name! Or rather how deep the wailing, and what tones of cursing and blasphemy would have assailed his throne, had they not been silenced at the cross! It was to turn aside this tide of wickedness and woe, and secure that ocean of praise to God and the Lamb, that the Sufferer of Calvary thus humbled himself to the death. How full of meaning are those words we have before recited, which, in the trouble and anguish of his soul, the Sufferer uttered. *Father, glorify thy name.* This was the consummation he desired, and was ready to perfect even at the expense of those bitter agonies and that atoning blood. Glorious Saviour! glorious even in thy humiliation! I mourn and weep when I reflect upon the scoffs and insults that were cast upon him, and the painful and ignominious death he endured, and wonder that he did not blast his murderers by the breath of his mouth. Yet I love to think of them; I see him so glorious in them all, that I glory in a suffering Saviour. He would not have been so exalted, nor so glorious, but for these humiliations. Well may

we glory in them, since the greater they were, the more is he honored.

We ask you to receive these truths, and pray that you may receive them under the anointings of *his* Spirit who has gone up to bleed no more, no more, no more to die. It is from such a reception that you must date the commencement of your religious hopes, your new and spiritual life, your eternal joy. Look, O ye, who love and adore him, at that bloody scene of your Redeemer's humiliation. Dwell on it; it is a glorious scene. Bloody as it is, it greets you with smiles. Sweet voices are echoed from those dying groans; balmy breezes come across the desert, even from that "place of skulls." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone; but if it *die* it bringeth forth much fruit." Rich are the fruits that spring up from the soil that was watered by the Sufferer's blood. It was indeed a fearful cup that he drank. "The curse of the law was on it. The wrath of God was on it. The loss of God's presence and favor was on it." But he drank it, that you might never drink it. It cannot be that his followers should endure the curse, since he endured it for them, and in their place. O what a truth is this, and how precious does it make that glorious Saviour to them that believe! Give me Christ and poverty, rather than all the wealth of the world without him; Christ and a dungeon,

rather than no Christ and a sceptre. I have borrowed this thought from another tongue. "Malem," says an ancient writer, "*mori cum Christo, quam regnare cum Cæsare. Pulchra terra, pulchrum cœlum, sed pulcherrimus Dominus Jesus.*"

Look also, ye who have never loved and adored him, at that bloody scene of your Redeemer's humiliation! Let the arrogance of human reason take heed how it becomes a scoffer at the suffering Nazarene. Let the vain confidence of the self-righteous take heed how it flatters itself that it has no need of him who is mighty to save. Let the pride of every unsubdued heart take heed lest its contempt be stirred up toward him who is worthy of all confidence and praise. Let unbelief, in all its forms, be ashamed that it is ashamed of Christ, be humbled that it doubts either his power or willingness to save; that it ever gives place to the thought that there is no hope in the bounty of his grace. There is ineffable tenderness in the appeal of his glorious humiliation. A suffering Saviour is the sinner's refuge, the prisoner's hope. Away with reasoning pride. Away with scoffing and thoughtlessness. Away with self-righteousness and obduracy. Away with fear and despondency. Away with wickedness. Take the gospel in its simplicity, and be no longer estranged from the suffering Son of God.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRIST GLORIOUS IN HIS RESURRECTION.

THE hostile Jews gloried in the fact that Christ was *dead*, but denied that he had *risen*. On this question the decision rests, whether Christianity is true or false; "If Christ be not raised, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." His resurrection is the *great miracle* which attests the truth of his gospel. If it was never wrought, all previous miracles are left in inextricable perplexity; if consummated, in connection with his subsequent ascension, and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it puts the seal of heaven upon the completed series of Christ's miracles, and gives the world the assurance that his gospel is "no cunningly-devised fable."

Let us, in the first place, advert to the *narrative itself which the Evangelists furnish of this great fact*. Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, men of wealth, and distinguished for their character and office, and men of blessed memory, for their tender regard to the lifeless son of Mary, took the

body of Jesus, embalmed it, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in the sepulchre. Centuries before, the prophet Isaiah had said, "And he made his grave with the wicked and with the *rich*, in his death." These men were among the principal Jews who followed the Saviour to Mount Calvary, though with very different views from those who came to satiate their malignity by the barbarous spectacle. Their object was to be witnesses of the final act in the drama, and to rescue the dead body of the Sufferer from the outrage of his murderers. It must have been a beautiful and affecting sight to have seen these illustrious men, members in the minority of the very council which had condemned Jesus as a disturber of the peace and a blasphemer, thus shielding him from the infamy which awaited him from the ministers of justice, and giving his body honorable burial.

Jesus expired at the ninth hour of the day, or about three hours after noon. The sun was beginning to go down when these men ascended the cross, drew out the nails, loosened the cord that bound the dead body, and carefully lowered it down, as though they were carrying in their hands a treasure too sacred to be committed to the dust. It would seem that this kind service was the result of preconcerted arrangement between them. It is not probable that they expected his resurrection, from the fact that they embalmed the

body ; nor was this surprising, when we consider the incredulity of his more immediate disciples. It was a "new sepulchre" where they laid him, built for the Son of God, and hewn out of the virgin rock, never polluted by the flesh of fallen man, and where the sinless One slept alone. There was wisdom in this arrangement of divine Providence, both in that his sepulchre was in the solid rock, and could therefore be sufficiently protected ; and in that he was entombed alone, and therefore could be more certainly and easily identified, when he rose.

The prediction that he would rise was known to his enemies ; nor is it any marvel that they adopted those precautionary measures which would detect or prevent imposture. Hence their care in protecting the sepulchre, in sealing the rock that was rolled upon its mouth, and guarding the place by a band of soldiers. God "taketh the wise in their own craftiness," and the very measures which the subtlety of men adopt with the view of defeating the progress of truth, are often turned to good account, and directed to the "furtherance of the gospel." These very precautions against Christ's resurrection only served to give the evidence of it greater power, and make the fact itself more notorious.

The day on which he was laid in the sepulchre passed away. The following night is passed. The next day passed, which was the Jewish Sabbath.

Very early on the morning of the third day, and while it was yet dark, Mary Magdalene visits the sepulchre, and soon after her, at early sunrising, certain other women came also, who had followed Jesus from Galilee. And "they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre: And when they looked, they saw that the stone *was* rolled away, for it was very great." There had been a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, "and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake and become as dead men."

These women saw the sepulchre, but *Jesus was not there*. "Then Mary Magdalene runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." As she and her female companions were wondering at what had taken place, "behold two men stood by them in shining garments." And as they "were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth," these bright messengers said unto them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man

must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and *the third day rise again.*" These perplexed disciples remembered these words, and "entering into the sepulchre, they *found not the body* of the Lord Jesus; but they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted, for I know that ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is not here; he is risen, as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay; and go your way quickly, and tell his disciples and Peter that he is *risen from the dead*, and goeth before you into Galilee. There shall ye see him, as he said unto you, Lo, I have told you! And they departed quickly, for they trembled and were amazed, and fled from the sepulchre with fear and great joy. Neither *said they anything to any one*, but ran to bring the disciples word. And they told these things to the eleven, and to all the rest."

Peter and John, on hearing these things, immediately ran toward the sepulchre. John coming first to the cave, did not enter, but stooping down, looked in, and saw the grave-clothes, but *not Jesus*; while Peter immediately after him, entered into the sepulchre, and also saw the grave-clothes, but *neither did he find Jesus*. John then entered into the sepulchre *with Peter*; and though they knew not what had become of Jesus,

were satisfied that he was not in the sepulchre. The facts they had seen were obvious; but they knew not what conclusion to deduce from them; "for as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." "Then the disciples went away again to their own homes." Such is substantially the narrative of the Evangelists.

The question here arises, *What had become of the entombed Jesus?* Had his body been secretly removed, by the Jews or by his disciples, or had he risen from the dead? That the Jews had taken away his body, it were preposterous to believe, nor was this ever supposed. That his disciples had surreptitiously taken it away, was reported among the Jews; they had bribed the guard at the sepulchre, to originate and give currency to the rumor that his disciples "stole the body while they slept." This artifice of the chief priests is too frail and preposterous. It is not probable that such a body of men as the Roman Guard, would have slept on such a post, and under the penalty of military law; nor, had they slept, is it probable that his disciples could have taken the body of Jesus, without awaking them; nor is it possible, that if they remained unawakened, they could have known and testified that the disciples took it away. Subsequent events also show that the very Jews who fabricated this falsehood, themselves were ashamed of it; for when the apostles

were afterward brought before them, instead of accusing them of taking away the body of Christ, they beat and threatened them, without making the least allusion to the allegation of their having removed the body. They contrive every pretext for putting them to death; they calumniate and abuse them, they accuse them of sedition and heresy, and the profanation of the Temple; but they say nothing of this rumor of taking the body from the sepulchre. Even their celebrated orator, Tertullus, who was induced to array all his rhetoric, and all the arts of his profession against them, says nothing even of this *suspicion*, although Festus himself testifies that the resurrection of Christ was the subject of discussion between him and Paul. Why did not the Jewish Sanhedrim, when they had seized the apostles and put them in prison, for declaring that "the God of their fathers *raised up Jesus*, whom they slew and hanged on a tree," instead of deferring to the advice of Gamaliel, to refrain from these men and let them alone, at once affirm that his resurrection was a fraud, and that God had no part with impostors? If, then, the body of Christ was not removed from the sepulchre, either by his enemies or his friends, what is the evidence that he rose from the dead?

The truth of his resurrection cannot be proved by the fact, that it was seen by men. No eye of

man watched over his sepulchre when he rose, unless it were that of the Roman guard, who, according to their own account, were *asleep* during the whole of this wondrous transaction, and who, according to the narrative of the Evangelists, "for fear of the descending angel, did shake and become as *dead* men." His disciples were not there; the Jews were not there. The only witnesses who actually saw him rise were the *two angels*, who rolled away the stone from the mouth of the cave, and who appeared to the women early in the morning on which they visited it, and said unto them, "He is not here, but is risen." Habited in garments, like their own resplendent purity, they came from heaven, amid the terrors of an earthquake, to open the gates of death to their sleeping Lord, to be the *witnesses* of his triumph, and to remain seated upon the rock which they had rolled away long enough to proclaim his resurrection, while the affrighted soldiers recovered from their astonishment, and fled to the chief priests to tell the prodigies they had seen. These holy women were perplexed and sad, when they found the body of Jesus was not in the sepulchre, and probably thought that the Jews had taken it away in order to cast upon it new outrage, and commit it to the same ignominious grave with the two thieves. The two angels made them the first

depositories of the tidings, that the Lord had risen, and thus through those holy women who,

“Last at the cross, and earliest at his grave,”

first announced to men that he “who was crucified through weakness liveth by the power of God.

When the rest of the company, after having heard the announcement of the angels, had dispersed, one there was who still remained near the sepulchre. She could not leave the spot where she had seen the body of her Lord deposited; but took a melancholy pleasure in bedewing it with her tears. There she stood doubting, weeping, agitated by hope and fear; when, turning round, “she saw Jesus himself standing and knew not that it was Jesus.” She was too much absorbed in her own thoughts to recognize her Lord; and when he uttered the words, “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” her imagination was still so occupied with what she had just seen, that “supposing him to be the Gardener, she saith to him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” She made no answer to his questions, because she supposed he could not be ignorant of the cause of her grief, nor of the object of her search; nor was this silence unnatural in her state of mind. Who could doubt, so near his sepulchre, *whom* she was seeking? She was waiting for an answer to her own request, when Jesus called her by *name*, and

with a tenderness of emphasis which she suddenly recognized, said, MARY! She cast herself at his feet and exclaimed, "*O my Master!*" It was her risen Saviour, her own living Saviour, that she beheld. She sees him who was just crucified and laid in the tomb of Joseph. She hears his voice, and is subdued with joy. *She* "*came* and told the disciples, that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her." After this he appeared to the *other women* on their return from the sepulchre into the city; and they constituted a cluster of witnesses. On the same day, he appeared to the *two disciples* as they were going to Emmaus, and whom he found conversing on the subject of his death. Their hopes that he was the promised Messiah were crushed and buried in his grave. They were giving utterance to their sadness, when Jesus, not at first recognized by them, drew near and went with them. He commenced the conversation with the question, "What manner of communications are these, that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?" He knew their thoughts, and his object was to instruct and comfort them, by first eliciting their own views, and then disclosing himself to them as the risen Saviour. Jerusalem had just been agitated and held in consternation by the tragical event of the crucifixion; multitudes of Jews, not from Judea alone, but from all portions of the earth, had come up to

the city; all Israel had seen the great Deliverer lifted up; and the reply they gave to his inquiry was, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" He said unto them, "What things?" The question interested them; and they proceeded to state their views concerning Jesus of Nazareth, the conduct of the Jewish rulers in putting him to death, their own sadness and their vacillating hopes of his resurrection, the vision of angels, and the testimony of the women who had come from the sepulchre. In this doubting state of mind, Jesus found them, and rebuked them for their unbelief. "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken!" He then proceeded to instruct them out of their own Prophets in their minute predictions concerning himself; his birth, his lineage, his character, his death, his resurrection, and his eternal kingdom and glory. They listened with wonder and their hearts burned within them; and when they reached the village where they were going, he went in to tarry with them. "And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them, he took bread and blessed it, and brake and gave to them." He sat in their presence; they saw him and heard his voice; "their eyes were opened, and they knew him." Their conviction that he was risen from the dead was

perfect ; and having produced it, he “ vanished out of their sight.”

After this, he appeared to the *ten disciples*, when Thomas was absent ; and then to the eleven when Thomas was present, when he upbraided him for his unbelief, and showed him his perforated hands and feet, and his pierced side ; and to convince them that it was himself and not a spirit, he conversed with them, and ate and drank with them. After this, he appeared to seven of them at the sea of Tiberias, where he again made himself known to them, ate with them, restored Peter, and intimated to him the severe trials and bitter end to which that Apostle was destined. And after this he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once. This was in Galilee, where he had spent the greater part of his life, and was well known, and where his person would have been universally recognized. Thus he continued to have intercourse with men for *forty days*, until he ascended to heaven. We know not how often he appeared to them during these forty days, besides the instances recorded ; but it is probable they were very many.

The seeming deficiency in the witnesses is the fact that there is no recorded instance of his appearing to the Jews, his enemies, and in Jerusalem itself. The time was when my own mind was, I will not say perplexed, but rather wondered at

this deficiency. Why were there not *other* witnesses? Why did not Jesus show himself publicly, present himself in the temple, and stand in person before the Sanhedrim itself, and let them see for themselves that he had risen from the dead? But the wonder has long since passed away. Who should be the witnesses of his resurrection, if not those who were the best qualified? Other witnesses there might have been of very dubious qualifications, and still more dubious character. They were not the men who would have sealed their testimony with their blood. Christianity does not ask the testimony of such men. The resurrection did not need to be propped up by such dubious testimony. Mary's testimony in the garden is worth more than the testimony of the whole Jewish Sanhedrim. We should be sorry if the great proof of Christ's resurrection rested upon the testimony of men so imperfectly acquainted with his person; bloody men, too, and men who stood convicted of subornation of perjury on his trial. Besides, if he had gone into the temple and presented himself to the Sanhedrim; the consequence would have been that they would have denied his resurrection. They would probably have refused to *identify* him; and would have endeavored to perplex the minds of men with the question, whether the man who had thus appeared to them in the Temple, were *the same* with him

who died on Calvary. Divine providence did not mean that *such* a question, on *such* testimony, should ever be agitated. Or they would have treated him as they did his apostles, and as they had treated him—crucified him a second time and put him to an open shame. It was too late for this. The days of his humiliation were past. He was never again to be reviled and rejected of men. It was not for want of testimony that they did not believe; the reason lies deeper than this. It was their proud and radical alienation of heart to the lovely character of Christ, and to his doctrine. The man who began his career in a stable and ended it on the cross, they would never acknowledge as their promised and exalted Messiah. Their disdainful rejection of him could not be overcome by *testimony*. No, they had closed their eyes and hardened their hearts. They had had their day. The harvest was passed. They were given over in judgment to a reprobate mind. His *friends* were those who saw him, knew him, and were best qualified to be the witnesses of his resurrection. When he was about to leave the earth, he committed these great facts to their keeping, and said to them, “Ye are my *witnesses of these things*.”

We may now advert to the INTEREST AND GLORY of *this great event*.

The first thought which here impresses us is the completeness of the evidence by which it is estab-

lished. It is evidence, throughout, which makes its appeal to the popular mind, and is addressed to ordinary readers and unlettered men. Men need but fair and honest minds in order to appreciate it. Let any man take these sacred records and read them, and he cannot fail to perceive there is an honesty of statement, and a sincerity of purpose in the narrators which bespeak them as true men. We have already shown that they could neither have been deceived, nor were they deceivers, in what we have said in regard to their competency and credibility on the subject of Christ's miracles. We speak now of their testimony itself to his resurrection ; read it ; compare their different narratives, and though some facts are related by one, and some by another ; and though they sometimes relate the same facts differently, they are *the same facts*. The unrestricted and unembarrassed freedom of their statements is among the vouchers of their honesty. They were not studied, literary compositions ; human polish would have spoiled them. Their simple object was to make a faithful record of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth ; and they have done it with the simplicity which is in keeping with their object. There is a straightforwardness in their narrative which no impostor could have attained, and touches of nature in it which are above the power of fabrication.

Take, for example, the single circumstance, that the first witnesses of this great fact, on which Christianity rests, were *women*. Would a deceiver have selected such testimony? Credulous, trembling women to be the first depositaries of an event, amid events where stouter hearts might have quaked with fear! Would an impostor have painted the scene in the garden between Mary and her unrecognized, and then discovered Lord? Was this the fancy of an impostor, or a scene from actual life? Is there a chapter in Tacitus, or Pliny, or Suetonius, or any Roman historian, giving an account of men and events at the same period of the world in which Jesus lived and died and rose again, that is worthy of such confidence as the simple memoranda of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? It is a glorious fact, therefore, that "the Lord is risen indeed!" The witnesses themselves at first could scarcely believe their own senses. When the fact was first testified to the apostles, we are told that "these words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." One of them resisted the testimony to the last, and would not believe until he had seen and heard; until he had handled the crucified body, and even opened the scarcely-healed wounds in his feet and hands and side.

Nor is it any matter of regret that Christianity had then, and now has the advantage of their

caution; for it went forth more boldly as they went more boldly and assured; and though poverty, ignominy, dungeons, and death were their reward, their testimony was destined to subdue the world. Rome fell before it, who was not to be subdued by artifice and imposture. Millions have lived and died by it, who would not have trusted in falsehood. And millions have died for it who were not the sport of delusion. The tomb of Jesus, instead of burying the hopes of men, had scarcely covered up the seed before it shot forth, and its branches of righteousness and hope were themselves covering every land.

Christ is risen, and therefore our preaching is not vain, nor is your faith vain. These truths, these promises, this perfected redemption, have a seal fixed upon them, more sure than the seal upon his sepulchre, and are guarded by those heavenly Watchers, whose eye never slumbers, and whose arm is never weary. In raising Jesus from the dead, God has given him power over all flesh, and full authority to accomplish all the purposes of his grace. He was slain, and hath redeemed us unto God by his blood.

Our second thought is, that the resurrection of Christ is a *glorious* reality, for *the assurance it furnishes his followers of their own resurrection to eternal life*. The doctrine of a *future state* is clearly revealed in the Law and the Prophets; it

is revealed with progressive clearness; it was believed by the Jews, and this popular belief constituted one of the preparatives for the introduction of the gospel. It is a different question, whether the Old Testament reveals the doctrine of the *resurrection of the body*, and whether all those passages which speak of the future blessedness of the righteous, and the future misery of the wicked, may not receive a true and fair construction in limiting their future existence merely to the undying spirit. We would not be over-confident in our conclusion that they require a different and less limited construction, in opposition to the expressed views of men of great learning and excellence. Yet must we deliberately affirm that to us it appears, that when the Psalmist speaks of "*his flesh resting in hope*," of "*waking in God's likeness*," and of God's "*redeeming his soul from the power of the grave*,"—when the prophet Isaiah speaks of "*death as swallowed up in victory*," and when we weigh well the interpretation which the apostle Paul gives to these words;—when we hear the prophet Daniel affirming "*that many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*,"—when we hear Job declare, "*For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin is consumed, and worms destroy this body, yet in my*

flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself and mine eye shall behold, and not another; no doubt remains upon our own minds, that the great doctrine, not only of a future state, but of the resurrection of the body, is contained in the Old Testament Scripture.

It is quite obvious, however, that the full disclosure of this truth is reserved for the New Testament dispensation, and that the great proof of it is found in the resurrection of Christ. All doubt and perplexity on this subject are dispelled, when we hear the apostle say, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead: but if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." It is a wonderful truth that these bodies, after having been reduced to dust, buried in the ocean, or scattered by the wind, or devoured by beasts of prey, or burnt to ashes, shall be restored; but it is not more marvellous than true, and not less true than that Christ rose. Christ is "the first fruits of them that slept." Not the *first fruits*, in the sense that he was the *first instance and example* of resurrection, because others had

risen before, and he himself had exercised his miraculous power in raising them from the dead. But they were not the matured fruits, though first gathered, nor the true samples and specimens of what the resurrection should be. *They* returned to dwell again among the dead; *he* rose to die no more, to live and reign; *this* is the resurrection of which his is the first collected fruits, the first offered to God, as the earnest and pledge of the final harvest. In the narrative of his death, we are told, that when the veil of the Temple was rent, and the earth quaked, that the graves were also "opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many." When he rose, he raised up them also, in honor of his own triumph over death and the grave, and as proof to the world that he had risen, and that there shall be at *last* a resurrection of the dead. "The grave hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure, and all nations have descended into it;" the earth itself will at last become like one vast grave-yard; but they shall "come forth."

How perfect the resemblance between the resurgent body, and the body which existed on the earth, we are not informed. It will be sufficiently so as to be identified with it; yet will it be more

beautiful and lovely, because it will be spiritual, immortal, and "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." The early Christians rejoiced in this glorious prospect; nor could the cross, nor the stake, nor the cruellest death their enemies could inflict, suppress the joy. They did not fear to suffer nor to die, because they had been "begotten to such living hopes by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Our third and last thought is, that the resurrection of Christ is *glorious, for the full and complete introduction it furnishes of the gospel dispensation.* The Saviour instructed the Jews, that though there had not been born of women a greater than John the Baptist, yet "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he." John belonged to the old and worn-out economy. The gospel dispensation had not commenced; great as John was, the meanest prophet under the gospel dispensation was greater. The gospel dispensation did not begin with the coming of Christ; Christ himself was subject to all the Jewish ordinances. It did not begin with his preaching, nor with his miracles; he was then in the form of a servant. It did not begin with his death, nor while he lay in the sepulchre; these were the days of his deepest degradation, and in which his disciples were clothed with sackcloth. It was not until the morning on which he rose, that the glim-

mering twilight of Judaism passed away, the night vanished, and was followed by the day in which the sun shall no more go down, neither the moon withdraw itself. The resurrection of Christ is the marked period in the history of the world, the brightest period, the most joyous period. He must continue under the power of death for a time, before he could be recognized as the authoritative Founder of the New Dispensation, as the Author and Finisher of the Christian faith, as the announced and honored Captain of his people's salvation. He was a mortal man till then; after this, "death had no more dominion over him." Till then, he was Heaven's Messenger, sent to woo and win his church in accents of sadness, and in groans and death; after this, he became her joyful Bridegroom, decked with robes of salvation, and clothed with light as with a garment. Till then, he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; after this, he was Lord both of the dead and the living, the Head of his church, the King of the universe. The sacred and joyful day of his resurrection, ushered in the year of jubilee to the impoverished and enslaved families of the earth; it was the Sabbath of the world. The glory of the resurrection eclipses, I will not say the shame, but the glory of the cross. What is earth, and the glory of all its kingdoms, to the glory of this risen Saviour? This is he who rose, that all nations

might bow before him; that he might sway the sceptre of the world; and having extended his kingdom from sea to sea, set upon the throne of David forever.

This high vantage-ground the Christian dispensation occupies. This was the stand-point of the apostles when they went forth "preaching Jesus and the resurrection," and repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations in his name. Was it not a glorious event? We look back upon these scenes of mourning, and repeat the question he put to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and enter into his glory?" On this eminence, the ministry of reconciliation now stand when they speak and teach in the name of Jesus. The cross is victorious, only because he could not be holden by the chains of death. His resurrection holds this prominent place, because it is God's mark of approbation of the perfection of his character and work. If his death was an expiation for sin, his resurrection is the great proof of its sufficiency, and of God's acceptance of it in behalf of sinners. The Scriptures give emphasis to the fact, that "he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, that if thou dost confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

"The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice in it, and be glad." Every returning Sabbath bears this witness for the Son of Man. It brings before the world this seal of his completed atonement. "Though made of the seed of David according to flesh, he is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by his resurrection from the dead."

Such is the narrative given us of the resurrection of Christ; such the testimony by which it is supported; and such is the glory of his resurrection itself.

We place ourselves by the tomb of the risen Saviour *as dying men*. It is a dark world we inhabit, where sorrow and pain, infirmity, sickness, and death are man's inheritance. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." The glittering show of earth and all its pageantry vanish, when "his confidence is rooted out of his tabernacle, and he is brought to the king of terrors." It is a dismaying truth that these bodies will putrefy and be dissolved in the dark grave. "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" The cold, damp sepulchre is a solitary dwelling, and an untried state of being. "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he

that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, neither be raised out of their sleep." These are sad reflections, and they come from a far distant and dark dispensation. There is a brighter view of the grave than this. It is not the deep ocean where the hopes of man are buried; but the garden of hope, and where the seed dies only to spring up again, and bloom with the returning year of a pledged immortality. Long ago the blow was struck that weakens the power of death, extracts his sting, and is destined to break up his empire. When the Son of Mary assumed our nature, it was "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death." When he rose on the morning of the third day, he publicly announced the purpose, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy destruction." Glorious triumph! and still more glorious Conqueror! Cease then these gloomy and agitating fears of death and the grave. Anticipate, if you will, the bold and sudden knock of the Destroyer at this earthly house of your tabernacle. Or mark the gradual invasions of disease under which it is wasting away. Or inspect the wrinkles which time has traced upon your

brow, and count the gray hairs which admonish you that the elasticity of youth and the vigor of manhood are gone, and that you may look in vain for withered sprightliness and faded beauty. And bid them welcome. Hail them all as God's appointed and your own bright omens of unfading vigor and immortal manhood; as the ripening seeds of the coming and promised harvest, "sown in corruption, but raised in incorruption; sown in dishonor but raised in glory; sown in weakness, but raised in power." He who was dead, liveth, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of death and the grave. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

We place ourselves also by the side of the Saviour's tomb also, *as mourners*. We have a quarrel with the all-devouring grave. It has swallowed up those we have loved. The venerated are there. There sleep smiling infancy, and prattling childhood. There moulder beauty's form and manhood's promise. The parents' hope lies buried there, and the husband's pride, and the wife's own refuge and comforter. And there the living sigh and mourners tread softly, and many a bosom gives utterance to the thought, O cruel grave! But have they all forgotten, that there Jesus slept? Have they never learned, that "since Jesus died and rose again, so them also which sleep in Jesus

will God bring with him?" When now from his high abode he looks down upon these dreary ages of time, and marks the desolations which death has made, and the hopes which the grave has swallowed up; does he not remind them of his own protest against this all-voracious destroyer! Is it not over this vast cemetery that he uttered the promise, "Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise." Is not the command still imperative, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead!" Bright rays even now fall upon the mansions of the dead. He will not be slack concerning the promise, that "the hour is coming in the which *all* that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth." The days are few before the light of that immortal morning shall dawn, and these vile bodies shall be no longer the food of worms, but shall be fashioned like unto his own glorious body.

We place ourselves also by the tomb of the risen Saviour, as the *ministers of his gospel*. We bring you a message from the sepulchre where there is nothing now but the napkin that was about his head, and the linen clothes that formed his shroud. We show the proof that he is the promised Messiah, and the Saviour of the world. We give you his own assurance, that, having thus

struggled with the powers of darkness on the cross, and gone through the gates of death and grave, and thus accomplished the most arduous parts of the work he came to accomplish, he lives to perfect it, and that not one iota of it shall remain unaccomplished. Jesus and the resurrection is the gospel we proclaim. He is not on the cross now; nor do your sins wring with anguish his tortured soul. Nor is every human hope now buried in the caverned rock, guarded by Cæsar's soldiery, and watched by hovering angels. On that memorable morning, he bid adieu to earth's sorrows and ignominy, and now fills a throne where heaven does him homage, and where it is heaven, and will be heaven to you thus to honor him. "Awake then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." This is our message from his sepulchre; and "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." This is *his* message; and "see that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not they escape who refuse him that speaketh from heaven."

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION GLORIOUS.

THE history of Christ during his residence on the earth, was, as we have seen, a wondrous history; everything is worthy of notice that relates to it. The manger where he was born—the Temple where his parents consecrated him to Israel's God—the village where he was brought up—the chamber where he instituted the Supper—the garden where he agonized—the cross on which he hung—the sepulchre from which he rose, and the MOUNTAIN from which he ascended, all awaken in our bosoms the most lively emotions, because they bear so intimate a relation to HIM, to whom, if we are Christians, we have committed our immortality, and on whom we rest all our hopes. Sacred spot of earth! where those feet last stood that were nailed to the accursed tree. The Empress Helena, the mother of the great Constantine, is said to have here erected a temple, in honor of his Ascension. There is no doubt a superstitious and unchristian reverence for what are called *holy*

scenes and *holy places*; nor that they have given rise to observances and rites which are hostile to the simplicity of the gospel, and ruinous to the souls of men. Yet is it human to be affected by them; and it may be *Christian*, without regarding them as the symbols of Antichrist.

We are creatures whose thoughts are formed, in no small degree, by associations of thought. Great events consecrate and impart a portion of their own greatness to all that surrounds them. Were a Christian traveller to visit the Holy Land, next to Gethsemane and Calvary, he would go to the MOUNT OF OLIVES, and there turn to the New Testament, and read the short narratives which so beautifully describe the circumstances of his divine Lord's final departure from this sinning and suffering world. With lingering and fond delight, he would dwell on the minute and apparently trivial circumstances which bring this delightful, but too often forgotten scene, to his remembrance. Christians of every age have contemplated this event with deep interest, not merely because it is the bright commencement of that brighter future upon which the Son of Man was then ushered, but for its intrinsic importance, and the halo of glory which it throws around his Person and his throne.

Allusions to his ascension are found in various parts of the Sacred Writings, but the only de-

tailed account of it is given in the short narrative of the Evangelist Luke, in the closing paragraph of his gospel, and in the introduction to his historical treatise, called "The Acts of the Apostles." The narrative in his gospel, is in the following words: "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." In the "Acts of the Apostles," he adds, that "a cloud received him out of their sight," and that his disciples "looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up." About *forty days* after his resurrection, he met with his disciples at Jerusalem for the last time, where he uttered those lessons of heavenly wisdom which none but he knew how to utter, and gave them important instructions with regard to that spiritual kingdom which he had set up in the world. It was *forty days* after his birth, that he was brought into the Temple, and presented to the Lord; and now, it is *forty days* after his resurrection, which was a sort of second nativity, that he presents himself before the Lord in the temple above. It was after his *forty days'* temptation in the wilderness, that angels came and ministered unto him; and now, *forty days* after he left the wilderness of the grave, angels minister to him before his throne. Having reiterated to his disciples the assurances

of his continued love, and having instructed them to "tarry in Jerusalem until he should send upon them the promise of his Father," he "was received up into heaven, and set on the right hand of God."

They were at no loss as to *the place* to which he ascended. The question as to any *intermediate state*, where the souls of the righteous have been supposed to exist between death and the resurrection, is *settled* by the fact that he ascended to the heaven where God dwells, and that "where *he* is, *they* shall be also." It is perfectly obvious that it was not to any such intermediate state that he himself went. "A little while," says he, "and ye shall not see me, and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because *I go to the Father.*" Still more explicitly he says, "I came forth *from the Father*, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and *go to the Father.*"

The evidence of his ascension depends, in the first place, on his own declarations. He frequently declared that he was going back to the heaven from which he came, and persisted in that declaration to the last. We have just as much reason to believe his testimony as we have to believe that he was *true*. It depends also on the testimony of his disciples, who saw him rise. He did not ascend alone, but took his disciples with him from Jerusalem to Bethany, so that they might be witnesses of this great event. He does not shun the face

of day, and amid the secrecy and silence of the night, fly back to his native heaven; but in the open light of the sun, he ascends through the astonished firmament, and in the presence of adoring disciples. He does not disappear and "vanish out of their sight," as he did on some other occasions; but in solemn majesty moved up before them into heaven, while their eyes were fixed upon him and they "steadfastly looked up" as he rose, till the bright object they were gazing at became smaller and more small, and all farther distinct vision was precluded by the "cloud which received him out of their sight." Nor was it from some obscure valley or mountainous ravine that he ascended; but from the mountain top, near Jerusalem, where the whole city might have seen him. He selected this eminence that nothing might intercept the view. It was the spot where he often retired from the city's strife, to hold intercourse with God, from which he rose to renew and perpetuate that fellowship. It was from *Olivet*, because he there struggled in the garden, and he would have the scene of his greatest weakness, also the scene and the memorial of his divine power; that the place which was the beginning of his passion might be the beginning of his glory; and that from the spot where he had contended with the powers of darkness he might ascend as the mighty Victor, thus teaching all his followers in every age of the world

that their severest conflicts secure their greatest victories. Other witnesses also there were, angelic messengers sent from heaven to give the assurance to his astonished disciples that he had gone to dwell with his eternal Father. There is evidence, too, of a different kind arising from the fact that the predictions which he himself uttered before his ascension were fulfilled by subsequent events. He predicted the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and the Spirit was poured out. He predicted the signs which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem; and not one of them failed. There were "false Christs who deceived many;" there were wars and commotions, "nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom;" there were "famines and pestilences;" there were "earthquakes," and "fearful sights and signs from heaven;" there were persecutions, and his followers were "delivered up to councils and synagogues and prisons, and beaten and killed." He predicted that "the gospel must be published among all nations;" and it was preached to Jew and Gentile, and churches were organized and pastors settled in every part of the then known world. He predicted the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, and the trench that should be cast about it; and it was compassed on every side. He predicted the miseries of the Jews during and subsequent to the siege; and history assures us that never was there

such strange and unparalleled suffering. He predicted the total destruction of the temple and the city; and they were both "laid even with the ground," nor was there "left in them one stone upon another." He predicted that the Jews should be led away captive into all nations; and they were led away. He predicted that "Jerusalem should be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" and so completely was Judea subjected, that its very land was sold, nor has the city from that time to the present ever been in possession of the Jews. And to add to this testimony there is the fact that the Son of Man, from the day of his ascension, has not been seen among men. From that memorable day, with the single exception of Saul of Tarsus, no eye has seen him save upon the throne of David and at the right hand of God.

Such, in few words, is the scriptural narrative of the ascension of Christ, and of the testimony by which it is established, so far as is consistent with our present design to present them. We say nothing now of the *moral argument* in proof of this great fact, as we may have occasion to advert to it hereafter. We are chiefly concerned with the importance of this fact, and with the *great glory* it confers on the ascended Saviour. There are several characteristics of this great event, by which this thought may be illustrated.

In the first place, this ascension furnishes *strong confirmation of the truth of Christianity*. Christianity is not less a narrative of *marvellous facts*, than it is a statement of marvellous and heaven-inspired truths. To speak with more precision, its great and distinguishing doctrines are but revealed statements of these great facts. We have before remarked the singular circumstance, that the primitive martyrs to the Christian faith, suffered martyrdom, not for their belief in speculative theory, not for principles and doctrines which they could substantiate by *argument*; but for unwavering testimony to *facts* which they themselves either saw, or which they received on the testimony of accredited witnesses. It has been our object to state these facts, from the descent of the Son of God to Bethlehem's stable, to his ascension from the Mount of Olives. They are all miraculous, and indicate the interposition of supernatural power. Although each of them distinctly possesses this feature, and bears the seal and superscription of heaven, yet they are not narrated as distinct and isolated facts, but as the component parts of a perfected series. Christianity may not rest on any one of them; its Author never intended it should rest on any one of them. Not one of them can be spared from the series; every one of them is a link of burnished gold; but the brightest and purest of them does not

alone form the golden chain of truth and love that binds earth to heaven. The true gospel is contained in those momentous facts, so forcibly bound together by Paul: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was *manifest in the flesh*, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, *received up into glory*." Christianity ends where it begins. The divine Author first came from heaven, and after his varied pilgrimage of love, and labor, and suffering, on the earth, went back to the heaven whence he came. The facts which constitute the sum and substance of it, form this beautiful circle, of which Christ is the centre, and from which so many subordinate truths radiate to the unbroken circumference. There is this consistency in it, that every part of it is adapted to every other part; and it is only in its relation to the whole, that any one part can be appreciated. This last miracle of Christ, his ascension from earth to heaven, suits well with his first miracle, his descent from heaven to earth. It suits well with his life, his preaching, his death, and his resurrection. They all stand or fall together. You cannot deny one without denying the whole. There is the same evidence in favor of every part, that exists in favor of the whole; and the same evidence in favor of the whole, that exists in favor of every part. You demolish Christianity, if you demolish the doc-

trine of the resurrection, because if he did not rise, he does not live and reign. So you make a wreck of Christianity, if he did not ascend; because he is no more than the risen Lazarus, if he lives not, reigns not. We must travel with him from the place where he was born, to the Mount of Olives; and there, on that sacred eminence, we may look back and see his glorious career. Olivet will not soon be forgotten, for the confirmation it furnishes of the truth of the gospel.

In the next place, the ascension of Christ furnishes us an affecting view of *the loveliness and the dignity of his character*. We have more than a glimpse, both of his humanity and his divinity, in this wonderful scene. There are things in his Person and glory that are protected from all unhallowed curiosity; but in the circumstances of his ascension, we feel that, like the disciples who accompanied him from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olivet, we are permitted to inspect with more than ordinary familiarity, that contrasted yet combined loveliness and dignity which render him glorious. It was the *last* earthly interview he ever enjoyed with these holy men. Endeared as they had been to him, and he to them, the time had come of which he had often premonished them, when he must leave and go to his Father. Yet to remain with them as long as he might remain, "he led them out as far as to Bethany."

Eager as he was to return to his native skies, he trode this last path with no unmeasured steps. Here was the *man* Christ Jesus; the emotions, the look, the language of the man. And there was divine loveliness and divine light that spread around him, kindling within their bosoms thoughts and affections beyond the ordinary privilege of their fellowship even with their divine Master. Who is that wonderful Personage standing on the Mount of Olives, with his eye fixed on heaven, "lifting up his hands and blessing" his disciples? His words ever had been words of *blessing*; but now they fall with an emphasis and a tenderness that bespeak his departure. He began his career, he continued, and closed it in the same spirit of *blessing*. Just as he is about to ascend, the words of blessing are on his lips. His heart yearned toward them. All that he could give, he then gave, because all that he could feel he then felt. It was in the very act of blessing them, and while his hands were uplifted, and the blessing was on his lips, that "he was parted from them." He could not leave them to measure their bloody path through this vale of sorrow, without this last assurance that all their weakness and faults were forgotten, and that he bore them on his heart. Their allotment was to wait a little while here below; his cause demanded it; and that through fiery trials and great tribulation, they should enter the

kingdom of heaven. They were the last words he uttered, when he thus blessed them. Thus ended his wonderful career on the earth; a termination which will be had in everlasting remembrance. Calvary, Tabor, and Olivet, will ere long melt away; this earth, with all its profane and sacred scenes will ere long be burnt up, and the places which now know them will know them no more; but this loving Saviour will not be forgotten.

We scarcely know which most to admire in this scene, his matchless loveliness, or his infinite dignity. Hear him speak, and see him ascend. It is not the *Man* Jesus who had not where to lay his head; nor is it the *Living God* before whom Moses trembled. It is the *God-Man Mediator*, that despised rejected One, putting on his robes of majesty, in order to terminate his earthly career in a manner befitting his high character. While he was pursuing the preliminary objects of his mission, his true dignity was slowly and gradually unfolded. At his resurrection the dawning light began to break forth; but it was at his ascension into heaven that he openly demonstrated before angels and men that the eternity of the Godhead is his; that he inhabits it; that he fills it, and that it is his own eternity. Such was his progressive and splendid path, that when he saw that his Mediatorial work on earth was accomplished, and

when he had made all necessary arrangements for the extension and perpetuity of his kingdom among men; by his own almighty power—that power by which he stilled the tempest, cast out devils, and raised the dead—he “ascends up where he was before.” There the dying Stephen saw him, when he “saw the heavens opened.” There the exiled Apostle beheld him, where thousands and thousands of thousands bowed before him, and sung the song, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” And there he will remain “until the times of the fulfilment of all things, spoken of by all the Prophets since the world began.”

We are told that the disciples who saw him ascend, after he had gone up *worshipped* him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God.” The scene they had just witnessed confirmed the views they had long cherished of the dignity of their Divine Master. In supreme love and profound veneration, they prostrated their souls before him, as their faithful Redeemer and rightful Lord, as the triumphant Conqueror over sin and death. They knew what he deserved. To him belonged all honor, glory, and praise, and to him they ascribed them. They could “now return to Jerusalem with great joy.” Mount Olivet was one of the permanent memorials of their Master’s glory. From the spot where their own feet had stood

with his, they had *seen* him rise ; and though their *transports* of joy may have passed away, they were in that settled state of mind which constrained them to abide in the Temple, " continually praising and blessing God."

The Bible has few facts more full of interest than this ascension of the Son of God ; it has none more sublime or wonderful than his glory as here manifested. Human reason has nothing to do here but satisfy itself of *the fact* ; the glory is infinite ; it is above the reach of human comprehension. We worship and adore, as the disciples did, when they returned to Jerusalem. Men may have large and lofty views of his glory ; but however large and lofty they may be, they fall short of his real dignity. It will employ eternity to make it all manifest. Nay, eternity itself cannot complete the development. It is easier to tell what he is not, than what he is. He is not man ; he is not angel ; he is not the highest of created beings. To know him perfectly, we must see him with the eyes, and know him with the intelligence of the Deity. The more we search into this unfathomed depth, the deeper we find it. The rays dazzle and overpower us with their splendor. As we see him go up, and recall his birth, and life, and crucifixion, we are hushed into the silent raptures of astonishment.

His ascension furnishes us, in the next place, with a *glimpse of his blessedness*. If modest and

humble piety is chastened by this view of the personal dignity of Christ, it is gratified by the view it presents of his begun blessedness. The blessedness of the *Man* when he ascended, we can better understand, than we can the blessedness of the ascending *God*. The infinity of the Deity is to us an inconceivable idea; nor can we comprehend his blessedness any more than his infinity. We must speak of that which we cannot comprehend when we speak of the heavenly blessedness of God manifest in the flesh, or we must not speak at all. His incomprehensible blessedness is one of the radiating splendors of his glory. He ascended up on high to behold his heavenly Father's face without a veil and without a cloud, and with him to inhabit the same infinite plenitude of joy. We have seen enough of his degradation; other visions now greet us. The scenes of shame and suffering are over. The days of humiliation may be remembered, and even commemorated; but they are never to be realized a second time. It is not the Garden now, but the celestial Paradise. It is not now the scorn of kings and the derision of the people; but the alleluias of harpers harping with their harps. It is not the groans that rent rocks asunder and shook terribly the earth; but the voice of those "which were redeemed from the earth," as the "voice of many waters and as the voice of a great thunder." It is not One, who

of all the miserable, is himself the most miserable; but One, who of all the happy, is himself the most happy. He is within the City where "nothing that defileth" shall enter. He has reached the shore, and wave after wave no more rolls over him. His last tear was shed when he wept for others' woes; and now, on that same Mount where he wept over Jerusalem, he bids farewell to earth, and goes back to be "glorified with the glory he had with the Father before the world was." That glory he so often sighed for, how welcome! That joyful meeting with his Divine Father was itself a recompense for all his woes. That long sought home, that peaceful rest, that renewed intercourse with seraphim, and with the spirits of just men made perfect, and those acclamations of praise all found a response in his own divine bosom, and he was happy, infinitely and eternally happy.

How joyous must have been the scene when the early disciples thus saw him so far above the darts of this cruel world, and the more cruel darts of his earliest and latest foe! It was enough that their beloved Lord now lived, God blessed for evermore. They remembered the words which he spake, "If ye *love* me, ye will *rejoice* because I said I *go to the Father*." His glory was not eclipsed in the darkest night of his sufferings; he could suffer as no other ever suffered, and glorify his

Father even in draining the bitter cup. Nor was it obscured now that the darkness is passed, and the light of heaven shone upon him. His character was not such as to lose its lustre amid the fascinations of joy; on the other hand the fascinations of joy added lustre to his character. He who travelled in the greatness of his strength, in the deep valley of his humiliation, arrayed himself even in purer garments when he ascended to sit down on his throne. There was surpassing glory in that surpassing blessedness. What is more triumphant and glorious than the infinite blessedness of the infinite Saviour? blessedness as diffusive as it is infinite! blessedness that is identified with the blessedness of his ransomed ones, and that is the only source and guardian of all the blessedness in the universe!

This leads me to remark, in the last place, that we cannot have just impressions of the glory of his ascension without *associating it with the objects it was to attain*. These were the same for which he clothed himself with humanity, and endured humanity's curse. They were vast in their intrinsic importance, vast in their extent, and vast and interminable in their influence upon the destinies of men and the empire and glory of God. The work he had already accomplished on the earth was but preparatory to the work which, as the mediatorial priest and king, he was to carry on in

his state of exaltation, until the final consummation of all things. It was a remarkable prohibition which the risen Saviour uttered to Mary in the garden, when he said, "*Touch me not*, for I am *not yet ascended to my Father*, but go to my brethren and say unto them, *I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.*" His work was not accomplished, nor could it be until he ascended into heaven as the recognized and honored Priest and King.

There are emphatic predictions in the sacred writings of the perpetuity and glory of these high offices of the ascended Christ. "Thou art a Priest *forever*," says the Psalmist, "after the order of Melchisedec." He was designated to this high office by the decree and oath of him "who hath sworn and will not repent." The prophet Zechariah instructs us that "he shall be a *Priest* upon his *throne*." He was to unite the character of priest and king, and forever maintain his royal Priesthood and his sacrificial royalty. "I have set *my King* upon my holy hill of Zion. Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor." The prophet Isaiah affirms, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he

hath poured out his soul unto death." Again, it is written, "the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." And again, "He shall drink of the torrent in the way, therefore shall he lift up the head." There, too, was that marvellously-retained inscription upon his cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, *the king of the Jews.*"

These and other similar productions were fulfilled, not until he ascended to his Father. Then it was that he went up to offer oblation and intercession for his redeemed, and to give them his official benediction. "We have a great High Priest," says the Apostle, "that is passed *into the heavens*, Jesus the Son of God." Again he says, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus the Son of God." Jesus Christ, because he continueth forever, hath this unchangeable priesthood. Like the High Priest under the Levitical law, who with his splendid robes entered into the most holy place, so Jesus, not with the blood of bullocks and of goats, but with his own blood, and still bearing the marks of the Great Sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, entered into the "most holy place, not made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." The true church of God in every age, can now say, "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the

heavens." There he must present himself as their Advocate, pleading for them the merits of his sacrifice, supporting them under their trials, and conduct them safely to his and their heavenly home. There must he appear, presenting to the heavens from which he came the public demonstrations of his perfected sacrifice, and claim the fulfilment of that everlasting covenant of which his own blood is the seal. Under the dark and shadowy dispensation faith lived only on these predictions; now it lives on the predictions fulfilled, and consummated by the resurrection and ascension of the once foreshadowed and predicted High Priest. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is *risen again*, who is even at the right hand of God, who also *maketh intercession for us!*" Nor until he ascended, was he publicly invested with his *kingly* office. For the suffering of death, he "was by the right hand of God *exalted*." He was to become "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." "We see Jesus," saith the apostle, "for the suffering of death, crowned with *glory and honor*;" having a "name which is above every name."

When he ascended into heaven, therefore, it was as the great *Mediatorial King*, "principalities and powers being subject unto him," and to exert his power in the kingdoms of nature, providence,

and grace, as "Head over all things to his church." Thence he was to send down his Holy Spirit to perfect the work of redemption, and to perpetuate it to the day of his coming. His crown of thorns was the pledge of "many crowns" to be won from the enemy, and there cast at his feet. From his glorious, high throne, he was to spoil the Destroyer, and deliver his captives by means of his own ordaining, and by institutions and authority which he alone had a right to establish. He was to impart the power of working miracles to his apostles; he was to inspire them with the thoughts and words with which they were to reveal his will to mankind; and he was to conduct them by his Spirit and providence to the ends of the earth. By their preaching he was to overturn the altars of superstition; extend his gospel and kingdom over the world; plant his church amid arid sands and mountain snows; and be everywhere present with his people and his ministers, and repeat the triumphs of his power and grace, ever redeeming the promise, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church." He was to introduce the period of Millennial glory, and fill the earth with the "knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters fill the sea." And when all this is done, he is to come at last to *judge the world in righteousness*. This last fact was strongly impressed upon the minds of those who were the witnesses of his

ascension, by special messengers sent from heaven. These apostles had seen him for the last time, until they should see him come in power and great glory. "As they were looking steadfastly toward heaven as he went up," behold two men stood before them in white apparel, saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? *This same Jesus* which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven!" As he had disappeared in the clouds of heaven, so the clouds of heaven should reveal him, when he would once more descend, to gather before him all nations. Descending angels met him in his upward flight; amid their acclamations he ascended, and by them conducted to the portals of the Heavenly City. What a glorious epoch was that in the history of Christ and of heaven, when the everlasting doors, for more than thirty years closed upon him, were opened! Who, in contemplating his ascension, can do otherwise than contemplate his glory? What a triumph was here! It was the Seed of the Woman bruising the head of the Serpent. It was the triumph of humanity over the malignity of Fiends, and the power of Hell. The Second Adam, the appointed and accepted representative of a redeemed humanity, was in heaven at last. In defiance of sin, death, and hell, *he was there*, the grand proof and pledge of God's reconciliation

to man. Illustrious, refulgent day! It was the great consummation of his great work. And what a thrilling welcome was that, when thousands clustered around this restored Son of God, and shouted the return of this mighty Conqueror, with all the scars of the great battle fresh upon him. What mean those heavenly voices? "THOU HAST ASCENDED ON HIGH; THOU HAST LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE; THOU HAST RECEIVED GIFTS FOR MEN, YEA, FOR THE REBELLIOUS ALSO, THAT THE LORD GOD MIGHT DWELL AMONG THEM!" Hark again! "LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, O YE GATES, AND BE YE LIFT UP, YE EVERLASTING DOORS, AND THE KING OF GLORY SHALL COME IN!"

Thus glorious was the great Redeemer in his ascension into heaven. Christians in every age have contemplated this great event with high satisfaction. So ought we to contemplate it, and study its import. It is truly a remarkable event; as the closing event in a series, it is the most remarkable. *Do you believe* it ever took place? It is the great policy of Satan to prevent men from believing these facts, to make light of them, and treat them as a farce. You believe other things on far less testimony; but *do you believe these?* You believe other things because you have no motives to disbelieve them, and your own minds are in a state which yields to the force of evidence. It is not so easy to believe this, be-

cause it involves such high interests, and affects your eternal well-being. I ask therefore again, *Do you believe* that Jesus died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven as the King of the universe and the Judge of men? Perhaps you wish they were not true, because they disturb your consciences, alarm your fears, and demand so high a place in your thoughts, that they do not allow you to look to any other refuge than this Prince and Saviour. Do you doubt them? Do you love to doubt them? Are you willing to doubt them? There is no question of greater importance to be decided, than whether they are true or false; and if true, whether you believe or reject them? I entreat you not to live any longer without deciding this vital question. They are so far beyond the range of common truths, that nothing can satisfy you, or justify you in rejecting them, unless you can prove them false. This no man has ever done, and no man can do. Be he Jew or Gentile, it is something gained to be convinced that you cannot prove them false. If you look upon them as doubtful, O be implored, by all the glories of that heaven to which Jesus of Nazareth is gone, and all the solemnities of that Day of Judgment to which he will soon come, not to give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till that doubt is removed!

You will say you do not doubt them. Well,

then, *how do they influence your character and conduct?* You give your assent to them as facts; and just think what momentous facts they are. You could not believe that the sun shines, or is obscured; that the wind of heaven blows from the east or the west, without its influencing your conduct. And can you believe such momentous facts as these, facts on which hang an eternal heaven, or an eternal hell, and yet treat them as the idle wind? Ah no, perhaps you do not believe them, after all. Faith in such realities as these, would form your character, and fit it for the heaven where Jesus dwells. You would have new views, new affections, new hopes and fears. You would have sources of peace and joy you never had before. You would have found what the world cannot give you, and would no more go to the world as your chief good. You would love that Saviour who, though he knew no sin, became sin for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him. Your faith in such realities would form the elements of a new and holy life, and do for you what nothing else can do.

This is the reception we solicit for this great fact in the Saviour's history. Let it bring near the realities of eternity, and make those realities precious. The ascended Saviour is as near to *us*, as he was to his early disciples; and the heaven where he dwells as near to us as it was to the

Mount of Olives. *There is indeed a heaven;* it is but a few hours' distance from us, when once our spirits receive the Saviour's bidding to "Come away." The eye of faith can see it; through the grave and all its circumambient clouds, it can descry the Heavenly City. He still speaks the assurance, "Because I live, ye shall live also." They are his lips which still affirm, "I go to prepare a place for you." Just as certainly as his disciples beheld him ascending through the clouds, will all those who love his appearing "ascend to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God." Take courage, then, ye trembling saints. "To him that overcometh," saith he, "will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne." Christians are apt to fear, because they do not see their Lord, nor hear his voice, nor receive his sensible benedictions as they once fell as it were from his own lips, that he is unmindful of them. Like an inexperienced and fretful child, because it does not see its mother's countenance, nor hear her voice, concludes that it is forsaken, so we, because the ascended One is out of sight, sometimes complain, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." But absent though he is in body, he is present in spirit. Well we know what he can do for us, and how he can fill us with the consolations of his love. Well may we live above

the world and walk with Jesus. Well may we seek often to be alone with Jesus, and well may other objects be lost sight of and swallowed up in the thoughts of Jesus. Well may we, with the exulting disciples, meet often in his temple to praise and bless the God of our salvation; and at his table also, and drink at that fountain of living waters. One would think we should have no heart to speak of anything but Christ, nor any other language but that of praise. Delightful employment! Come Christians, let us unite with these holy men who returned from the Mount of Olives with so much joy, and let the heaven where our Master dwells bear witness to our vows, and record our thankfulness, while we say, "MY SOUL DOTH MAGNIFY THE LORD, AND MY SPIRIT DOTH REJOICE IN GOD MY SAVIOUR; FOR HE THAT IS MIGHTY HATH DONE GREAT THINGS, AND HOLY IS HIS NAME!"