

*EXTRACTS
FROM
LETTERS OF J. DOUGHTY*

NOVEMBER 1920 - MARCH 1922

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(NOVEMBER, 1920—MARCH, 1922).



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PREFACE.

As the Lord still raises up His servants for His work, so does He call them to Himself when their service is over.

Each servant doubtless has his own peculiar line. This was particularly marked in the case of the writer of the letters from which the extracts have been taken, and which were written when he was unable to continue his former activities.

Although addressed chiefly to individuals, many of the letters contained ministry which it was judged would, in the hand of the Spirit, be for much blessing generally.

It is with this end in view, therefore, that they are published, and the issue is committed to Him in whose service the writer so happily finished his course.

It had been hoped that extracts from the whole of the letters received would have been included, but publication limits made this impossible without considerably lessening their value. It was therefore decided that the requisite abridgement would be better made by dealing with letters

covering the period November, 1920–March, 1922 only, than by a general curtailment.

The publication of extracts from the earlier letters, which are equally valuable, may be a matter for future consideration.

This explanation is felt to be due to those who kindly loaned letters, or furnished extracts, which are not included in the present volume.

May the wider range given to the letters now published be approved of the Lord, and be a means of distinct spiritual gain to His beloved people.

Derby.

W. L.

October, 1924

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EXTRACTS FROM THE LETTERS OF J. DOUGHTY.

THE TRUTH IS IN JESUS.

. . . I HAVE thought much of late of the first piece of the armour. (Eph. vi.) There is doubtless divine wisdom in putting truth first, because we have to meet a being who is utterly false in every way. This piece of armour is a necessary and preliminary defence in standing firmly, consciously, and immovably on heavenly ground, for whoever takes heavenly ground must prepare himself for fighting.

The first step in this preparation is having the "loins girt about with truth." How many godly, gifted men . . . who enjoyed and ministered heavenly truth, at last succumbed to the falsifying influences of the enemy and ceased to stand for what is heavenly as a present thing in testimony. They doubtless even retained much that was estimable and useful in measure, yet, alas, utterly failed to stand for that which is strictly peculiar to the heavenly aspect of Christianity, and the saints between Pentecost and the Lord's return.

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Satan has no truth in him, as the blessed Lord declared, so that when he speaks falsehood he speaks of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. I doubt if any one is to be depended upon as to scripture who has left the separate path, because he has in some way become a victim of the false application of the truths he has held. . . .

Satan is entirely false, and no mere man is a match for him. Only one Man, who is a divine Person in manhood, is his Master. We are therefore shut up to the Lord for all power against false influences, and false application of scripture. Truth is, I believe, inseparable from the Person of Jesus, even as falsehood is inseparable from Satan. “Grace and *truth* came by Jesus Christ.” Hence lying was not condemned in the Old Testament times, for truth had not yet come, and did not subsist in man, however many had written and spoken by the Holy Ghost. All truth was originally in the mind of God; it is now in Jesus, the Old Testament God, in manhood, and is communicated to our souls by the Holy Spirit’s application of scripture. So that any departure of any spiritual affection from the Person of Jesus is really departure from truth. . . .

Yes, truth is in Jesus; in Him we have it; away from Him it cannot be. May our loins

be braced up with what we find in Him by the Spirit, as recorded in scripture. . . . Correct exposition is not sufficient, for very often have I known of those who, while using the same terms, have quite failed to agree with each other, proving that in the spirit of their minds they were under different influences. . . . Truth means more than a thing being true ; it implies that any part is held in its true relation to every other part. Now, in order to secure this adjustment we must have a person, a Man who is a divine Person in the Godhead. In this one Person every truth subsists in its true relation to every other truth. So we are preserved from the sad state of things in Christendom, which is the simple result of setting one truth against another through failing to hold it in its proper relation and bearing. This cannot be done apart from the Person of Jesus. He is the living Word, and the scriptures are the record of Him.

All true ministry is from the Head, Christ, and in view of "the unity of the faith," "the knowledge of the Son of God"; "the full-grown man"; "the stature of the fulness of the Christ." The new man is "created in truthful righteousness." "The fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth." "Let your loins be girt about with truth."

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We can only meet error with truth. Where is the truth as to the Father? In the Son. Where is the truth as to God? In Christ. Where is the truth as to the saints of this time? As a family, in the Son of God; as the temple, in the Spirit; as the body, in Christ the Head. Holding the truth we think and act from God's thoughts, as set forth in Jesus the Christ, the Lord, the Head. . . . The outward profession to-day is a denial of the truth, therefore we must derive all our thoughts from another source, namely, from God in Christ, by the Spirit.

There are other blessed and important parts of the armour, and we need it all. Yet truth must take the lead in meeting the attacks of false influences, or we shall never be able to hold fast what we have and make sure our crown. May we all be preserved from false influences by holding the Head, and holding all our knowledge in relation to the Head, and so realise its true bearing on all that we have to meet here.

RECOGNITION OF CHRIST AS HEAD.

. . . LARGE meetings I do not look for, believing it to be God's mind to keep us small, consistent with the general ruin, and the cross of Christ. Numbers is not power by any means. Very often have I found that as meetings have increased in numbers they have decreased in power. The Lord is just the same to two or three as to two or three hundred. We are all apt to look on things after the outward appearance, forgetting that the Lord looks on the heart, and measures us according to the inward man, and the place given to Christ Jesus our Lord in our hearts.

There are two things which always have been, and are now, destructive of spiritual power, unless carefully kept under, and not allowed to become an object. They are, bodily activity in service, and mental activity in scripture. Satan knows how to influence saints and put these things (which are right in their proper place) in the place which the Holy Ghost always gives to the Person of Jesus. The Spirit has come to glorify Jesus in the hearts and minds of those in whom He dwells. Satan, transformed as an angel of light, works to make anything an object which will divert and distract from the Lord Jesus Christ, the

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beloved Son of the Father. Therefore we need to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation as to this. The whole *true* testimony relates to the unseen Person, and that order of things which is connected with Him at God's right hand. . . .

We need to submit to the constant administration of the Lord Jesus, doing everything in our meetings and christian walk and ways in real subjection to His spiritual authority over our spirits and souls. We need to constantly hold Him as the Head, the source to us all of God's thoughts and mind, and all divine wisdom. Whatever we have received in the past is no match for the enemy in the present. There needs to be constant exercise, constant prayer, constant recognition of the Lord Jesus as our only authority, and constant drawing from Christ as Head. Precedent, usage, habit, creed, system, indeed anything which proceeds from man, or ourselves, is utterly useless against Satan, who is transformed as an angel of light, and has his ministers on every hand as the ministers of righteousness. Who then is a match for all this save One who is the enemy's only and sole Master. We say we have come out to the Lord as our only resource. Indeed, He is our only resource against all this and the widespread ruin in Christendom. Yes, blessed be

God, He is sufficient, as each and all will prove who are true to Him. Consequently we need to be much with Him privately and alone, for meetings are sure to be weak when composed of individuals who are little with and before the Lord in private, where no eye sees, nor ear hears but His. "Ye have not, because ye ask not," or because you have your own desires in asking. We need to be led of the Spirit in all things, who always leads to Christ first and in all details as Christ is our Object. May we all be of those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER.

THERE is no doubt that we live in what I may term superficial days. Books are plentiful, meetings are numerous and easily accessible, while advanced education and city life sharpens wits and promotes intellectual activity. There is constant danger of this activity intruding into the study of scripture, and the ministry of the word, hence the great need of prayer and especially private prayer and meditation, along with reading and hearing. . . . Brethren (so-called) have been wonderfully marked by devoted attention to the word. Has there been proportionate meditation and prayer?

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The word and prayer are frequently mentioned together, and need to be attended to in even balance. . . . For understanding we must wait on the Lord. "They who seek the Lord understand all things." Spiritual understanding is necessary to walk worthy of the Lord. . . .

Truly God's way is in the sea, leaving no footprints, and untraceable to outward observation. Also His way is in the sanctuary, and understandable in Christ, who is the expression, as our glorified Head, of God our Father's purpose with each one of us. How blessed to be able by the Holy Ghost to read in Christ our God and Father's intention in regard to each and all those who compose the heavenly family of sons for the Father's delight, and who compose the church, the body and bride of Christ, for His delight. We have a glorious future before us needing a great and extensive spiritual education in the present. It is well to regard all the present in the light of the glory already established in Christ, and only awaiting His return for completion as to us.

THE TESTIMONY.

. . . I DESIRE to send a little word on testimony as it applies to Christianity, the day and dispensation in which we find ourselves. It is most important that we should in our souls be morally and practically in that testimony which God would have us render during this the time of the Lord's absence, and in view of His return. The mass even of converted persons are testifying of God according to Old Testament times as Almighty, etc. Of course God is all now that He ever was, for He cannot change. Yet He presents Himself according to the peculiar testimony of the time.

There are four aspects of the testimony according to Christianity. Doubtless this was foreshadowed in type in the Old Testament, especially in the Pentateuch. However, we read that the same God who spake in times past by prophets has in these last days spoken in the Person of His Son, a divine Person in manhood. All true testimony therefore ranges around and relates to the Person of Jesus, the second Man, the Son of God.

- (1) The testimony ; as the testimony of God. (I Cor. ii. 1.)
- (2) The testimony of the Christ. (I Cor. i. 6.)

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- (3) The testimony of our Lord. (2 Tim. i. 8.)
- (4) The testimony of Jesus. (Rev. xix. 10.)

It is all one testimony, of course, but presented in different aspects.

(1) THE TESTIMONY OF GOD is necessarily the first. The same God who appeared as Almighty to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has now revealed Himself as Father in the Son become Man. The Godhead was implied in the statement, "Let us make man," and the Hebrew word for God was generally in the plural. There was, however, one divine Person in the Godhead quite unknown until the Son came, a Man, declaring Him—the Father. Immediately the Son said God was His Father there was opposition. John viii. is a wonderful study as to the Father sending the Son, and the Son in manhood always pleasing Him and speaking to the world what He had heard from His Father. To us there is one God, the Father, so that whenever we say God, we ought in our minds to understand that this one God is to us the Father. A true testimony therefore presents one God as the Father revealed in the Son. How blessed to know the one God according to this precious name of Father and to testify of Him accordingly. We thus know God in love and as exercising Fatherly care over us, and as the One who is the true source of

everything. All comes out from the Father : the Son ; the Spirit ; the saints ; yea, all things. One God and Father of all, who is *of all, above all, through all, and in us all.* What a wonderful testimony is the testimony of God as Father.

(2) THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHRIST. This is the testimony of the Head which God the Father has provided. The Head of every man ; the Head of all principality and power ; the Head of the body the church ; the Head over all things to the church. Man, being utterly lost in himself, cannot be a source of anything according to God. Therefore a new source of all that is of God, and according to God, is necessary to make any one to answer to God.

This our God has abundantly provided us in Christ our Head. In Christ God can meet man, and man can meet God. In Christ we have Christ's character. In Christ and by Christ in us we can be suitable to God. God has met all that He wanted as to man, and all that man needs for God, by means of His own anointed Man, Christ, the Head, the source to each one and all of all that God is toward us, and we toward God. How blessed to have such a Head, and what a testimony to testify Him, the glorified Man while He is hidden in God, at God's right hand.

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(3) THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD. God has made Jesus Lord on His throne in heaven, and established His kingdom in the Lord Jesus at God's right hand on the Father's throne. When men here began to usurp authority, and the saints were giving place to them, it was necessary to exhort the faithful not to be ashamed of this hidden authority. What was coming in in 2 Timothy has become general in Christendom. On every hand men are occupying the place in the Christian profession which God has given to Jesus, and hence the lack of spiritual power. The Holy Ghost will own no spiritual authority but Jesus as Lord, nor will He support any who give to another the place which belongs to the Lord Jesus. Our meetings and general testimony will be powerful or weak according as we are true to the Lord and testify the position of authority given to Him of God.

(4) THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS. This is said to be the spirit of prophecy, because Jesus is the Jehovah of the Old Testament in manhood. How wonderful that the Jehovah God, the "I AM," should become a Man and present Himself as a Man to the eyes and ears of the very people He had dwelt amongst in the tabernacle and in the temple. We need to study and read the Old Testament in the light of Jesus, a Man now risen and glorified.

How blessed to get at the *spirit* of prophecy, and so have the Morning Star of the coming day brightly in our hearts.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

. . . I THINK I John is given as the means whereby we can answer to the Gospel of John. The gospel is the revelation of God as Father in the Son ; the epistle is the means whereby the heavenly family can go on in fellowship according to this revelation. In the gospel Jesus says and does everything Himself as sent and taught by the Father, and the disciples are witnesses of what He said and did. In the epistle the witnesses declare what they had seen and heard and handled, and their fellowship was with the Father and with His Son, having witnessed all that was presented in Him. These witnesses give the epistle to the family in order that each and all may have fellowship with them in that which they had fellowship with. This order is most important, for there is a tendency with some to overlook the special and peculiar place given those who companied with the blessed Lord when here, and who were specially chosen to be eyewitnesses of the Word. We must, therefore, be prepared to take our true place,.

and not only own the divine origin of our faith, but also the men through whom it has come to us. The apostles had in common what is presented in the gospel, and were all one in testimony, as the Lord prayed they might be. (John xvii.) This was their fellowship, and the epistle enables believers to have fellowship with them. The result is the same when we are willing to reach it by way of the chosen vessels. It is all of God in His Son incarnate and now glorified, yet it has come to us through men of like passions with ourselves, and therefore meets us so blessedly and suitably. I do not think that there can be any real spiritual progress in the Gospel of John without obedience to the teaching of the first Epistle of John.

(1) We have the true spiritual character of the epistle in chapter i. 1-4. It is, taken as a whole, the declaration of that which they had seen and heard and handled in the Person of Jesus. This was nothing less than the word of life, the external life which was with the Father and manifested to them, and reported to us by them in order to furnish us with a way spiritually into what they were in, and to give us a full joy. I have no doubt that if i John were carried out by us practically, a full joy would result.

(2) We have the true spiritual character of

the declaration in chapters i. 5 to ii. 11, namely, that God is now light, and "in him is no darkness at all," because He is fully revealed in His Son. Light is the main idea in this section, and gives the heavenly family and, of course, each one of it, the divine standard of God Himself as Light, as the one and only standard of spirit, words, and ways. All must accord with God now in the light in His Son, a Man. This is the measure for us all, and measures us all—God as light in His Son. There is ample provision for restoration when any one fails to answer to what God is. There is the Advocate, the propitiation, the righteous One. Loving our brother is the test of abiding in the light; all that is not love is darkness, and does not agree with God.

(3) The apostolic guard. (Chap. ii. 12-28.) He writes to us as children who are born of God, and have thus begun a new spiritual history, the old one having been closed with forgiveness, for His name's sake. The fathers are approved and admonished—approved by the first statement and admonished by the second—to go on as they were. The young men are warned as to the world, which is looked at spiritually as "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Those who are strong are in danger of these

things. The babes are warned as to the opposer of the Person of the Son in their spiritual affections, and appropriate counsel is given for the babe stage, yet surely needed by all. Thus fathers, young men, and babes are all guarded, and well would it be if saints took more notice of this guard, for it would preserve from all that hinders a practical answer to the rest of the epistle. It is most blessed counsel ; may we heed it more.

(4) Chapter iii. gives the family character, and each one is held responsible to observe it and individually conform himself to it. Even in natural families each individual must obey the family character and order. There could be no harmony in a family if each child took his own course, and had no regard to that which was suitable to the whole, and to obedience to the parents.

Therefore chapter iii. opens with the Father's love to the whole family, as that which gives the family its heavenly character in contrast with the world, looking forward to the blessed consummation of this love when we shall be with and like His Son, and the present practical effect of this love on us now.

Righteousness and love are shewn to be inseparable, and that lawlessness has no place in this family. Abiding in the sinless One is shewn to be the way of righteousness and

sinlessness, and therefore the way to answer to the family character. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. How beautifully simple is God's way for His children. Abiding in the sinless One is the way to keep clear of sin, for in Him is no sin or lawlessness. Thus we answer to the Father and the family character. Let us ever remember that it is always the one who is wrong who opposes and persecutes the one who is right. It was so with Cain in regard to Abel: even so it is now.

(5) Chapter iv. gives the family disposition. This needs cultivating. We have to be educated in it, and to mind what spirit we are of, for a wrong spirit could be very zealous for Christ, as in Luke ix. with James and John. . . . So this chapter begins with "Try the *spirits* whether they are of God," and right on to chapter v. 5 is education in the love of God toward us, our love to God and one another in view of the witness in chapter v. 6 to end.

(6) The testimony or witness. The Spirit from Jesus glorified, and the water of cleansing, and the blood of expiation, all agree in one as to their testimony of what God is as expressed in the death of His Son. This is the witness of God to what God is as revealed in His Son. All true witness to what God is—love—is so far a witness to what was presented by the Son in this world. The heavenly family

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is purposely left here to be a continuation in witness or testimony of what God is as Father revealed in the Son in manhood. The Spirit has come down from a glorified Jesus to indwell each one, and all, in order that there may be a testimony in and by this heavenly family consistent with the death of God's Son, and clear of the world.

May we all learn this epistle in spiritual understanding, and so be some witness of that light of God which has been so perfectly manifested here in the Person of the Son in manhood. Let us ever remember that where divine love is lacking amongst us there is no true testimony at all, for true testimony lies in the expression of the truth of who and what God is, as now known in His Son, and as He will be universally made known in the world to come by the heavenly family as the body and bride of Christ.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MAN IN WHOM GOD IS KNOWN.

. . . How thankful we should be that by means of an indwelling divine Person we are able to draw nigh to God in Christ with the blessed assurance that He will draw nigh to us. How this rebukes one's neglect of God

who so loves to have us draw near that He responds by drawing nigh to us. . . . May we avail ourselves of this great privilege more and more, and be very watchful against any neglect of it, for God's presence is indeed our home, as born of Him and having His Spirit.

We must not expect to increase by the knowledge of God unless we draw nigh to Him in Christ, the anointed Man, for there is no true, full knowledge of God apart from a Man, and that Man His beloved Son, a divine Person in the Godhead. The true knowledge of God is now as Father: "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we *FOR* him." (Margin.) This God and Father is *of* all, *above* all, *through* all, and *in* us all, by the Spirit of His Son. The Son is now in manhood, not any less a divine Person than He ever was, yet He is now a Man. God was manifested in Him as a Man before the eyes of men, and what was manifested here has been received up into glory. Doubtless the knowledge of God is the great thing, yet as the true full knowledge of God is only to be attained in a Man, it follows that the knowledge of man in Christ is the only way to know God. It would appear that it was ever God's intention to be known in man, for this kind of being was made in His image and likeness. May we not conclude,

therefore, that the knowledge of man is necessary for the knowledge of God.

Much of recent misunderstanding has proceeded from assuming the knowledge of God apart from the knowledge of man. The latter is presented in scripture in two distinct ways, namely, in Adam the first man, and in Christ the second Man, the last Adam. Indeed, the Bible might be summed up as the record of two men. The first man has misrepresented God all through, and does now, and ever will. The second Man always most correctly represented, and presented, Him by His Spirit in Old Testament saints, and in manhood, or bodily presence when here. We may be sure we should not have had such numerous and lengthy records of the first man's doings if we had not been intended to learn what man in Adam was. Every one, save Christ, the second Man, was allowed to fail in some particular to demonstrate the contrast between what he was in himself and the man who was expressed in Him by the Spirit of Christ. There is no exception to this. It is, indeed, wonderful how little of self was expressed in some, yet all gave evidence of their descent from Adam. Sin has come in and utterly and irremediably ruined man. God doubtless saw this at the outset of man's fall, and therefore announced the woman's seed, the second

Man, at once. This announcement indicated that the long trial of man up to the cross was not intended to effect improvement or alteration, but to prove what he was as a lawless being, unalterably unsubject to God.

In Job vii., Psalm viii., and Psalm cxliv., the question is asked: "What is man?" The answer has been given perfectly as to the first man (that is, as regards all without exception of Adam's race) at the cross of Christ. The more we understand the cross the more correctly we have God's judgment of what man is. A long history of four thousand years accords with what Christ endured when bearing God's righteous judgment of man. Wherever and whenever this judgment is accepted whole-heartedly there is an ending accepted, and a true preparation for a new beginning. The bottom of all the trouble in the world, and amongst the saints to-day, is that this ending is not accepted, for unless the first man goes out of our minds and hearts there will be no room for the Second. Well might the apostle say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He speaks of the offence of the cross. He appropriated the cross to himself, and could truly say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live;

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and . . . I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." So one thinks and speaks who has truly accepted the exposure and setting aside of man in Adam.

The One in whom man was judged and set aside, as regards God, is now, thank God, risen and glorified. He is the beginning as the Firstborn from the dead, even as He was the ending on the cross. What man is in contrast with God, and what God is in contrast with man all came out there, and we now, thank God, have a beginning for every one who receives Christ, for such are thereby transferred from Adam, the sinful man, to Christ, the sinless Man, God's Anointed, the Head of every man, who gives us each and all His own blessed character with God. The first man is now superseded by the Second. All true believers belong to the Second, and are of His order of man, only awaiting His return to be actually and totally like Him. Meanwhile we have the Holy Ghost to lead, guide, teach, and form our souls according to what the second Man is. The standard of our conduct is the second Man, and the allowance in mind, heart, or spirit, of anything that we know does not accord with Christ, makes us dissatisfied and unhappy, because

the Spirit who is always true to Christ disallows it.

The first man is in contrast with the Second ; all contrast, no similarity, except the bare fact that both are men.

The last Adam is finality ; there will never be another order of man.

The natural man is in contrast with the spiritual.

The earthly man is in contrast with the heavenly.

The old man is in contrast with the new.

The outward man is in contrast with the inward.

The evil man is in contrast with the good man.

To which of these do we belong and yield ourselves ? From which do we take our character and conduct ? Our apostle, who was surely right, said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" ; the knowledge of the Man in whom I know God, yea, a Man who is God, in the sense of being a divine Person in the Godhead, the Son revealing God as Father.

The knowledge of man in Christ, God's Anointed Man, the Head, is the way to know God, even as the knowledge of the Father is in the Son, a Man. We need the balance as to the Person of Jesus. Jealousy for His Deity

and divinity may be carried to the extreme of losing sight of His humanity, and then the first man comes in, for it is only by means of the Second that self in any and every form is excluded. The two men are never in together ; either Isaac or Ishmael occupies us, and religious self, good self, is the worst of all.

SATISFACTION IN GOD HIMSELF.

. . . I AM increasingly assured that God is supreme, whatever man may do, and that His greatest supremacy is His great love. We may therefore conclude that everything He orders, or permits, is in strict accord with what He is—and He is Love.

This marvellous revelation of God as Father has been set forth in His Son in manhood, and we do well to study God in that blessed One, who, dwelling in the Father's bosom, has declared Him fully before the eyes of chosen witnesses in this world. So that this revelation is no mere doctrinal theory, and is not made known to us in words only, but by specially chosen and fitted vessels who saw, and heard, and handled "that eternal life, which was with the Father," and was manifested to them in order that by the power and illumination of the Holy Ghost we might

have through them a full and perfect declaration of who God is and what He is toward us in His Son, who are His children, born of Him.

Although the true God is still Almighty, Jehovah, the unchanging I AM, and the Most High, we need this last revelation of God as Father in His Son, in perfect love to us His children, in order to have our affections perfectly answered without anything of this poor world which has proved its condition by rejecting Him. How blessed to know the way of divine satisfaction while passing through this scene, and so be able to carry and use the mercies of God without either trusting in them, or expecting from them that which they cannot give, and were never intended to give. Man naturally ever since Adam in Eden has been ensnared by Satan through giving God's gifts the place which alone is due to God the Giver.

The Son of God, the blessed One who has been manifested in manhood, presents God to us in the light of love in order to undo this work of the devil in man's heart, and to enable us by the Spirit to find our satisfaction outside the whole natural sphere, and the world, and the flesh, in God Himself and His love.

FULNESS OF SUPPLY IN THE PATH OF SEPARATION.

SEPARATION from the mass of God's people when failure came in was ever God's way for the faithful; indeed, none could be truly faithful otherwise. I have ever noticed through a long experience that whoever trifled with his separation left the separate path sooner or later. Therefore it behoves us not only to "come out," as we say, as connected with a meeting which as a meeting maintains this separation outwardly, but see to it that all our personal and private associations are in accord with our public profession.

The only power by which this can be done is the spiritual power in the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, wielded by the Holy Ghost in us. It is in this way that the kingdom of God is in power while Christ is absent and rejected by the world and absolutely misrepresented by a corrupt profession.

Therefore a few of God's people are separated, that on the one hand they may have the conviction that they have no resource whatever save the Lord Himself, and on the other to intelligently recognise that all that is according to God now lies in the Spirit of God, and in eternal life in Christ, outside and

beyond the actual condition of things around us.

God is our Father, and Jesus is our Lord, and Head, and Priest. It is well we should remember this most seriously in these days when confidence in man and natural ability is so abounding.

God as Father supplies all needs, the one universal source of all that is good and perfect. In Matthew's gospel, as heavenly Father in contrast with earthly father, He supplies all our natural need. In John's gospel, as the Father revealed in the Son, He supplies all the needs of our spiritual affections as those who are born of God.

Let us not then look to any other source for supplies whether natural or spiritual.

As Lord, Jesus is our unfailing but our only defence against Satan, whether his wiles or his power. The Lord knows when we are neglecting Him, having turned to gifted men, to knowledge of scripture, to correct modes of meeting, to any one or anything save Himself. He allows all to fail us when trouble or difficulty arises amongst us, in order to recall our minds and hearts to Himself.

Judges and the historical books are one uninterrupted testimony to this tendency to neglect the Lord, who as constantly and faithfully reminded them of it by the oppres-

sion of the enemy, until they abandoned all resource save the Lord Himself. What a perfect resource we have against the enemy in the Lord.

As Head, He is the unfailing source of all that Man is according to God, the second Man, in contrast with man here—the first man. He is God's Man, and must be our Man. The more we know Man in Christ the more we know God, for God can only be correctly known in the anointed Man, the Son of His love, the image of the invisible God, the One in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the One in whom all the fulness was pleased to dwell. Well might our apostle's burning desire be "to know him." May it be ours.

As Priest He sympathises with us, succours us, enters into the way we are affected by the influences, incidental to our pathway through this world, having gone through it all Himself according to God as a Man. He is a safe retreat from the tempter and his influence, and can hold up our souls in the life in which He is Himself now.

Thus we have in Him as the first begotten Son, a Man who is in Person the Son in the Godhead, One with the Father, an adequate object and resource against everything contrary and for everything positive.

We need to watch and pray because of our constant tendency to settle down with what is visible. Looking at the unseen by the Spirit is the secret of spiritual power and ability to overcome occurrences, whether around or amongst ourselves. Stephen is a standing example of this. The Holy Ghost delights to make the unseen a reality to us, even more so than the visible, and when this is so, we overcome the visible under the influence of the unseen. How blessed that our light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory, while we look at the unseen. Thus God would have that maintained in testimony now which will be displayed in the world to come.

EDUCATION FOR ETERNITY.

. . . It appears to be God's will to keep you here a little longer to perfect His work in you. The outward circumstances and the inward working are doubtless always in harmony, and both promote under God's good and mighty hand that which He purposes to accomplish in our souls for eternal glory. How blessed to understand in any little measure the ways of God with souls in the light of His purpose.

If any other way than that which He is taking would accomplish His purpose in our souls it would doubtless have come about.

I have been exercised recently as to the way John's ministry prepares for Paul. It has been said that John recovers to Paul after Paul has been lost. The history of Ephesus is interesting and instructive in this way. Paul laboured there the longest, and it turned away from him the first, with others in Asia. To these churches Revelation ii. and iii. were sent. In the Epistle to Ephesus the Lord puts His finger on the point which accounted for their defection from Paul, and afterwards gives John's epistle and gospel as the way back to first love.

In the present day, I doubt not, the knowledge and enjoyment of divine Persons by John's ministry is the only way to know and enjoy the second Man, Christ, and God as set forth in Him, and also the church as the second Man's body and bride.

Thus Luke, who is distinctly on Paul's line, gives the good news of the second Man, in whom God was presented here, and must be approached by way of John. John presents the Father in the Son. The Son is presented in manhood, yet it is, in John, the Son, a divine Person in the Godhead, who is presented, and of course in Him the Father, another divine

Person in the Godhead. This is to answer the affections of the Father and the Son in the heavenly family, and the affections of the heavenly family in the Son and in the Father.

When our spiritual affections are thus answered and satisfied we are in a spiritual and moral condition to study the second Man, and so learn God in all the excellence of His moral character, and the church as the second Man's body and bride.

This order of things embraces all that Christ suffered as a Man, for there is no doubt that as a Man He suffered everything that could be suffered by man, whether from Satan or men, and, most wonderful of all, from God Himself. In this way He attained as a Man the full competency of priesthood, having gone through everything that would afflict His followers, sin apart. Our lesson under the teaching of this Priest is the knowledge of this Man, and thus of God.

The apostle's highest ambition was to know this Man, Christ Jesus. This is learned in suffering in one form or another, while we are succoured and sympathised with by Himself. What an education for eternity!

A SUBDUED SPIRIT.

. . . I AM much impressed by the wonderful way our God and Father maintains a balance between His mercies to us in circumstances, and His grace to our souls. I have no doubt they are always in harmony, though we may fail to be able to reconcile the outward and the inward.

The Book of Job is most instructive on the point. Job was such a perfect man outwardly that he could not understand why God should work in him as He did. As to the external, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Satan, and the mere external, failed to manifest Job's inward condition of soul, but God's inward working on his spirit exposed him thoroughly. His friends all reasoned on the external line and were not able to answer Job, for on that line he was innocent of all their accusations. Elihu at once went straight to the inward mischief, an unbroken spirit, and silenced Job at once. What a lesson for us; think of it—that it is possible for a man to be blameless outwardly through God's care of him, and yet to be all wrong as to his spirit inwardly. How much there is in the Old Testament about a man's spirit, our own spirit, and how God delights in a sub-

dued spirit, a spirit that yields to God's Spirit, and in that way to God. How blessed to be *led* of the Spirit.

THE LORD HIMSELF, OUR ALL-SUFFICIENT AND ONLY RESOURCE.

. . . I THINK much of the younger portion of the gathering, along with the rest, and am exercised that we should all have a divinely-given sense of the true character of the separate path in these last days.

It is doubtless a great honour from the Lord to be in the place of testimony in a time of general departure from God's mind and ways. When the Lord wrought in souls the idea of separation from the whole of the christian profession, as that they could no longer walk with, we may conclude that He considered the separate path as absolutely necessary in order to have even a few to His mind ere He comes again. We, therefore, need to take this separation seriously to heart as a divine work in souls by the Lord Himself in view of bringing us out of everything in a corrupt christian profession *to* Himself. Believing God's testimony in the gospel, and receiving Christ by the Spirit, should be carefully distinguished

from being brought out *by* the Lord *to* the Lord as our only resource in our public profession, and in the conducting of all our meetings. I doubt not that every one who is so brought out by an inward divine working to the Lord Himself could not by any amount of persuasion or influence be induced to leave those who are similarly gathered together. Such do not come together voluntarily ; they come together under divine compulsion, and going elsewhere never enters their minds. We may rest assured that whoever comes otherwise will, sooner or later, be tested, and take himself away on the same ground on which he came.

It is important that those who desire to be together and go on together according to the "testimony of our Lord" in these last and closing days of Christianity should seriously feel how entirely and completely we are shut up to the Lord for all spiritual power. This is no new principle ; as we have often pointed out, faithful men in all ages and in all times of general failure have retired from the existing, established order of things to the Lord Himself, and have ever found Him sufficient. We never find such attempting improvement, alteration, or reconstruction. The Lord Himself was their one and only resource, and each one acted on the light and

power and direction received directly from Himself.

The blessed Lord when here acted as a Man directly from God by the Spirit. He persistently refused to fall in with the established order of things, although it had been divinely given through Moses. Paul in prison could no longer walk with the mass of Christians, nor would they any longer walk with him, but he exhorts his faithful son in the faith not to be ashamed of the testimony of the one and only spiritual authority, the Lord, when men were usurping His place, and God's people willingly giving the place to men which God had given to Jesus.

. . . We are in the last days, when I believe nothing external can be trusted in this great corrupt christian profession. The Lord alone is to be trusted. The difficult times have come, and we need to realise our dependence on the Lord. Our apostle was shut up to this before he was called away, and fully proved the Lord's sufficiency in the most extreme testing. How triumphantly he exclaims, "The Lord delivered me"; "The Lord will give me"; "The Lord stood with me"; "The Lord shall deliver me," and, as a parting word to Timothy, and to every faithful man, he says, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." Ah ! this is what we all

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...need against the provoking influences of un-faithfulness on every hand—the Lord be with our spirits ! How often we have known persons to be right as to the point or question in hand and yet to be in a wrong spirit. How we need the power of the Lord to control our spirit. . . .

When we are really controlled by the power of the Lord individually we are in a condition to act together collectively, and to consider and act on truths of a collective character, but not otherwise. Let us beware of acting on anything we have simply got used to, whether in doctrine or practice, without real soul exercise before the Lord. He is Satan's only master, and there is no salvation in any other.

DIVINE PERSONS IN RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER AND TO MAN.

WE are doubtless in the last days, and the difficult times, when dear saints must either be out and out for and to the Lord Himself, or be swamped by the strong human current of the day. No half measures will carry now. Rigid separation in heart, mind, and spirit, to divine Persons will alone preserve us from the subtlety of Satan and the infirmity of the flesh.

What a wonderful thing it is to be indwelt by a divine Person, One who is as truly a Person in the Godhead as the Father is, and as the Son is. Now we may rest assured that divine Persons can never be separated from one another, nor can they ever act independently of one another. Moreover, all their activities must be directed to one and the same end, and work in perfect harmony in every detail. Each Person has His own distinct place in the Godhead, and never deviates from it, while holding it in perfect truthful relation to each other Person. The Father, now revealed in the Son in Manhood, is the source of all. This wonderful Person was quite unknown before the Son came into the world as a Man, although many expressions in the Old Testament indicate the plurality of divine Beings. The Son glorified the Father on the earth by carefully and persistently affirming the Father as the Source and Spring of all. The Father gave Him everything ; the Father shewed Him everything ; the Father was the Source of His wondrous act of laying down His life and taking it again ; the Father gave Him the heavenly family ; the Father sent the Son ; the Father sent the Spirit in the Son's name. The Father is the source of all compassions, of all lights, of all spirits, yea, of all glory.

How blessed that by the Son we are introduced to the fountain-head of all things, to that one God and Father of all, who is *above* all, *through* all, and *in* us all. It is therefore now our privilege to take every mercy, all love and grace, yea, all spiritual things at their very source. This is a very great blessing, and, indeed, necessary to preserve us from the constant tendency to corrupt divine things because of the influence upon us of the merely natural.

The Son is that Person now in Manhood in and through whom all that has its source in the Father finds its expression.

The Son, the Jesus of the New Testament, is without doubt the Jehovah of the Old. This Person is peculiarly "the Word"; the expression of that which had its source in the Father. All that was said or done in the Old Testament by holy men of God was by the Spirit of the Person of the Son, now the Christ: "*The Spirit of Christ which was in them.*" Well may the Father have such delight in the Son as the One who is capable of giving perfect expression to all that is in the heart of God the Father.

This Person is now the Word, and so the Word now has a personal character, which makes it living and operative, and no longer the letter which killeth. Thus, in

reading and studying our Bibles it is imperative that we should be reading a Person, a Man, as written down in the book. It is only so that we get at the spirit of the letter, and at the mind of God in any and every scripture. If all students of scripture had pursued this course thousands of books on scripture would never have been written ; theology would never have existed, neither would heresies and division have afflicted the people of God. How happy are we when in purity of affection we study this Man, in whom God is revealed as the Father, and in all His true, moral character, and as the One in whom all the thoughts of God are truly and intelligently presented to our souls by the Spirit. The lovely connection of the personal Word and the written word is beautifully given when the Lord's enemies asked Him, "Who art thou ?" "Even the same that I said unto you," was the answer. Yes, His words expressed Himself. Thus the Person and the scripture are inseparable.

The other divine Person is the Holy Ghost, and it is important to bear in mind that He is a Person in the Godhead, and not only a Spirit. The word *He* is often used of Him. His mission is well described in John xiv., xv., and xvi., and we do well to ponder it and ever give Him His true place. He never

occupies us with Himself nor with ourselves except in correction and reproof in view of the Person of Jesus. He is here absolutely for the glory of the Son, and so for the Father.

THE PURPOSE OF OUR PILGRIM PATH.

. . . I FEEL that it is a good thing to have God's mind in regard to our pilgrim path through this world.

Each believer is watched over, and cared for with a constant, unfailing divine care.

Each one and all are absolutely and entirely in the hand of our God and Father, according to His love, power and purpose.

It is indeed wonderful that our God should leave us in this life of sorrow and difficulty after having made us His children; after having redeemed us, and put us in Christ, and Christ in us, and given us a perfect title to heaven, and fitness for it.

We need most seriously and prayerfully to consider why He has left us here to go through this world. We may be sure that our God and Father has some very distinct and blessed purpose in leaving us here; for it cannot be any pleasure to such a Being to allow such a world to go on, or to allow His loved ones to go through it.

We all begin our spiritual history as babes, born of God, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost. This is the blessed effect of believing the gospel, and the point of entrance into the kingdom.

We are children in the heavenly family in view of growth in divine affections, and the knowledge and enjoyment of divine Persons. We are subjects in the kingdom in view of being subdued and subject in soul and spirit to the will and pleasure of God. *The former is John's ministry, the latter is Peter's; and the two are to enable us to answer to Paul's*, which is the second Man, the Head of every man, the Head of all principality and power, the Head of His body the church, the Head over all things to the church.

It is in proportion as we grow in divine affections, in connection with divine Persons—the Father and the Son—by the Holy Ghost; and also in proportion as we are subdued in our souls and spirits to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ by the engrafted word and the Spirit, that we are able to follow *our* Apostle Paul in giving place to the second Man against self, and to hold Christ as the Head, the Fount of all divine wisdom and the mind of God.

The knowledge of the *Father* in the *Son*, and the knowledge of *God* in *Christ*, and the

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vast realm of divine things established in Him, is the purpose of our pilgrimage and schooling in all we pass through here.

None of this will be lost—our education is not a vain one ; the result is well worth the process, however exercising and painful it may be on account of what we are naturally, and the multitude of contrary influences with which we have to contend in our pathway.

It is, however, a great stay and comfort to understand and yield to God's intention in all our experiences. The majority of God's people have ever misunderstood God's ways with them, and fretted and complained in their experiences, through ignorance of God's ways and His intention in and with that which He has permitted to come on them.

May we be more grown up in divine affections, more subdued in the kingdom, and more intelligent in God's ways and purposes as set before us in the second Man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

To succour, sympathise and save, He went through every kind of suffering here as a Man, and is now our perfectly qualified Priest to make every bit of our pathway profitable to us spiritually.

We are thus fitted to be true in testimony, useful in service and consistent in walk and ways while here, and prepared for future

display in glorified bodies in the world to come.

How immensely important is our pilgrim path.

SAINTS IN SEPARATION NOT A CHURCH.

I AM increasingly assured that those saints who are in the path of separation have no scriptural warrant for regarding themselves as "a church." The term always includes all the believers in the place. I believe the abiding scriptural provision for the faithful is, "Where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them"; "calling on the name of the Lord"; "Calling on the Lord out of a pure heart." Where and when this is real we have the Lord according to all His kingdom power by the Holy Ghost. Otherwise we have form without power. The Lord's name is, I believe, the present fame of a glorified Man in heaven, and must be our only rallying point by the Spirit, and not anything connected with ourselves here.

FIRST THAT WHICH IS NATURAL, THEN
THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL.

It is well to be intelligent in the divine order, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy : the second man is the Lord from heaven." (I Cor. xv. 46.) Hence we are all first of the order of the "first man," the earthly order of man. By the marvellous grace of God believers have been transferred, as to position and character, to the second Man, the heavenly, and are awaiting His return to be changed into His image, being already of His order spiritually.

Actually, the natural remains, and we are left here after believing, without one bit of the natural being removed, to be spiritually educated, along with the many and varied exercises incidental to the contrast between the natural and the spiritual.

It is a marvellous conception of God to bring in the natural order with the purpose of superseding it all by the spiritual. We cling to the natural, and indeed we should be of all men most miserable if we had no hope outside it.

It appears to be God's way to supersede

what we have got used to by something better. The exercises caused by passing from the inferior to the superior are very real, and are never treated lightly by the Father and the Lord. I doubt not that our High Priest, the Son of God, as a Man went through this life, and met and experienced and overcame everything in order that we might have His succour and sympathy and support in all those exercises and temptations, which are inseparable from our being actually still in the natural order, while spiritually born of God, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost. We all learn by contrast, and had we each one been created and put into heaven without coming into and going through the natural order, we should have known nothing in its true character, for the spiritual order is only learned by those who have been into and passed through the natural. The divine purpose in allowing the natural to go on so long is to educate souls in the spiritual, until that grand moment when we shall all have spiritual bodies in accord and in harmony with the spiritual work in our souls.

“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” The first or old creation is in view of the new. The first man is the figure of the Second. The earthly becomes the heavenly. The natural must give place

to the spiritual ; the temporal to the eternal ; the visible to the unseen.

God is in nowise allowing this world to go on for its advancement or improvement, for there is nothing in it for His pleasure, all being marred, tainted, and defiled by sin. He orders and overrules and supports and controls according to His wondrous work in converting and instructing and forming souls according to the second Man, and His purposes and counsels in Christ with eternal glory. The new creation work of God as to our souls now, and shortly as to our bodies, is that to which everything of nature must be subordinated. Christianity is not intended to make us unnatural, yet nature must not be allowed to lead on account of the principle of lawlessness which has come into it. By the reception of Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, another power has come into us, who works and leads according to God in Christ while the old and natural is still there, hence the exercises and sufferings of this time.

However, our God and Father has graciously given us the light of the unseen to set against the visible ; the spiritual against the material ; the world to come against the temporal ; the second Man against the first ; and His and our glory against all the glory of man and

this world. We are not here to have anything altered for us, but to be sustained in our spirits above this order of things by divine power working in us. The language of scripture is, "*Hold up* my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." (Psa. xvii. 5) ; "*Which holdeth* our soul in *life*, and suffereth not our feet to be moved" (Psa. lxvi. 9) ; "*Hold* thou me up, and I shall be safe." (Psa. cxix. 117) ; "*Humble* yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall *lift* you up." (James iv. 10.) Thus the divine way is to hold us up in spirit above nature, so that we may act according to God, in nature, by the Spirit in a power above the flesh.

GOD'S WORK IN US NOW, IN VIEW OF THE DAY OF DISPLAY.

. . . How worthy of Himself are the ways of God with each one of His own, and doubtless in strict accord with His eternal purpose. Yet how few even of God's people consider why this evil world is allowed to go on, or understand the purport of all God's ways in and with His saints. It is easy to say that God is gathering out the church for Christ, which is quite true ; but how much is involved in this ! It is not only that our being with

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Him and like Him is assured, as though the whole matter was an act of divine power at the rapture in answer to our redemption. Thank God, the work was finished on the cross, and every question of righteousness settled. The power of God will in the twinkling of an eye raise the sleeping ones, and change the living ones, and take us all up bodily to be for ever with and like the Lord Himself. All this is unspeakably blessed and a matter for constant praise and thanksgiving.

Many have an idea of what was done by the Lord Jesus when here, and what He will do at His return and in the world to come, and yet seem to have little or no understanding of what He is doing now in souls by the word and the Spirit. I feel increasingly the importance of our being intelligent in the ways of God with our souls inwardly and spiritually at the present time. Our spiritual history on this line begins by our being born again, born of water and the Spirit. We thus begin as babes, and we are simply left here after our new birth to grow in spiritual stature in the way of love and intelligence. Our title to heaven is as good on receiving the Spirit as ever after, and we may be sure that it is no pleasure to God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ to leave us in a world of

sin and sorrow in Satan's sphere with unchanged bodies. There must be something of vast importance in the mind of divine Persons in keeping saints in such a scene actually and bodily. It would appear to be God's mind that each believer shall go through this world and tread the path which our High Priest trod Himself—under divine teaching and by the wonderful succour and support and sympathy of priestly grace.

There is a deep and real meaning, therefore, in everything that is permitted to occur to each one of God's people in the way of outward circumstances, and our one exercise should be to learn what our God and Father intends to teach us while going through each circumstance. The one thought with many is, How can I most quickly and easily get out of this trouble? Whereas it should be, What further can I learn of God in it? Therefore the lesson has to be repeated in another form, for our God loves us too much to allow us to go through this life without divine teaching. Divine teaching is a very great matter in Christianity, for it is the preparation inwardly now for outward display in the coming day. The outward circumstances now are all under God's hand in harmony with the working of His Spirit inwardly. Sooner or later we get spiritual good out of every

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experience, for tribulation works patience, and patience experience of what God is toward us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How blessed to be in the secret of God, and so be able to view this world, and all that is permitted to go on in it, as a school in which to learn God and His infinite love, and grace and mercy also. How could we learn such a Being without exercises and circumstances in which to learn Him ? The mass of God's people, I fear, fret against God and His ways with them. However, blessed be His name, He goes on with His work of love, and makes His teaching effective, although very often it is not done in the happy way it might be, and would be, if accepted in subjection of spirit.

Individually we are being prepared to reign with Christ on His throne, and collectively Christ is preparing the whole of the saints from Pentecost until His return to be as His body, the expression of Himself, and as His bride, His glorious adorning. Life is well worth living here for such an education in view of such a position. . . .

The Lord grant us spiritual intelligence in order that our judgment may be according to God. We shall then be thankful for much that we should otherwise grieve over. When God's work in souls is done, as to the church,

He will speedily end this world and bring in the world to come. It will then be our turn to be exalted, honoured, and distinguished, when this poor world and all that men court will be gone for ever. May our God carry on the work of faith with power in each one, and give us a single eye to the Person of Jesus, and the glory shining in His face.

OUR FATHER'S TEACHING.

As to your own exercises, I have no doubt you sincerely believe that nothing can happen to any of God's children without their Father's permission. No doubt this is so, or God would not be God. This supreme Being, God, is the Father, revealed in the Son, and He is our Father witnessed in each one of us by the Spirit of God in us. We may be sure that He will ever be true to the name of Father, and is all to each one of us who are His that the name of Father can possibly convey. Not a bird falls to the ground without Him, and the hairs of our head are all numbered by Him. Moreover, He has declared His love in the gift of His Son for us, and to us, and by giving each and all of us to Him. This love He has shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and commended it to us in the death of His

Son. Are we then not able and entitled to accept everything that occurs to us, from whomsoever and whatsoever, direct from His hand over and above all persons, channels, and causes, and be only concerned to learn what God our Father has to teach us by what He allows to come upon us? When this is learned we are at rest, and can leave Him to act for us and bring about His own will for us, knowing His perfect love and care, and unceasing interest in us, as those who are in His Son, and have His Son in us.

DIVINE FESTIVITY NOW.

. . . How wonderful are God's ways of imparting to our souls the blessed knowledge of Himself in Christ, and the vast range of divine things treasured up in the Head. What an education our God is giving us, and how gently, patiently, and effectively He teaches us in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. What a marvellous thing it is that by the Holy Ghost came down to indwell us we are compelled to join in the acclamation of heaven in having Jesus, the second Man, there glorified as divine festivity for our souls now. (Luke xiv.) Thank God, we can *now* enjoy this feast, during the night time of Christ's absence,

joining in the joys of heaven spiritually, while passing through this world bodily. It is all very wonderful. Every experience and circumstance is ordered or over-ruled to help us to move with the Spirit into heaven's joy in having Christ there.

SERVING GOD IN ONE'S SPIRIT.

. . . SERVING God in one's spirit is wonderful. It can be done when the body is at its weakest, even in greater nearness and power and effectiveness. So that one's usefulness can go on in bodily weakness, and the unseen and eternal be even more realised than in strength.

TAKING OUR CARES TO GOD.

. . . IT is an immense comfort and relief to have such a Being as God to go to with our cares, and to have the assurance by a man of like passions with ourselves that the peace of God shall guard our hearts and minds against our anxieties. This is indeed a wonderful provision for us. Let us not neglect to make our requests known to God, and so miss His peace. I believe Satan ever seeks to influence us against bringing our cares to God, in order to get an

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advantage over us under pressure. Of course we are intended of God to go through these things, but we are not first in this path. A divine Person has become a Man, and as a Man has gone through this world and met every influence from man and Satan, and, blessed be His name, is able to succour them that are tempted. The path of the will of God through this world is very real, for, in addition to natural feelings and susceptibilities, we have spiritual sensibilities, and thus feel things differently from and more acutely than the unconverted. Yet, thank God, we have an outlet in prayer to God our Father, and to our Lord Jesus, who understand us as no one else can.

LOVE, THE MAINSPRING.

. . . WE read that faith works by love (Gal. v. 6), so that we may thus understand why there is so little faith and such confidence in means. If love were better understood and realised, faith would be more in exercise. Faith that would remove mountains is possible without love, and leaves the one who so exercises it just nothing. How important to begin at the right end. Of course faith, and hope too, are most important and necessary, yet the greatest is love. Love is the mainspring

without which the machine will not go. The most wicked man uttered the sublimest prophecy, yet he had no love. All the gifts God ever gave never gave love. "Ye must be born again" for love. We must have the Holy Ghost indwelling for love; yea, we must have the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for love. The law demanded it, and God has supplied it in His Son in manhood and by the Spirit. Thus we have it objectively in the Son, and subjectively in the Spirit.

. . . I FERVENTLY hope that you are being sustained in spirit, soul, and body, and proving that out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness. How wonderful to have a God and a Lord who can make that yield us strength and comfort which would naturally eat us up. Well may our apostle say, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

RIVER OF DEATH BETWEEN NATURAL, AND SPIRITUAL.

. . . THERE is a vast domain opened to our souls and spirits in connection with Christ risen and glorified, by way of His death.

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The way He has gone actually and bodily is the way for us spiritually to leave this life and to enter into life beyond death. Death—His death—is the only point of departure from the natural order, and the only point of conscious entrance into unseen and eternal things. The natural and the spiritual can never be connected. The river of death rolls between the natural and the spiritual ; between the human and the divine ; between the temporal and the eternal ; between this world and the world to come. The blessed Son has cleared the way of every obstacle by going the way Himself, and no power can close the way after Him ; it is ever open for our hearts, minds, and spirits, when the Person of Jesus on the other side is more to us than all on this. Surely He is worthy to be so !

. . . I PRAY that you may all be kept in peace in all ways, and by all means. Yet faith must be tested, or we deceive ourselves.

ENDURANCE.

. . . It is a great comfort to understand that the proving of our faith in these trials works endurance, and therefore the more we

endure the more we are able to endure. The important matter is to endure a trial right through, otherwise we stop short of the grand goal of lacking nothing, and being morally complete; the trial has then to be repeated in some other way.

How one appreciates the "Priest" in these provings of one's faith. What a blessed provision for us in all our weakness we have in One who has gone through the whole of the path before us, and can enter into in fullest sympathy our very feelings under the tempter's efforts to draw our hearts away from God by allurement or pressure. Everything has been thought of and provided for us, and we have it all in a divine Person, a Man, and all made practically and experimentally available by the Holy Ghost in us. We must, however, have the process in order to gain the result, and surely our God and Father must order the process which will alone secure the result. May we come boldly to that throne on which the Administrator of grace sits, and receive at His hand the mercy and grace needed for seasonable help.

OURSELVES FOR GOD BEFORE OUR SERVICE.

. . . THE Levites of old, typifying servants now, were first set apart and presented to the Lord before their service was given them. God must have *us* first, and then our service ; the welfare of our souls is more to our God than all our work for Him. Christ died *for* us that we might live *to* Him, and we must learn to live *to* Him, or we cannot purely and really live *for* Him.

FAITH AND ITS PROVING.

How wonderful are God's ways of teaching us, in His perfect wisdom ever suiting the outward circumstances to the inward work, and carrying on the inward work in harmony with His eternal purpose and future display in glory. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Thus our God and Father uses the trials to prove the faith which is there, the faith which He has given, the faith which has come into our souls by the Spirit's application, or engrafting of scripture, and which is the measure of light which each one of us has received from God.

I believe faith is light from God in the soul by the Spirit. Hebrews xi. is given us to shew what it is possible to do on that principle. There is no copying or repetition in it. No two instances are alike, yet every one who acted on his faith was distinctly supported and an overcomer. The proving of our faith is more precious to God than the most valuable thing in nature. The testing of it proves what is there, and is often very humbling to us because we are so apt to over-estimate ourselves spiritually, and conclude we have more in our souls than we really have received from God. We are actually in man's day, but spiritually in the Spirit's day. Whatever has man for its source, however gifted or spiritual he may be, will fail us when God proves our faith ; but, thank God, whatever is from Himself, administered by the Lord in the power of the Word and the Spirit, will abide every test, and strengthen us in the ability to endure as we go on enduring. . . .

Holy men of God always acted individually from God when the mass of His people had departed from the order of things entrusted to them. If each one faithfully obeys his faith from God, there will be genuine fellowship with one another, because our ideas, thoughts, and actions proceed from the self-same source. Now this faith is what God gives each believer,

and it is this individual faith that He proves. This proving finds us all out, and manifests where we *really* are in our souls, and exposes all assumption. I conclude we are not happy because the exposure is not accepted, and because our faith is not acted on. Thus our thoughts and conduct flow from a human source instead of a divine one.

We are in the last days, the difficult times, because there is nothing external and visible to be trusted ; hence we must each be guided from an unseen source and act on the faith given. Endurance and wisdom are the essentials for acting according to the faith given. May we have both, and so refuse our own thoughts and desires and submit to God. The crown of life is to them that LOVE HIM against every influence which would draw the heart away from God.

. . . God is love, and God is above all and certainly cares for us. There is wonderful light for our path in James i. :

Count it all joy when ye fall into divers trials ;

Knowing that the proving of your faith works endurance ;

Ask God for wisdom ; love God against alluring influences ;

Expect from God as the Father of lights,
instead of lusting ;

Listen to God as begotten of Him ;

Act from God according to the engrafted
word.

May the Lord guard, guide, and bless . . .
and make all the exercises produce what His
purpose of grace intends.

THE SECOND MAN, OUR OBJECT.

. . . You are not a numerous gathering, but the Lord is just the same for two or three as for two or three hundred ; numbers make no difference to Him. We need to watch and pray against the effect of the visible and material upon us, for we are all very much affected by what we see with the outward eye and hear with the outward ear. A divine Person, the Holy Ghost, has come to indwell us in order to lift our hearts, minds, and spirits above the natural man, and his order of things, so that the second Man, glorified at God's right hand in heaven, may be our absorbing Object, and that our minds may be set on things above where He sits at the right hand of God. He has died for us and risen again so that we may all be affected by the claims of His infinite love, and live to Him as our one motive in

all we say or do. We cannot really and truly live *for* Him unless we first live *to* Him. It is always either self or Christ. When Christ is before us we are clear of self, and when self is before us it cannot be Christ. Isaac and Ishmael never live together ; we must deny self in order to follow Christ. This is the daily cross, and absolutely necessary if we are to be here *for* Christ and for God.

Man is the cause of all the upset in the world and in the church, and the only remedy is the second Man, our Lord Jesus Christ. God has brought in the second Man who was announced as the Seed of the woman immediately the first man fell from God. There must be another man entirely. Let us be true to Him ; we shall then have God's approval and the Spirit's support.

PRAYER AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.

. . . We may listen with the outward ear, and in a sense enjoy what is said, and yet retain very little. We need divine power in order to take in divine ideas and understand with spiritual understanding. Daniel x. is a valuable chapter as shewing the way that devoted servant was divinely prepared to

take in what God had to communicate to him of His mind and thoughts. He had three weeks' deep exercise before anything was shewn to him, and then he went through a process of reducing him in his own strength, even to the weakest point. Then the gradual raising process began and went on from one stage to another until he stood up straight and could say, "Let my Lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me."

I often think of the apostles' word in Acts vi: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Usually the word comes before prayer in order to give us intelligence in prayer, but in view of ministry prayer comes first, for however correct and extensive our information may be, yet ministry to be any real help must come direct from the Lord according to present exercise and present need. Therefore the dear saints need to be much in prayer when meetings are proposed for ministry; otherwise much may be said, and great numbers and enjoyment realised, and yet very little be engrafted in the soul by the Lord in the power of the Holy Ghost. Hearing without engrafting is very deadening. It is "*the entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*" The one thing needful is to listen to a Person speaking

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to the inward man by the Spirit's voice applying scripture from the Lord to the soul. Let every one be swift to hear the voice of God from the Lord by the Spirit's use of scripture ; we are then slow to speak and certainly slow to wrath.

Brethren have often got angry and worked up much feeling over scripture by forgetting that man's wrath does not work God's righteousness. The vital thing for saints well instructed in scripture is to hold all their knowledge in relation to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We then have the spirit of the scripture and are able to see the unity of the faith when all our ideas are held in connection with Himself. When we read or study our Bibles we need to have the Person of Jesus glorified before our hearts and minds ; thus each brother will be able to hold his bit in harmony with what others have, and likewise they with him.

WAITING UPON GOD.

. . . THE discipline of our daily path is doubtless ordered and over-ruled to give us an experience of extremity, and thus make us realise our need of God Himself. We need the exercises attendant on the insufficiency

of everything and every one, as it is often said, "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," and He is ever faithful to take advantage of our extremity to prove to us what He can be to us in our extremity. (See Psa. cvii.) Hence the paramount importance of the patience of faith. "We count them happy which endure," says James. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy."

Our spiritual strength is evidenced in what we can endure, and the spirit in which we can endure, rather than in doing. Man's way of attaining perfection is by endless tryings and doings. God's way of making us perfect is by letting endurance have her *perfect* work, acting by wisdom from above. . . . "My soul waiteth upon God : from Him cometh my salvation. . . . I shall not be *greatly* moved. . . . My soul, wait thou *only* upon God ; for my expectation is from Him. . . . I shall not be moved." (Psa. lxii.) We see progress as we wait patiently on God ; first it is, I shall not be *greatly* moved ; next it is, I shall not be *moved at all*.

God is God, and God is love. He must have the supreme place. Satan ever tempted man to give some one, or something, or to take himself, the place which alone belongs to God.

There is only one supreme Being, there could not be another, and now that the Jehovah of the Old Testament has become a Man, the supreme place is always given by Him to the Father. When speaking of Himself and the Father as divine Persons in the Godhead He says, "I and my Father are one"; when speaking of Himself as a divine Person in Manhood He says, "My Father is greater than I."

It is most affecting and instructive, in John's gospel especially, how constantly and carefully Jesus affirms that He received everything from His Father. The Father is indeed the Source of everything. The Son is the Word, the expression and accomplisher of everything. The Holy Ghost is the effector of everything, but the Father is the Father of glory; every family in heaven and earth is named of Him. He is the Father of mercies; He is the Father of spirits; He is the Father of lights; He is the Father of all. How blessed to have such an One for our God, our supreme Object, known in His Son, a Man glorified on the Father's throne. "To us there is one God, the Father, *of* whom all things, and we *for* him; and one *Lord*, Jesus Christ, *by* whom are all things, and we *by* him." (1 Cor. viii. 6.)

We have all been sought and found to wor-

ship the Father, the one supreme God, known in His Son, a Man. Let us see to it that no object is allowed between our spirit and this blessed God our Father, known in His Son, and by the Holy Ghost.

TRUE CHRISTIANITY HAS CHRIST ONLY AS OBJECT.

THE Lord and the Spirit are ever inseparable : the Lord the Object of faith and God the Father in Him as the Son, and the Spirit the subjective power by whom the Lord's authority and administration is communicated to our souls through the engrafted word. Therefore the character of our obedience in this the Spirit's day is to work out faithfully what is wrought within. The Son, Jesus our Lord, is the Father's Object and the same blessed Person, a divine Person in the God-head, a glorified Man, is the Spirit's Object.

In Christ we have God toward man ; in Christ we have man toward God. He is the blessed mercy seat where God and man meet. In Christ God approaches me in grace and love. In Christ I approach God in all the blessed liberty and nearness in which Christ is. The Holy Ghost supports me the moment I turn with all my heart away from the world,

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from man, from Satan, from self, to Christ. Having Christ, the second Man, God's anointed Man, as my Object is ever pleasing to the Father, and the Spirit, and it is the one thing which the youngest and the oldest and all between are able to do if only willing to live to Him whose love in dying for us surely should be allowed to claim us.

This is the great beauty of true Christianity ; it gives us an Object, One who has been here as a Man, and gone through every possible trial in His life, and finished the whole work on the cross, and is now in heavenly triumph dispensing divine favours to those who honour Him with the first and only place in their spiritual affections. Surely He is worthy, and the Spirit in us may well be grieved when we give the place to any one or anything which belongs to Him alone, and of course to God by Him. For whatever displaces Christ displaces God Himself in our hearts and minds ; and God in Christ must be supreme and will be all in all at the end.

May we follow our Apostle Paul in Philippians. He was indeed captivated by Christ as the blessed Man in whom he had God. When he first saw God in a glorified Christ all his ideas of God were changed, and as a result his whole course was changed also. So it is with us ; our thoughts, our words,

our ways must all be regulated and controlled by what God is, as known in Christ, for God is supreme, God is God, and God is love.

DIVINE THINGS TO BE HELD
SUBORDINATE TO, AND IN CONNECTION
WITH DIVINE PERSONS.

. . . THE knowledge of divine Persons and the enjoyment of eternal life in the Son must take the lead of all else ; otherwise the flesh will take advantage of gift, of knowledge, of usefulness in service, indeed, of everything. Herein lies the weak place in regard to God's beloved people to-day, as always. Spiritual food being neglected, spiritual affections become weak. With the more spiritually minded, spiritual things are desired, and in measure sought after, but never attained in any degree of reality and power. They may be held in terms wherever ministry is attended to, and be a matter of considerable interest, yet never realised.

We are apt to begin at the wrong end. Every one when born of God begins at the right end ; he begins in his soul, in his spirit, in his spiritual affections, with the Son and the Father by the Holy Ghost, the unction of the Holy One. Few, if any, have avoided

the corruption of those pure spiritual affections by the subtlety of Satan, influencing the saints with all manner of things in order to divert and distract from the Son and the Father. Hence the apostle's faithful warning to the babes in I John ii., a much needed warning to all in all times and places, yet, alas! too often neglected.

Divine Persons are intended for divine affections, never *things*, not even divine things; for things, however good and necessary in their place, can never return affections. We must have persons for love, and for spiritual affections. Divine Persons alone give full joy. When divine things are held subordinate to the Son and the Father, to God and Christ, the spiritual vision is clear, the intelligence bright, the understanding is sound, the service is opportune and useful, and the walk is according to the will of God and pleasing to Him; all flowing from a spiritual source by the Holy Ghost, who has come purposely to glorify the Son through the saints in the scene where He glorified the Father.

THE WORK IN US TO SHINE OUT IN OUR GLORIFIED BODIES.

. . . THE work *in* us is the present work of God and will every bit shine out in glorified bodies ; so that the more there is wrought in us, the more there will be to shine out for ever and ever. How the intelligence of this helps one to bear the process patiently. How blessed it is to be instructed in God's present work in us for eternal glory. There is to be an exhibition of all this work of grace when we all come out of heaven with and like Christ, according to all of Christ that has been wrought in us, for God is working that in us now with which we shall be clothed in our glorified condition.

TRUE CHRISTIAN CONFESSION.

. . . How blessed it is to understand and realise that in Christianity God has judged the first man at the cross and brought in a second Man in Christ who perfectly presented and represented God in all His words, ways, and conduct when here. The second Man is a divine Person in the Godhead, therefore when that Man spoke and acted it was really God who spoke and acted in manhood condition. God was manifested in the flesh ;

nothing less than God Himself in all the perfection of His moral character. This blessed Man having finished the work of redemption at the cross, is raised from the dead to be a new beginning of Man for men.

There was an ending in death of all that is contrary to God, and a new beginning in Christ risen as regards man for God, and for us who are Christ's. We are by the gospel transferred from the first man to the Second, and have Him as our Head who gives us His own character with God, leaving us in this world to learn and continue the testimony of what God is in Christ, by the Holy Ghost, according to that which was manifested in Christ Himself in His life, right on, reaching its grand climax on the cross and in His death.

Therefore it is of the greatest importance that we should have a clear idea of the true character of the christian profession, or confession, and the means by which it can be truly and faithfully maintained by us. It is for this purpose, I doubt not, that the Lord has gathered out a few of His own to Himself, and put them in a separate path where it is possible to learn and obey the truth.

We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews that Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (or confession); that is to say, what we are intended to profess or confess in

our testimony as Christians is set forth in Jesus as the Apostle, and taught us by Him as our Priest. We are exhorted to consider Jesus, of course as He now is, glorified on the Father's throne in heaven. We are not gathered out to maintain a religious order peculiar to ourselves, but to be so apart from man and all that is of man, that we may be free to consider the Apostle and High Priest of the true christian profession, and neither profess nor confess anything individually or collectively, privately or publicly, which is not set forth in Jesus, and taught us by Him, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore a constant study of Jesus glorified as the One in whom God is presented, and a constant attention to Him as our Instructor is absolutely necessary for freshness, clearness, effectiveness, and power in testimony, and liberty in the Spirit of God.

We need to beware of the tendency to settle down with what we have already learned, and drop into a routine which is cold and lifeless. We have no excuse for so doing, for our High Priest is able to succour, support, and sympathise, and save, even to the uttermost point of our need, in regard to a faithful presentation and representation of God as known in Christ the second Man.

He is perfectly qualified as a Man to be

our Priest, having suffered all before us that any one or all of us can be called upon to suffer on account of a faithful testimony as to the truth of who and what God is. He is the "Author of eternal salvation" to all them that obey Him. He ever liveth to intercede for us. He is all for us that we have to be for God; "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," because we need to rise so high in soul and spirit now, even as we shall bodily at His return. He is the minister of the holy places; He is the Mediator of the new covenant; He is the great Priest over the house of God; He is all we need for a true confession of the living and true God.

Let us then diligently consider Jesus, and refuse every influence that tends to divert us and distract us from Him, for it is only what we learn from Him that is a true christian profession.

THE MODEL MAN IN PHILIPPIANS.

. . . I HAVE been much interested in studying the model man, the true reproduction of Christ, the second Man, as recorded by the Holy Ghost in Philippians. It was a very bold thing for a man of like passions with each one of

us to say, "Be imitators all together of me, brethren, and fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model." (Phil. iii. 17, New Trans.)

We ought to be deeply affected by this tender consideration of our God, in that He has not only provided us, in the Person of His Son, a divine Person in manhood, but He has been pleased to so morally reproduce this blessed One in a man, who was the chief of sinners, that we might have Christ practically presented to us so correctly that we might safely imitate Paul, as recorded in Philippians, as a true and faithful transcript of the Man to whom we have been transferred by the gospel.

We therefore have God in Christ ever set before us objectively, in a glorified Man in heaven, by the Holy Ghost. We are eternally attached to this Man, and severed from Adam. This Man is our Man in whom we have God; the Son in whom we have the Father. This blessed Man, this divine Person, the Son in the Godhead, is the one and only object in whom, and by whom, God the Father will be eternally adored, known, and enjoyed, in and through the countless hosts, heavenly and earthly, who are each and all of this new order of Man. On the subjective side, by a new creation work, this new order of Man, this

second Man, the last Adam, is being formed in souls from new birth to full growth, in view of a grand, eternal display in glorified bodies —of man according to God's heart, and God's heart toward man.

This wonderful subjective new creation work is going on, and neither Satan nor man can stop it, although the outward testimony be so sadly and seriously marred.

Then we have the truth of it all worked *in* and worked *out*, through the apostles by the Holy Ghost, and faithfully and correctly recorded in the Acts and in the epistles, according to the presentation of it in a fourfold way in the gospels, and as foreshadowed in the Old Testament. So that there are men whom we are intended to imitate and follow. Not any living men; that would never be safe, but men who are recorded in scripture, and primarily our own apostle—the apostle of the Gentiles. May we seriously and thankfully appreciate this practical and experimental working out of the truth in a man who was not one whit better than ourselves.

How encouraging it is to know that whatever God wrought in and through Paul is a moral possibility for us, for surely what has been proved possible in one is possible for all. Thank God, true Christianity is not a mere theory. Christ glorified still exists objectively.

Christ is still formed in our souls subjectively ; Christ is still expressed in the bodies of those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells. It is only according to this that we can solidly and happily walk together. . . .

WANTED—PRIVATE PRAYER.

. . . It is not fresh information that we old scholars need so much as a spiritual sense and consciousness of that which we have so long known as information. This, quiet meditation and prayer alone with God only can give. I am persuaded that we are in artificial, superficial days. There is much reading and hearing, but comparatively little prayer, I fear. I am much impressed by a remark of J.N.D.'s : "No public prayer will do without private, but God always answers private." There are many indications of the lack of private prayer, notably the long, pointless prayers in public. I hear of much information being given to the Lord, but very little real asking and presentation of request, issuing from a sense of need ; much is said in public which ought to be said in private, or not said at all. . . .

Before Mr. Darby's day, devoted, godly persons were mostly marked by prayer rather

than intelligent interest in scripture. Since then there has been a remarkable opening up of God's mind, and a wonderful interest in the word. Has there been proportionate private prayer with this? The tendency of the effect of a full gospel, giving liberty and much information, has been to lose the sense of need, and to neglect private intercourse of soul with God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ by the leading and power of the Holy Ghost. I am personally feeling the great importance of a due balance of the word and prayer. They are put together in several places, and are, I doubt not, intended to be held together. . . .

While gifts are from the Head, or are manifestations of the Spirit, ministry, the supply of divine food to souls, is from the Administrator, and supposes that He has been sought and waited upon for it. There may be any amount of speech, writing, words, and even correct information, but little ministry, with consequent spiritual emaciation and lack of vigour and power. I believe the Lord is exercising the saints, and that God is allowing circumstances also in view of a more diligent attention to the Father, and the Lord, by the Spirit, on the part of individuals in private. . . .

There is no teacher like God, and Christ, and the Spirit. Each divine Person has His

own peculiar range of instruction for us, and what we learn of divine Persons will abide when all dispensations have passed away.

THE WORD IN A PERSON, A LIVING, GLORIFIED MAN.

... I AM much exercised for the young amongst you, and earnestly pray that the Lord may graciously fit many of the older ones so to walk, act, and speak, that a true, powerful, affecting influence may be brought to bear on each dear soul and spirit, promoting gracious, vigorous spiritual growth to the honour and glory of God and Christ. We are without doubt in the last days, and it behoves each one to take the existing condition of things, both in the church and in the world, seriously to heart with God, who is allowing it according to His blessed purpose of grace and blessing to souls. God is intent on blessing, and will therefore over-rule occurrences and circumstances to enable saints and sinners to be willing, yea, desirous to receive that which will impart blessing, a character of blessing which endures for ever.

The external state of things is sad in the extreme, both amongst professing Christians and others, yet God is surely carrying on His

blessed work in a silent, secret way internally, all beyond the reach of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We have not to take our ideas from observation. A divine Person dwells in each true believer, and we have an inspired record in the scriptures of all God's mind as set forth in a Man, who is the Word, the true expression of all that God is, who was ever with God, yea, who is God.

We ought to appreciate with great thankfulness that the Word is no longer only presented in words. We now have the Word in a Person, a living, glorified Man, which gives a living character to all that is written, appealing to our spiritual affections with all the force of divine love. Having the Holy Ghost in us we are able when reading the written word to really read the living Word, the revelation of who and what God is, as the Father in the Son, in Manhood, who is the Word. When He appears, and we all appear with Him, He will in righteousness judge and make war as the Word of God. The unfaithfulness of the great professing body will then be exposed and answered by what He is as the Word.

Let us, then, be exercised by the unrest here to turn to Him who gives rest, and who so teaches by what He is that we find rest to our souls as we go along.

ABIDING *WITH* THE LORD, AND *IN* THE SON.

. . . WHAT a wonderful work God is doing in souls during the absence of Christ, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, not only in the conversion of sinners, but also in divinely teaching believers. Of course we all begin as babes when born of God, and are intended to grow spiritually to full growth in divine love, and divine intelligence. It is, therefore, well worth while to remain here a little longer, not only for the help and comfort of each other, but for an increase of spiritual stature.

There are two simple things which we all need to constantly attend to, namely, abiding *with* the Lord for grace and spiritual power and salvation from everything contrary to God's pleasure; and abiding *in* the Son, the blessed Object of love and revelation of God as Father, for love, and as the Source of all supply of everything that is good, and for all our needs. (1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.) The Lord is an absolute spiritual authority over everything spiritual. He is Satan's master, and can control the spirit of each according to God. The Father is the Source of all. He is above all, through all, and in us all. May we seek Him as to all that He is allowing at the

present time, for it is all under Him, and He has a definite purpose in all that occurs.

How blessed to have God for our Father, and Jesus for our Lord. Let us abide *in* the Son, and abide *with* the Lord.

THE CHARACTER OF THINGS, NOT THE CONDITION TO FORM OUR IDEAS.

. . . I AM afraid the majority of God's people take their ideas very much from observation, and think that the external profession with which they are pleased to connect themselves presents the truth to them ; whereas, almost universally the outward profession of Christians is utterly false and not at all to be trusted, so entirely does it misrepresent the truth of things as it exists in Christ, and in the Spirit, and is recorded in the scriptures. . . .

Every phase of the doctrines and practices of evil men inspired by Satan is exposed in the epistles, so that we can have a divine judgment of everything that is going on around us or among us. Thus we have a correct idea of what professing Christians are holding and doing without the trouble of occurrences engaging our hearts and minds. On the other hand, we have a true description of what is

here on the earth that is heavenly in its source and character. The heavenly family is here, composed of all God's children, born of God, and in the charge of the Holy Ghost during the absence of Jesus the Son. Then again the house of God is here, composed of the companions of Christ. God dwells in this house; it is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth of what God is, according to the way He has been manifested here in His anointed Man, Christ. The assembly of God is here and is described in 1 and 2 Corinthians as God's temple and Christ's body. The family, the house, the temple, the body, are all composed of the same persons and cannot lose their character as long as the Holy Ghost is here.

Therefore, on the one hand we have God's own description of the *condition* of things as compared to a great house, etc., and on the other the true *character* of things as existing in and by the presence of the Holy Ghost in those born of God. Our gathering together, our meetings, and our general public testimony and walk should be in accord with, and be an outward expression of that spiritual order of things which is here in and by the Holy Ghost, until the Lord, whose last act while we are here, will be to raise in an incorruptible condition the bodies of those who have died and

have been buried, and change the living, takes us all to be with Himself.

There is also the other side of the truth, namely, what is in Christ risen and glorified, which will be expressed in us as His glorified body, the church, in the world to come before the whole universe. As we accord spiritually and practically with what is here by and in the Spirit, we shall find ourselves able to enter consciously into the reality of what is in Christ where He now is, and the more we are occupied with Christ in glory the more we are in accord with the Spirit here, and all that is connected with the Spirit. The two must ever run together.

The condition of things amongst professing Christians is no guide except so far as it calls attention to Christ and the word. We must search the scriptures as to whether what is professed is there. I doubt whether anything is of the Lord or the Spirit which is not recorded in the word, written down in the epistles, in the gospels, and in the Old Testament. Of course we need to study to shew ourselves approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth. When we have the right idea and application of any scripture we can turn to God, and with God in Christ before us, the Spirit assures us of God's approval, and we then never have with shame to let

that go, but can permanently hold it against all opposing influences.

We are in very difficult times, for nearly everything that has come out from God in past days is imitated, therefore our thoughts and ways must not be regulated by the external profession, but by an inward, unseen source. Satan imitates even this by spiritualism, yet surely that which is divine is superior to all this, and "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the scriptures work together. The Father is the Source of all. The Son is the only divine Person who is in glorified Manhood, and therefore He is the *Word*, the expression of all; and the Holy Ghost is the One who gives effect to all that in souls now, and in our bodies also now and hereafter, which is expressed in the Son, and has its source in the Father. The Word is now personal in character, for Jesus, the One who is truly God, is the Word. The scriptures are the transcript of this blessed Person. So that the word is not mere letter now, but living and spirit, and in a Person. Therefore the Person and the book must ever be read together by the Spirit.

GOD'S WAY FOR THE FAITHFUL IN THESE LAST DAYS.

. . . I HAVE been much interested in what I believe to be God's way for the faithful in these last days—these difficult times. The condition of things outwardly in the Christian profession is not at all reliable, being so thoroughly permeated by man and what is of man. Men have assumed, and professing Christians have conceded to men, the place which God has given to the Lord Jesus. The few who are treading the separate path need to realise the necessity of being sustained in soul and spirit above the natural material and human influences which are all but universal amongst Christians.

Thank God, we have everything foretold and provided for in scripture, for as soon as 1 Timothy was departed from 2 Timothy was given. We are there furnished with everything that the individual requires to sustain him spiritually above the external and the visible, in order that he may be consciously in the spiritual.

. . . 2 Timothy shews the way to be a vessel to honour, "sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." Such can call on the Lord out

of a pure heart, and follow those blessed moral qualities which are presented in Christ Jesus. Such can be good soldiers of Jesus Christ and remember Him in His risen character and position as the Old Testament Jehovah in Manhood. Such know and own God in all His supremacy in love now revealed as Father —the four divine names in 2 Timothy. Surely all this can and will support us in soul and spirit above the actual state of things, whether around us or amongst us, and thus we are in touch with what is only spiritually discerned.

First in the spiritual order I should place the heavenly family composed of all that are born of God, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost. This is a heavenly circle on the earth, yet all spiritual, unknown by the external course of things, whether religious or profane. This family is in the charge of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, a divine Person in the Godhead, even as the Father and the Son are. The Comforter is here to glorify the absent Son in the affections of each and all, and He cannot and will not fail in His mission. This family has its *character* in the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, a *character* which no failure in *conduct* can alter. How important it is for each one to answer to His spiritual character, and to the family character.

Secondly, the house of God is here as the pillar and support of the truth, of who and what God is, even as He has been manifested in this world. It is a spiritual house, composed of Christ's companions.

Thirdly, the assembly of God is here composed of all who are in Christ Jesus. All such are of God in Christ Jesus. They are God's temple in and by the Spirit; their bodies are the Holy Ghost's temple, and they are Christ's body in and by the Spirit.

The family, the house, the temple, the body, all exist here by and in the Holy Ghost come down from Jesus glorified in order that there may be a continuation of that on earth and in this world which Jesus so fully and faithfully presented when here Himself. The christian profession in its true character, therefore, has Jesus for its Apostle and Priest. It is set forth in Him as the Apostle, and taught and maintained by Him as the Priest.

The outward profession and all activity in service, whether in meetings or out, should flow from the inward, spiritual source, and be according to the character of the Father and the Son, and of God and Christ, as they are known and enjoyed in the spiritual order of things by the Holy Ghost. Thus there is a heavenly order of things here on earth in a divine Person sent from the Father and

the Son and which, thank God, cannot lose its character while the Holy Ghost is here. Unless our outward testimony and activities in service flow from this spiritual source, freshness is lacking, power and love are wanting, and the present movements of the enemy are not met.

When we are consciously in this spiritual order, the eternal side of things in Christ glorified is a reality to us and not merely knowledge in terms. Let us then appreciate 2 Timothy as the grand antidote to the natural influence of the actual outward condition of things upon us, and may we walk in the Spirit and the Spirit's domain, and so give a true testimony according to what is here in the Holy Ghost, and what is in Christ glorified.

Let us beware of settling down with any outward form, or usage, creed or routine. The moral ruin in the souls of people is too widespread to be remedied, but the spiritual remains untouched by the flesh, and is outside the reach of the world and Satan. The outward is rushing on to a judgment pronounced in scripture, but the Holy Ghost is here, and He is greater than he that is in the world.

THE GAIN OF BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS HERE.

. . . BEREAVEMENT is irreparable ; the loss can never be made up ; the natural is for ever left behind. Pleasant remembrances remain, yet these greatly serve to keep open the loss. How blessed to have the light of the resurrection side of things, and the joy of eternal life as a present portion. How we should bless the Father and the Son for the indwelling divine Person, the Holy Ghost, who is so well able to sustain our souls and spirits in the living consciousness of that which is beyond death, even while we are here in the body.

How blessed, also, to be intelligent in the ways of God with us in connection with the perishing of the outward man in order that the inward man may be renewed day by day. Weakness of body we then understand to be in view of strength of spirit ; decay in the natural is for the spring of the spiritual ; crosses and losses in the visible are for progress and gain in the unseen and eternal.

WE are much with you in spirit at this time, and much in prayer for you, to our God and Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, that your wounded and desolate natural affections may

be more than answered in a spiritual way by the sympathising succour of our perfectly qualified High Priest. He can enter into the way you are affected as no one else can. As a Man, while still a divine Person in the God-head, He has gone through every form of testing according to God, both from Satan and from man, in view of sustaining us in our weakness against every influence of the tempter, who is ever ready in times of proving our faith to introduce thoughts and feelings against God.

May you realise the wondrous grace dispensed from the throne of grace which can sustain you in the constant sense of divine favour against the natural influence of your irreparable loss.

THE SPIRITUAL TO AFFECT US.

. . . WE need to consider what we are spiritually as well as what we are naturally, and learn to sacrifice the natural to the spiritual. The two can never be on a par, one must dominate the other, and surely the spiritual should dominate.

The history of Israel and the Philistines wonderfully illustrates this. The Israelite represents what we are spiritually, and the

Philistine, I think, represents what we are naturally, and while the Amalekite was to be destroyed, the Philistine was to be subdued. The two, that is, the Israelite and the Philistine, never made terms; if one was top the other was under, but they were never on a par. A few of us have by the grace of the Lord been brought out into a path of separation from all around us in a day when the condition of things in the outward christian profession is pretty generally of a merely natural, material, and visible order. Therefore the external and visible amongst professing Christians is no guide whatever, and must not be trusted. It is largely carried on according to tradition, and doctrines and ways of men. The history of so-called "Brethren" is no exception to this, for men and men's ideas and ways have prevailed time after time with very many. The reason of this is the influence of the visible and material over the soul and the spirit (our own spirit). . . .

When the material and visible dominate the believer's spirit, he loses the consciousness of the unseen and spiritual, and thinks and acts according to sight and natural sense. Thank God, the separate path clears us of very much of the material religious—that which is tangible to the senses, as sight, hearing, etc. However, we must still have a

measure of material influences to overcome. We come together bodily, we hear voices, we see faces, we are affected by one another's behaviour, even the bread and wine are material, also the mere letter of scripture. All these things tend to keep our souls and spirits down in the visible and material sphere, and hinder our realisation of that spiritual order of things which is here in and by the Spirit, and only discerned by the Spirit. We must realise and answer to what is here in the Spirit, or we are not in accord in our souls with that which is in our glorified Head and about to be displayed in the world to come.

The Lord Jesus is the One to whom all power is given, and we have professedly come out of all that is of and according to man, to own the Lord as our only resource in regard to that spiritual power which alone can hold our souls and spirits above the visible and material. Whilst the outward visible condition of things has come from the moral ruin of professing Christendom, thank God, what is in and of the Holy Ghost is what it always was. There is no ruin in the Spirit's domain, all is of, and according to God there.

The Holy Ghost is as much a divine Person in the Godhead as the Father and the Son, and there is no disparity in divine Persons, although each is pleased to hold His own

distinct place. The Father the Source of all ; the Son incarnate, the Word, the expression of all ; the Holy Ghost the subjective effector of all, but never an object.

Let us briefly notice what is here in the Spirit, all beyond natural vision, and outside sight and sense. The heavenly family is here composed of all who are born of God, and in the charge of the Comforter. The assembly of God is here as God's temple and Christ's body. The house of God is here, composed of Christ's companions. The true christian profession is still here, set forth in Jesus Christ as the Apostle of it, and taught and maintained by Him as the Priest of it. Faithful men in all ages separated from what the mass of God's people were holding and doing, and were guided by what things were in God's mind. Let us seek the Lord earnestly for power to hold us in our spirit above the visible and material in the christian profession, even amongst ourselves. We shall then be conscious of that which is here in the Spirit and shall be able to carry on a testimony outwardly which is derived from a spiritual source.

. . . The spiritual order has no names or distinctions in it. There are no sects or parties in it. It embraces the whole company of those who have the Spirit. . . . We are

absolutely dependent on the scripture record for all information as to this spiritual order. The faithful cannot derive their testimony from any external visible source, the departure being so general. Yet, thank God, what is written divinely is reliable, and all we profess must be found in and derived from the scriptures.

FRESH EXPERIENCES PROVE OUR FAITH.

IT pleases our God and Father at times to break links with this natural side of death, in the exercise of His great love toward us, in order to strengthen the links already formed in our souls by the Spirit with that which is unseen and eternal.

The process is painful and often heart-rending, and would be too much for us, and altogether unprofitable, had not our precious Saviour as a Man gone through this world and been made perfect through suffering before us. . . . Subjection of heart and spirit to Him who is so perfectly qualified to sustain us is the vital thing on our side. He succours and sustains and saves in order that the tempter shall get no advantage over us on account of our weakness.

As a divine Person He, of course, knew everything. Jehovah—Jesus, who in the Old Testament affirmed that He declared the end from the beginning, yet as a Man learned obedience by what He experimentally and practically went through and suffered. Therefore, we may conclude that we, His followers, are never first in any suffering on account of obedience to the will of God. There is One, a divine Person, the Son, a glorified Man, who has been through all the temptations and sufferings which obedience to the will of God involves, in passing through this natural order of things, and while learning what divine teaching alone can impart.

It is always fresh experiences which test us; we are largely creatures of habit, and gradually get used to things both naturally and spiritually: “Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.” While Jehovah exercised His people Israel, as the eagle does her young, there was no strange god with them, but when afterwards He allowed them to settle down with abundance they “waxed fat and kicked.” It is these fresh experiences which exercise us; it is the way we have not been heretofore which proves our faith, and works endurance, and gives a knowledge and realisation of God and His grace, which could not be gained otherwise.

"Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help." There is One ever accessible who not only knows all about us, but who knows us, and can enter into the way we are affected by that which is permitted to come upon us.

THE SUPREMACY OF SPIRITUAL JOY.

. . . I HAVE much enjoyed meditating on the Father's delight in the Son, and feel much the greatness of the privilege of being enabled by the Spirit to share the Father's joy in having before Him a Man who answers all His affections, purposes, counsels, and who fully expresses Himself. The Father's love is the source of all the Father has treasured up in Himself from eternity, a marvellous range, which He knew that His Son would be quite competent in Manhood to make known, and bring into actuality in a universe of bliss after the first man had run his course. . . .

One does not wish to under-rate the work done for us, or in us, or by us, nor all that Christ is to us, and what we are to God in Christ, yet I feel the supremacy of spiritual joy lies in what divine Persons are to each other. Is not the sense and enjoyment of

this the particular and peculiar privilege of sonship, and the heavenly family of sons?

The church is doubtless for Christ as His body to express Him, and His bride to adorn Him. The family of sons are for the Father to be before Him holy and blameless in love, able to have His own appreciation of His Son in manhood before Him. (John xvii. 22-26; Eph. i. 3-6.)

DIVINE TEACHING TO BE LEARNT NOW.

. . . WE have a faithful God who in His supreme love and sovereign grace brings home to us in various ways, and by various means, and at suited times, what we are in ourselves in order that we may turn to Him and experience what He can and will be to us in our extremity. As we read in Psalm xviii. 35: "Thy gentleness hath made me great." His divine skill and gentle dealing lead us on "from strength to strength" notwithstanding our inherent weakness. How important it is for us to remember with Jeremiah: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not *in* man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." (Chap. x. 23.)

How blessed to be under such a Lord as Jesus. How worthy as a Man He is to be Lord of all, and have all power in heaven and earth, for He has been thoroughly proved to be perfectly obedient against every possible influence to the contrary, from Satan and man, and, wonder of wonders, last of all when forsaken of God He endured all God's holy judgment of all that is contrary to God, removed the distance and brought in all the nearness of man to God in His own blessed Person. In all this nearness and blessedness we who are in Christ have part and are responsible to be true to the heavenly Man, and are able to be so by the indwelling divine Person, the Holy Ghost.

How many who have truly believed and have received Christ and all the wondrous benefit by Him are yet so little exercised as to the import of all this, and what is involved in being transferred in character and position from Adam to Christ. They, with all of us who are in Christ, are under divine teaching, and God our Father will so order and overrule circumstances, and Jesus our Lord will by His word and Spirit, so work in their and our souls that the order of man in Christ and the knowledge of God in Christ, shall dominate every affection and idea. This climax is reached by the vast majority of be-

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lievers on the death bed, I believe, yet, how much more profitable and happy is it to attain it in our pathway through this wilderness world.

May we have grace to accept all that comes *to* us or *upon* us from God our Father, above and beyond all causes, channels, and occurrences, and to turn to Him with everything and for everything, knowing that we are indeed the subjects of His sovereign grace according to infinite love for His own satisfaction eternally.

GOD'S WAYS WITH US DICTATED BY HIS LOVE.

. . . OUR God and Father is a wise and effectual Teacher, and knows exactly how to handle each one of us according to the particular exercise needed to bring about His wondrous new-creation work in our souls. Our great concern should be to discern what our God would teach us in all that comes upon us, and in all that He is pleased to put us through.

. . . Things do not occur to God's children aimlessly, and it is astonishing how much we may suffer and fail to discern what God is at. However, He patiently and gently goes on with His blessed work of grace, and never

fails to bring us to the point in our souls which He has before Himself for us.

This is not often done in the happy way it might be, in intelligent, sweet communion ; yet it is sure to be done, for love is supreme and grace is sovereign. If we only understood we should thank Him and bless Him even more for what He has refused us, and for that which has crossed and disappointed us, than the contrary.

We need to regard all God's ways with us in the light of God's love to us, for love is what He is. God is love, and God cannot act inconsistently with what He is. He cannot deny Himself ; so that we can safely interpret His hand according to His heart, and all His ways in the light of what and who He is as God the Father revealed in the Son, Jesus our Lord.

THE REPRODUCTION OF CHRIST IN TROUBLous TIMES.

. . . WHAT a provision we have in Philippians iv. for these troublous times. How gracious of our God to put a man of like passions with ourselves through such painful and varied experiences in order that he might shew us how to act in all circumstances. It has pleased

God not only to send His beloved Son into this world and pass Him through every possible trial and temptation in order to be our perfect High Priest, but He has proved to us the perfection and suitability of all that He has brought to pass by and in Christ, in men like ourselves.

Christ has been reproduced as far as it is possible in the apostles, and specially in Paul, and hence the latter could say to us, "Be followers together of me. . . Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do ; and the God of peace shall be with you." This reproduction of Christ in men during His absence and rejection is almost more wonderful than the presentation in Himself before His death.

We may therefore conclude that the upset in the world and all the confusion in the christian profession is divinely permitted, without, of course, excusing any one, in view of helping on this wonderful subjective work in the souls of saints and sinners, in order that the absent Christ may have a place in people's hearts while this world is, in the patience of God, rushing on to destruction.

How blessed to be in the secret of the Lord, to know what God is doing in a day when so many are absorbed by man's activity. Are we God's fellow-workers ? Are we helping

on what He is doing? I feel we need to be much in prayer, and have God's thoughts, and so be here for Him.

"HE GAVE HIMSELF."

. . . I HAVE been deeply impressed of late with the importance of giving serious attention to the context of scripture statements. Take, for instance, the statement: "He gave himself." This is so precious in itself that every truly converted soul could not help being affected by it in some degree and yet might quite miss the reason given *why* He gave Himself.

We may take the scriptures in their moral order. In Titus ii. 14 He "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works." Human nature has become lawless by sin coming in, for sin is lawlessness in its very nature. Law is no remedy for this, for "the strength of sin is the law." This blessed One, the sinless One, was made sin for us, "that we might become God's righteousness in him." Thank God, although we carry about with us this lawless principle in our flesh, yet it has no right over us, because our Saviour Jesus

Christ has given Himself as the ransom price from all its claims in order to purify us from all its workings to Himself, setting us free from its dominion, zealous for good works.

Then again in Galatians i. 4, 5: "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." How lovely it is to know that it was the will of our God and Father that we should be out of the present course of things in mind, heart, and spirit, while bodily in it. We have the wondrous sacrifice of the blessed One, who knew our God and Father's will, as the perfect, divine answer to all our sins, and so are free to have Himself as our Object outside the present course of things and everything that is in it. I am persuaded that we should all be deeply moved by this gracious thought of our Lord and Saviour . . . and earnestly and prayerfully seek to realise this deliverance . . . as necessary and preliminary to our entrance into life beyond and outside the scene of sight and sense.

In Galatians ii. 20 our apostle beautifully expresses the motive which actuated him in living by faith while here in the body. He lived in the life of his soul by the glorious light of a divine Person in manhood who had

so loved him as to give Himself for him. Thus self had no further claims upon Paul. . . . He gave Himself for *me*, says the apostle, so that I am now free to have *Him* instead of myself as my Object. How blessed to know, that the Son of God had this in mind when He gave Himself for me, for self is doubtless one of our main difficulties, and can only be answered effectually by having an Object who is outside all that appeals to self, and who is infinitely greater than self and every influence that feeds it.

In Ephesians v. we are exhorted to be "imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." The Christ as the Head of His church does not instruct us to do what He has not first done Himself as a Man. We can only follow Him, we cannot be first in anything that is acceptable to God. He therefore gave Himself for us as the expression of the true character of divine love, and of what is acceptable to God. We need to pay attention to this presentation of love in a day when human thoughts of spiritual things prevail so widely. Especially is this important in regard to so sacred a matter as divine affections and what is acceptable to God in the way of love. Love

is clearly sacrificial as here presented, and therefore we can only walk in love, and offer to God, as we refuse self. Galatians ii. 20, therefore, prepares for this.

The grand climax of giving Himself comes out in view of the church. He "loved the church, and gave himself for it" that He might sanctify it and wash it, and present it to Himself. All this was in His heart and mind when He gave Himself for the church. He did not consider the giving Himself too great a price to pay for such a treasure. How blessed to be of such an assembly. What wonderful thoughts are connected with this precious statement, "He gave himself." May we all ponder them and be affected by them, and so answer to what was in His mind in giving Himself. . . .

INTERCOURSE WITH DIVINE PERSONS.

. . . I FEEL the great need, in these days of form with so little power, of more practical intercourse of soul privately, and individually, with God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Reading and hearing are indeed very great privileges, yet they are no substitute for personal private communion with divine Persons. . . .

Divine love must be connected with divine Persons in order to be available, and understandable, and receivable. The Son has become Man to make all this possible. He has encountered all opposition here and overcome everything. He finished all the work He was sent to do in life and in death, and is now the beginning in resurrection of all that is of and according to God, and for us who are in Him. . . .

All that is according to God lies subjectively in the Holy Ghost who indwells us, and objectively in the Father and the Son. May the Lord strengthen your faith, so that the Father and the Son, and God and Christ and all spiritual unseen things may be a greater reality to you all.

EXPERIENCE OF GOD.

. . . I THINK we must conclude that experience in its true and proper spiritual sense is experience of God, worked by tribulation and endurance of tribulation, which works in us along with the sense of the love of God by the Spirit, an experience, a realisation of what God can be to us in the tribulation. Experience of God is always happy, joyful, and profitable to us and in us who have His love by the Holy Ghost.

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The difficulties of the wilderness were doubtless to waste away the carcase of the flesh, and to bring them by way of the brazen serpent to give place to the Spirit, that is, to God, and so experience what God could be to them and for them. Still the point of experience is the experience of God, and this painfully brings home to us what we are in ourselves, so that experience must ever be more or less accompanied by tribulation, sorrow, and pain ; but if it be as "sorrowful" as to ourselves, yet it is "always rejoicing" in God.

DRAW NIGH TO GOD.

. . . I HAVE thought much of the importance of drawing nigh to God, as James exhorts, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." Such a thing could not have been possible until this, the Spirit's day. By this better hope, of all that is brought to pass in Jesus glorified, we draw nigh to God Himself as the Father revealed in the Son. We are slow to avail ourselves of this most blessed privilege, for which there is no substitute. Yet we have no excuse, for although we are weakness itself, and most susceptible to distracting influences, we have an all-sufficient

High Priest before God for us, ever interceding, and able to save to the uttermost point as to everything that would prevent us drawing nigh to God.

Intercourse with God our Father through the Son by the Spirit is absolutely necessary for true and real prayer. We may say many prayers, and long ones, without that consciousness of God's presence which gives reality to our prayers.

. . . The necessity for God Himself calls for constant change of circumstances because of our natural tendency to settle down with the visible and material, and man and means.

. . . Yes, God Himself is our necessity, and our privilege is to draw nigh to Him, have Him supreme in our hearts and thoughts as known in His Son, Jesus our Lord, in love, grace and power, consistent with righteousness.

. . . May we have grace to keep near to God consciously in our spirit and dwell in what He dwells in. He is found in Christ His Son objectively, and in the Holy Ghost and the saints subjectively. All this is apart from the world, the flesh, and the devil. For this we need to pray much privately as well as publicly, so as not to give way to natural influences. The blessed Lord in Gethsemane prayed more earnestly as the pressure in-

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creased rather than give way to it. As our Priest He will succour us against the tempter so that we may come with "boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help."

"THE SECRET OF THE LORD IS WITH THEM THAT FEAR HIM."

WE must not judge of things according to the outward appearance, neither as to the church nor the world. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."

The absence of Jesus from this world and His presence on the Father's throne in heaven as a glorified Man is a most precious secret. The presence of the Holy Ghost indwelling each saint and the whole company of the saints on earth is another wonderful secret. The presence here of a heavenly family of persons, all born again, all born of water and of the Spirit, and all that they are in and by the Spirit, is another grand secret. The new-creation work which is going on in each soul, from new birth to full growth, is a great secret between the soul and God, and the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, in, and by the Holy Ghost.

All the external and visible order of things is under God the Father's hand, and all occurrences in the christian profession are under the hand of Jesus as Lord, and all our inward soul and spirit exercises are in the hand of the Holy Ghost, who is here and has all of us in charge for Christ. The work in souls which is now going on, and has gone on since the Lord Jesus ascended and the Holy Ghost descended, is a great secret now, but will all come out in the glorified bodies of those in whom it has been wrought ; not one bit will be lost, all will be displayed to God's and Christ's and our glory. Neither God, nor His work, can be frustrated, although outward testimony may be much marred and divine Persons dishonoured. Let us then seek to go on in faith, in the bright light of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and their purpose and work.

THE HIGH COURT OF APPEAL: THE FATHER AND THE LORD.

How thankful we ought to be that in the difficult complex condition of things in the church and in the world, we have a supreme high court of appeal ever available. We have God, the Father, "of whom all things, and

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we FOR him," and Jesus, the Lord, "BY whom are all things, and we BY him." These divine Persons, in their own place, can always be approached and made use of because we have another divine Person indwelling us who is greater than he that is in the world. May we have sufficient lowliness and grace at all times to appeal to the Father and the Lord rather than assert ourselves independently of them.

The confusion around, and in our meetings also at times, is the result of proudly neglecting God, the Father, and Jesus, the Lord. We have no excuse for this neglect, for the Holy Ghost in us ever delights and is ever able to take our hearts and minds right up to the Son and the Father. The Spirit ever leads to divine Persons and to divine things through them. . . .

It has pleased the Father to give all that is His into the hands of His Son. The Son holds it all in Manhood so that it is in Him available to others.

GOD REGARDS US ACCORDING TO CHRIST.

. . . I KNOW how easily we can settle down with the visible and forget the unseen source, the Father, OF whom are all things, and we FOR Him. Yes, we are indeed eternally FOR

Him, as born of Him, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit who has attached us unchangeably to Christ, the glorified Man, who is, in His adorable Person, the beloved Son, the Father's whole delight. When we regard our circumstances here, in the light of what our God has made us by new creation in Christ, we are assured that nothing can possibly occur to us without an end and aim, and that our God and Father is sure to over-rule every detail in harmony with what He has made us spiritually, and for our spiritual growth.

I know that we cannot arrive at a true judgment by observation, nor form right conclusions by the past. It is only as we look at Christ, and study Christ, that we can gain the truth. . . . Being the subjects of sovereign grace in Christ, we are entitled to regard everything which causes the outward man to perish as a favour from God our Father, because it is sure to be followed, if not accompanied, by the renewing of the inward man day by day. God our Father is not working in souls for the improvement in man, or the advancement of the world, so that it is indeed a comfort to know that what is a calamity in itself is a means of soul blessing and spiritual advancement, under the mighty hand of God, and by divine teaching. We are apt to regret the very thing which is

absolutely necessary for our spiritual advancement, so little do we understand God and His ways.

. . . The world around us, and the condition of things in the christian profession, are a flat contradiction of the truth of real Christianity. Thus the proportion of chaff to the wheat is greatly increased, yet the wheat is sure, and will, every grain, be safely gathered into the divine heavenly garner. The man who crucified God's Anointed is exalting himself on every hand by means of the very things which have come to him by Jesus crucified, risen and glorified. There would have been no tares without a misappropriation of the word of the kingdom. Truly we have not to judge of things according to the outward appearance, but by Christ, the Man who is indeed the righteous One. How blessed it is to know that whoever is wrong there is at least one Man who is absolutely right, God Himself being the standard.

The confusion in the world and in the christian profession may all be traced to giving man naturally the place which God has given to His Man, who is also a divine Person in the Godhead.

It has always been a reproach to give place to Christ. Who would have thought that what Moses did was "esteeming the reproach of

Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? As the Lord said, "He that is not with me is against me." There is no neutrality here. A divine Person has become a Man, so that we have God and Man in the same Person. Of necessity such a Man must be exclusive, and whatever any of us are according to or for God is because we are in Him objectively and have Him in us subjectively. Therefore God regards us according to Christ, and we ought to regard ourselves according to Christ, and not according to our actual condition, in our relations with God. So that what will be universally *actual* in the new heavens and the new earth, when the former things are passed away, is now actual in the Person of Christ, and can be made real in our souls by the Spirit as we look at Christ.

How wonderful it is that we can anticipate "the world to come," yea, eternity itself, by means of being already a new creation, and in the blessed Man, God's Son, who is the present expression of all that has its source in God as Father, and which will fill the universe of bliss eternally. "Abide in me" is the word of the Son of God, and surely there is increasing need of this as the only way out of the confusion, and of entrance into what is according to God.

JOHN XIV. 20.

. . . I HAVE been much before the Lord in prayer, earnestly supplicating that the few of His own who are by His grace truly separated to Him should be exercised by Him to seek to answer to His intention in putting us into a separate path, not only from the world but from the great mass of His people who are mixed up with it and corrupted by it. The natural tendency of this separation, and the enjoyment from the Lord of special light and privileges is to lead us to conclude that we are something different from other believers.

There is one lovely verse in John xiv. which seems to furnish us with an effectual safeguard against this tendency: "*At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*" This is characteristic of the whole family on earth, and is one of the primary essential features of the Spirit's mission. Each individual knows these three things as he listens to the voice of the Spirit engaging him with the Son and the Father in his spiritual affections. This knowledge gives the blessed spiritual consciousness of the true relation of divine Persons to each other, and of the whole heavenly family to them and to each other.

Without this knowledge, gift, scriptural learning, and divine things lose their true application in our souls and we are unable to rightly divide the word of truth. . . . The lack of this knowledge accounts for the condition of things in the great house, and the repeated misunderstandings, dissensions, and failure of many who have occupied the separate path and left it.

This knowledge saves us from ecclesiasticism and from being mere expositors of scripture, for it shews us how to hold divine Persons in relation to one another and the saints in their true spiritual character, and divine things in connection with and subordinate to divine Persons. By this means our spirits are subdued and divinely controlled, and our souls are kept in divine order, and truths are properly adjusted in our minds. How simple and happy is God's way.

We are born of God, and consequently are for God. We are of Him, that we might be FOR Him.

“At that day ye shall know.” Do we know ? Have we so attended to this feature of the Spirit's mission that we^{ll} subjectively realise what is objectively in the Father and in the Son ?

“Ye shall know that I am in my Father.” What a privilege to know the abode of divine

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affections, to know what fills the Father's heart. Has not the Father made us His family in order to make us know what is in Him? The Son in glorified Manhood fills the Father's heart, and He has the family to share His delight in His Son. This is indeed the peculiar privilege of Sonship, to be known spiritually now, and enjoyed for ever when with and like the Son before the Father.

"Ye shall know" not only "that I am in my Father," but that ye are "in me"! What a lovely view of all the saints in this world is here presented. How blessed to see all the family in its true unalterable character in the Son. Does not this deliver us from all narrowness of heart, and personal feelings, and party spirit? How precious to the Son are all those who are in the Son. How precious each and all are to us as seen in the Son. Yes, the saints are all in the Son, the delight of His heart. How effectually this truth delivers from all error, for as we know all the saints as in the Son, we must refuse all that they profess to be which has no place in Him and has no place in scripture. This knowledge will indeed promote holiness and separation in a divine instead of a humanly bigoted way.

"And I in you." When the Father looks into His children's hearts what does He see there? What converted the hard-hearted Saul

of Tarsus ? God revealed His Son in him ! This knowledge gives a right view of the proper subjective condition of the saints. They have the Son in them, the beloved Object of the Father and of the Holy Ghost, filling their spiritual affections with Himself. This is the truth ; are we answering to it ? Do we individually, consciously know it ? If not, why ? The Spirit has come to make us all know it. The Son in the Father, the saints in the Son, and the Son in the saints, is a three-fold cord not easily broken, indeed, cannot be broken at all !

If these three things be truly known in our souls, not only as scripture statements, but in spiritual power, all else will fall into its proper place; and we shall be able in some measure to answer to God's mind in putting us into the separate path and shall not be moved by testings.

CHRIST, AS REVEALED IN THE EPISTLES FIRST, THEN GOSPELS, THEN OLD TESTAMENT.

THE key to every book in the scriptures is the particular way in which Christ is presented in it ; and as the epistles are the only portion of scripture which give us

direct information concerning Jesus glorified we must always begin there, and work from thence, and view all other scriptures in the light there given. From the epistles we can proceed to the gospels, and from the gospels to the Old Testament. Thus "every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," who writes and speaks according to heavenly rule, "bringeth out of his treasure things *new* and old." . . .

The more we study Christ, God's anointed Man, the better we understand scripture. All scripture is profitable, and able to make us "wise unto salvation" on one principle, and only one, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Faith is much more than believing a scripture. It is the light of the unseen in the soul by the Spirit of God. . . . This light from God in Christ is a constant present thing for understanding and action. It delivers us from precedent, usage, creed and custom and system, and from acting from ourselves. . . .

Exodus is the book of exit, or the way out, (as Leviticus is the way in), and has Romans principally for its antitype. The way out spiritually is of course by means of the second Man. It is the way out from what we are naturally in the flesh, and into a spiritual order of things in the Spirit, and in Christ.

The Egyptian represents what we are

naturally, as in the flesh, and the Israelite represents what we are as born again, what we are spiritually. The Egyptian has to be plagued up to the point of death in order to release the Israelite out of the scene of judgment to God the Saviour. This salvation is celebrated in its fullest extent in chapter xv., and all is grace until Sinai, when the people accepted law. From that point (chap. xix.) all is to bring home to us what we still are as to the flesh, and that we must give place to the principle of sovereign grace set forth in the tabernacle, which represents what is God's mind, and God's order in Christ, and which will be actual and universal in the new heavens and new earth, and in measure in the world to come. By means of Christ glorified, and the Holy Ghost, it is our privilege to anticipate all that will be actual in the day of Christ.

The way out of the external, and visible, and material, is typified by the order of things in the tabernacle; thus the way out is the way in. We cannot jump over anything, we must travel in our souls by way of the brazen altar, the laver, the holy place, and the holiest of all.

The brazen altar meets all that God is in His nature, as in contrast with all that we are in our nature as in the flesh—our actual natural

condition which we must carry about with us until our bodies are changed. The answer to our natural condition is the burnt offering, mainly set forth in John's gospel. The laver is the water of death by which we are spiritually washed as to our spirit from all that has no place in the Spirit who indwells us.

The candlestick light shews the people of God according to what they are in His mind, in the loaves, frankincense, and incense. It is in type what we all are in the Spirit and in Christ presented to God by the high priest in all the preciousness of His own Person. Therefore, there was to be no imitation of that ointment; it must be really and only Christ Himself that gives God's people their true character with God. The holiest seems to me to be Christ Himself in His present glorified condition as Man, setting forth God's resource for the world to come.

THE THINGS PREPARED FOR THOSE THAT LOVE GOD.

WE are being peculiarly shut up in these last days to God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ in their ways of love and grace with us. The external upset in the world and in the christian profession is no doubt allowed of

God in view of the work which He is doing in souls, and will under His over-ruling hand promote His work. Newspapers, religious and otherwise, are full of men's doings, experiments, projects and plans. Most men's minds are burdened with occurrences, and with finding remedies for the condition of things. Alteration and improvement are the great ideal, with the hope that ere long this world will be a paradise, and all this without the Father's object and the Holy Ghost's object, which is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Amongst ourselves there is more familiarity and intimacy with what God and Christ have done in the past, and will do in the future, than with that which they are doing now. The present work is not recorded in any historical form, and the future is not in outward evidence. True Christianity is indeed going on in mystery, and is therefore only known by the divinely initiated. It is established in the glorified Man, Christ Jesus, objectively, and in the divine Person of the Holy Ghost in the saints subjectively, by whom Christ is in them and formed in them. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned; sight and natural sense are of no avail here.

. . . God has prepared a wealth of things for those who love Him, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have not

entered into man's heart naturally. These things are all known to the Spirit, who dwells in the church and in each believer. The more these things are shewn to us by the Spirit the more superior we are in heart, mind, and spirit to the visible and material. There is a spiritual circle here on earth existing in the Spirit, where the deep things of God are found. The temple of God, and the body of Christ both exist in and by the Spirit, and are unalterable by the external state of things.

This spiritual order seems to be the answer here on earth to the holy places in the tabernacle and the temple, as distinct from the holiest of all. We have here in the Spirit the antitype of the twelve loaves, the candlestick, and the incense, all speaking of what the people of God were in the mind of God and how they were that. The outward rupture of the ten tribes in no wise altered this inward order. The priest went on as before quite undisturbed by the outward occurrences. The sphere of the holy priesthood to-day is in the Spirit, and the spiritual order is described in 1 Corinthians. It is the assembly in the wilderness with a spiritual internal order under the cloud of God's presence.

The assembly of God is here. It exists in and by the Spirit, it is all outside nature and the flesh and should not be confounded with

the outward christian profession typified by the outer courts of old. Our privilege now is to enter this spiritual order in mind and spirit by way of the cross, and make our outward profession agree with and be an outflow of our acquaintance with and our enjoyment of what exists in the Spirit. God walks in these holy places in His people, and dwells there. and finds there what accords with His holy nature. It is thus in God's presence we learn the ministry of the new covenant, and the ministry of reconciliation as unfolded in 2 Corinthians, and are prepared for beholding the glory of the Lord, that which He is to God and for God, which is called "the holiest of all."

We are apt to try and settle down with what we think of Christ on the side of what He has done for us, and is for us, and to us. All very blessed no doubt, yet but preliminary to our entering that which Christ is to God. How precious are God's thoughts of Christ. How great the privilege of entering into what there is in that Man for God, and what the Father's delight is in the Son. What Christ is to God as His great and grand Resource, and what the Son is to the Father as the delight of His heart of love, is the great end of all that has been done for us and given to us, and learned by us. God would have every

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one of us intelligent in what the Son in Manhood is to Him, and what the Son is as a divine Person in Manhood to the Father.

The church as Christ's body and bride is to express and adorn Christ as the former, and the heavenly family of sons is for the latter. May we be exercised to enter into that which is beyond all comparison, even "the holiest of all," that which is for God and the Father, who will at the end be all and in all !

WALKING WITH GOD, AND PLEASING GOD.

. . . I INCREASINGLY feel the importance of pleasing God. Enoch is spoken of in three distinct ways. In Genesis v. he is said to have "walked with God"; in Hebrews xi. to have "pleased God," and in Jude to have prophesied as to the doom of the unconverted preachers and teachers in Christendom. It is a wonderful proof of the divine inspiration of the scriptures that what was said at the beginning of Bible history should not be recorded until the end of the book.

We do well to study and imitate what is said of Enoch. No doubt he is a type of saints in this day who are awaiting translation to heaven bodily without dying. Enoch "walked with God." We now have God as Father in

His Son, a Man ; we now have the Holy Ghost in each one of us; a divine Person who has come to glorify the absent Jesus in each of our hearts by making Him the supreme and only object in our spiritual affections. The Father's object is Jesus, His beloved Son, in glorified Manhood. The Holy Ghost's object is Jesus, the second Man, God's anointed beloved Son. So that the Father and the Spirit have the same object, and we are God's children, born of God by God the Father's new-creation work in us, and according to His love, in order that we may be capable of having the same object as the Father and the Spirit.

How can two walk together unless they are agreed ? . . . We walk with God when His Son is purely and truly our one Object. We walk with God when we have His thoughts of His Son, and are interested not only in what He has done for us and is to us, but above all when we are before God in what Jesus the second Man is to God and for God. We walk closely with God when we are enjoying and realising what Christ is to Him as a Man and what the Son is as the delight of the Father. We walk with God the Father in the measure in which His Son is before us according to the Father's estimate and thoughts of Him. . . .

We are told what is absolutely necessary in order to please God. Doubtless it is essential that we walk with God absolutely, and allow nothing to come between our heart, mind and spirit, and His object. Faith is, however, quite necessary both to walk with God and to please God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for we must believe that He is, not that He was, or will be, but that "he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The all-important thing for us in every circumstance is to hold God in Christ, the anointed Man; the One to whom God said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." God is in Christ—there is the truth as to who and what God is. There is the true faith for this day, without which it is impossible to please God.

When we hold God in Christ the Spirit puts something into our souls that is stored up in Christ, "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and we are only complete there. Faith is the light of the unseen Christ, and God in Him, put into our souls by the Spirit; the light within us of that which is outside what we are actually in at the time. . . . Sight, sense, and observation are no guide in this day; we must walk by faith, by the light of the unseen in our souls by the Spirit, and so walk with God, and please God. . . .

Then Enoch was the man used to foretell what God would do with those who assumed a position of lead and authority amongst Christians, who had neither new birth nor the Spirit. They are assuredly here to-day and are exercising their ungodly influence in a corrupt Christendom. Jude tells us what to do in regard to this serious state of things in the christian profession. He regards the saints in accord with this state of things as "beloved in God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ." God the Father loves us and preserves us in a Man who is the Jehovah God of the Old Testament. We are told to build ourselves up on our most holy faith; the faith of God in Christ, as against men's assumption. We are told to pray in the Holy Ghost instead of using forms of prayer, and premeditated utterances. We are told to keep ourselves in God's love against the subtle influences of mere human kindness and natural feelings. We are told to await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto a life outside this, when at His return He will give us a new and spiritual body incorruptible and beyond all corruption.

If we walk with God and please God, we shall have a correct judgment of the real state of Christendom, and shall leave the correction of things to Him who will very quickly gather

out of His kingdom all things that offend. We are indeed in difficult times. Man is exalted on every hand, and God's Man is refused and neglected, but all has been foretold and ample provision is made for the faithful who cleave to the Lord, and abide in the Son of God.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

. . . JOHN x. has come to me with much freshness and power. . . . How much we need to recognise Jesus as our Shepherd in these difficult times, when men in the christian profession are lovers of themselves and of pleasure more than lovers of God. While it is wondrous love on the part of God our Father to have made us His children by spiritual birth, and the gift of the Holy Ghost to indwell us, it is a serious matter to be hindered from entering, in spiritual consciousness, into the knowledge and enjoyment of the Father and the Son in eternal life beyond death. As born of God we necessarily have spiritual sensibilities, and desires, and affections, which cannot find their answer in anything in the whole domain of nature, nor indeed in any religious order of things according to sight or natural sense.

As sheep we greatly need the Shepherd,

because of the spiritual dangers to which we are exposed. The main idea of the Shepherd is that all God's children viewed as sheep may be held together in separation from all that cannot be connected with divine Persons as known in eternal life. The Shepherd has come in order that the sheep may not only have life, but have it without restraint or limit. That, of course, can only be in life beyond death, a life made open to the sheep by the death of the Shepherd. It is important to note that the Shepherd is the door ; the door out of this life and the door into another life. Those who enter by Him exclusively find salvation from what is here, whatever form it may take ; they find themselves spiritually conscious of a region of divine liberty for their spiritual affections, and enjoy food which feeds them with spiritual strength and vigour. The exclusiveness of this is very testing and searching, for as surely as there is only one Jesus there is only one door, and that door is a divine Person in Manhood.

This blessed and necessary instruction as to the Shepherd is introduced on the occasion of the blind man's expulsion from what is of and connected with man here, and his separation absolutely and entirely to the Person of Jesus, the Son of God. Such an one correctly represents what it is to be out to the Lord,

out of everything to Himself in contrast with a visible, material, religious order. What is such an one to do ? What indeed can he do without the One as his Shepherd to whom he is thus separated ? Thus the Person of Jesus as the Shepherd becomes the point of distinction between those who are together according to God and those who are not. There is nothing ecclesiastical in this ; neither modes, manners, creeds, usages, nor systems have any place here for discriminating judgment. The Son of God came into the world that we might be blind to all that has no connection with Him, and have clear sight as to the true character of the Man who is the Son of God.

Now to be obedient to the truth of who He is as a divine Person in Manhood, and what He is as a Man who is a divine Person, we need and must have His Shepherd care. He only is able to so guard and guide the sheep that they are able to answer to His description of them in verses 27 to 30. What a wonderful character the sheep have as viewed from the standpoint of the mind of the Son and the Father about them ! To these verses I doubt not the sheep are intended to respond, and they constantly need the Shepherd's care for it. This care is beautifully and fully unfolded in verses 11 to 18, and assures us of

the competency of the Shepherd to hold the whole of the sheep together as one flock in perfect oneness. The fact that this has never been realised since Pentecost by all believers in no wise proves the inability of the Shepherd. The failure lies not in Him but in the neglect of Him by the sheep.

Twice in these verses we have the lovely expression, "I am the good Shepherd," the first time in regard to the dangers of the sheep from the hireling who serves for wages, and the wolf which scatters by alarming them. The death of the Shepherd is the point of departure from both hireling and wolf. The good Shepherd has furnished the sheep with a point of departure, a door of escape from the men who served as hired by men, and from the whole sphere of the enemy's power. The death of Jesus has opened a way to follow Him by and in the Spirit to the place where He has gone. Neither hireling nor wolf has any place there. The Son and the Father fill that sphere with life, light, and love. The good Shepherd has died to all here, so that His sheep might have Him by the indwelling divine Person of the Holy Ghost in a scene where the Father and the Son and a divine order of things exist in cloudless light and purity. The Shepherd who has died is the only way of escape from that which would

hold us back from Himself as He now is and where He now is.

The second time He announces Himself as the good Shepherd is in view of entrance into intimacy with divine Persons. "I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." Here again His death is definitely spoken of as the point of assurance of the liberty of intimacy with Himself and the Father, He by death having left behind Him all that has no place with the Father. The assurance and knowledge of this mutual recognition between the Son and the Father and the sheep is the most marvellous proposal of divine love. May we all respond to it. His death closes the door on all that could interfere with it, and opens the door by resurrection to that into which He has entered Himself.

Now we have the whole one flock in view. "On this account," He says, "the Father loves me," and gives Me authority to lay down My life that I might take it again. The oneness of the flock, and the oneness of the Shepherd was evidently before Him in laying down His life, and as evidently before the Father also. Oneness was ever God's great thought, and Satan has persistently opposed

it, and does so now. The remedies proposed by well-meaning men have often proved worse than the disease, and so sects and parties have multiplied. The grand remedy is the death of the Shepherd, and Himself and His life in resurrection. We must get out of this scene in heart, mind, and spirit to get clear of what interferes with oneness. Jesus Himself with the Father in life beyond death is alone sufficient to so shepherd the sheep that they may realise oneness against every adverse influence.

These words divided the Jews, for of necessity those who follow Jesus must separate from those who do not, only let us be sure that we are following Him. He will thus be the Object, and we shall not be occupied with what we profess to have left. Purity of heart and mind is only secured by death, for there is no other point of departure from this life. Our Shepherd has taken that way to furnish His sheep with a way to follow Him by the Spirit sent down from the Father and Himself to lead us by the way He has gone right up to the place where He now is.

May we all appreciate the good Shepherd more and more, and so feel our need of Him that we listen to Him, follow Him, and enter into His own joys as now with His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

THE BENEDICTION IN 2 CORINTHIANS
XIII. 14.

THE last words of the Apostle Paul to the church of God at the close of 2 Corinthians are worthy of our prayerful consideration, and very necessary for the right understanding and true application of the instruction of both epistles: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all"; an abiding apostolic desire. The grace, or divine favour of the Lord; how blessed to have the favour of this supreme spiritual authority controlling us in the kingdom of God, according to God in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. God the Father has made Jesus Lord of all, and it is well worth our while to acknowledge Him, and reverence Him in holy fear, and so keep ourselves in the constant consciousness of His favour. The grace of Jesus, the divine favour of the Jehovah-God of the Old Testament, is now available toward us, in the second Man, because He is for us, and toward us, according to all that He is described to be in the first part of the Bible. Whatever He demanded aforetime as Jehovah is now supplied to us in the same Person in Manhood as Jesus.

Jesus is the name which is above every name, being the name of the Old Testament God in Manhood. Therefore it is His peculiar personal name. Jesus is the Christ ; Jesus is the Son of God ; Jesus is the Priest ; Jesus is the Lord. Seven times this name is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews in a distinctly personal way, and also seven times in the Revelation, which book closes with this touching personal assertion : “I Jesus” ! How wonderful to have the grace and favour of such an One.

“The grace of Christ,” the divine favour of the second Man, God’s Anointed, the One to whom God declares, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee”; “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” Let us come boldly to that throne on which He is enthroned as our Priest, and obtain “mercy and find grace for seasonable help.” The grace of Christ associates all who are of His order of man with Himself in all that God the Father has bestowed upon Him and given Him as Man.

May we more and more appreciate the favour of Christ, and so be superior to the constant danger of falling under the influence of mere human favour. May we increasingly value the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle also desires that all who com-

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pose the church of God should have the love of God WITH them. The love of God is the supreme aspect of divine love, and is supremely superior to every influence which is contrary to itself. It is shed abroad in our hearts, it is commended to us in Christ's death, it is that from which nothing can ever separate us, as in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is that by which God has presented Himself to the world in the gift of His only-begotten Son. It is that by which God will overcome everything which is opposed to or contrary to Himself, and that by which He will be all and in all throughout eternity. Well might our apostle desire that the love of God should be with those who compose His church. It is the only supreme, saving, satisfying influence above all that is contrary to the christian revelation of God.

“The communion of the Holy Ghost.” A church must have a communion; indeed, we can scarcely think of a church without one of some kind. Communions have multiplied indefinitely in the christian profession, yet there is only one after all which is of God, and which is here mentioned. . . . When the intercourse of the saints who compose God's assembly is of the Holy Ghost it will be pure, holy and happy. It will be free from man, self, and the world.

PRAYER IN VIEW OF APPRECIATING THE HEAVENLY FAMILY AND THE ASSEMBLY.

. . . MAY the Lord keep them all [the young] for there is much before them and around them from which none can save them but the Lord Himself. . . .

The Lord has His own time and way with each one of a believer's household, yet He is faithful to His word and their baptism, yet testing the faith and patience of the parents meanwhile. We have to watch and pray lest we doubt His faithfulness and dishonour Him. What an outlet we have in prayer for all our exercises of every kind. We need to persevere in prayer, for Satan is sure to discourage and hinder our intercourse with divine Persons.

Very early in the Lord's public ministry we have His most blessed encouragement to prayer. How He emphasised private prayer and assured His disciples that it would most certainly be answered by the Father. How He stirs us up to ask, and to go on asking Him, who is the Source of every good and perfect gift, in the certainty of receiving. Asking and receiving with thanksgiving is surely a creature's place, and especially so in regard

to those who are by new creation God's children and indwelt by His Spirit.

We have to persevere in these things before and with our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, for they love to prove our sincerity and reality in the face of the accuser of the brethren. "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." The second Man, the heavenly perfect Man, as recorded in Luke, was always praying. His prayerful intercourse with His Father evidently greatly impressed His disciples, drawing out the desire to be instructed by Him to pray like Him.

Since bodily strength failed me I have found no occupation so happy and profitable as prayerful intercourse with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit; and the movement of my mind, heart, and spirit in the vast domain of the unseen and eternal.

There is no substitute for this, I am more and more persuaded. If it be neglected we become superficial and may be artificial, lacking in depth and power, with all our gift and knowledge. Prayerful meditation is indispensable for the knowledge of God's mind and will. To be here for God, we must go in to God, and be much in His presence in the

Holy Ghost and in Christ. We then come out from God to be here for God, according to the revelation of God in His Son, the Man of His own begetting and anointing.

The external christian profession abounds with what is of man and according to man. The only escape from this lies in divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Thank God the Holy Ghost is still here, indwelling each and all who have truly believed. There exists in the Holy Ghost on this earth a constituted spiritual order of things which is only spiritually discerned. It consists of the heavenly family of God's children, each and all born of God, and unknown by the world, because they are spiritual in nature and character. John's writings unfold this in great detail, as here in the world, yet unseen and only known in spiritual consciousness.

There is also the assembly of God here, in and by the Spirit, in the double character of the temple or shrine of God, and a body in and by the Spirit of God, as described in 1 and 2 Corinthians. In these epistles the house of God is not mentioned, although the outward profession is recognised by reference to all that call on the name of the Lord. We must not allow the conduct of the Corinthians to divert us from the spiritual charac-

ter of God's assembly, for the apostle corrects their conduct by placing before them their spiritual character as existing in and by the Spirit of God. They sincerely accepted the character, and were necessarily bound to repent of their conduct, and thus were soundly and permanently corrected. The first step toward this in the present state of the outward profession is to own the ruin and come out to the Lord as the only resource, calling on Him out of a pure heart. When the Lord by the power of the Spirit lifts the soul above the visible and material order of things, by whatever name called, the individual becomes spiritually conscious of the spiritual order of things which is here unalterably and unchangeably being constituted in and by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In this spiritual order God dwells by and in the divine Person of the Holy Ghost. These are the holy places where God walks, composed of persons who have become spiritual in character and condition by the Spirit of God in them. Our outward profession, whether individually or in meetings, should, of course, flow from this spiritual character and order, and be an expression outwardly of what God has made us all spiritually. So long as the Holy Ghost is here this spiritual constitution, order, and character remains unaffected by

external occurrences. If our meetings and public testimony be carried on according to any external order, even if scriptural in form, we are bound to decline and accommodate things to the human mind.

God's present assembly is not an assembly in the flesh like Israel was. It is an assembly in and by the Spirit. Doubtless the acceptance of the cross is necessary for spiritual discernment of that which exists in the Spirit. The Spirit only knows the things of God, and He shews them to those who obey the word of the cross, which shuts out man's power and wisdom, and leaves room for the power and wisdom of God. We cannot skip over Corinthians and enter into the Colossian and Ephesian order of things in Christ any more than the priest of old could avoid the holy place on the way to the holiest.

The brazen altar is the first thing in approach, for God must be met. The laver of Christ's death must be used to wash away what cannot enter the holy place. The true character of God's people must be owned as in the Spirit in order to pass on by the Spirit to Christ glorified as the expression of all the purpose of God.

THE FAVOUR OF THE SEPARATE PATH.

. . . I HAVE been much impressed by the great honour the Lord has put upon the few whom He has gathered out and put in a separate path in these last days, and feel the great importance of our being seriously exercised to answer to His mind in conferring this favour upon us. We need first of all to recognise that this separate path is an absolute necessity because of the general condition of things in the whole profession around us. We may be sure that the Lord would never have separated a few of His own from the mass unless it were necessary in view of His purpose with us. This godly judgment of the entire ruin of the whole public christian profession is required in order that we realise the Lord Jesus Christ as our one and only resource against the prevailing humanly corrupt state of things. He only has the power to hold our souls and spirits above the outward material and visible religious order which is of and according to man. He only can save us from settling down into a visible material condition of meetings and testimony, all the more subtle because of being scriptural in form. He only can save us from regarding ourselves as being something peculiar in

spiritual character, and different from others who are in Christ and in the Spirit.

Calling on the Lord out of a pure heart enables us to walk together without any doctrinal or ecclesiastical bond of any kind, and without any distinction in the flesh. Being held above the visible by His power in our souls we are able to discern by the Spirit the true spiritual character of all saints, as God's shrine or temple, and Christ's body. Obedience to these precious truths is only possible as we are held by the power of the Lord above what is present to the outward eye. Spiritual things are only spiritually discerned, and we are separated from the outward condition of things by and to the Lord Himself, in order that we may be free to discern what is here in the Holy Spirit whether on the side of the heavenly family of children, or on the side of the assembly of God.

The end of all this is that we may in the holiness of what is spiritual enter into what Christ is as the second Man, God's Anointed, glorified in heaven, the divinely-appointed Head, and so know God in His true moral character, and the world to come order of things, in which God will be fully displayed by means of Christ and the church.

Then, further, as a heavenly family of sons

in the Son, by divine teaching as children; we are intended to appreciate Jesus as the delight of the Father in the Son in Manhood, for the satisfaction of our spiritual affections.

There is nothing in all this to occupy us with ourselves as a separate company, but rather to engage us with divine Persons, and an order of things in which divine Persons are the only objects and which is in strict accord with God and Christ, and the Father and the Son. Therefore separation from those who dishonour Jesus as Lord, and the calling on Him out of a pure heart, is an absolute preliminary for discerning and entering into those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which have not entered into man's heart—the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

God Himself, the Father, presented and known in Christ His beloved Son, is alone worthy of our affection, and when God Himself is really our Object all else falls into its proper place, and can be held and used according to God's mind and will. . . . In eternity God will be all and in all. May He have this place in our hearts and souls now.

PEACE AS PRESENTED IN LUKE'S GOSPEL.

. . . WE little know the effect in souls around us which the Lord can give through the few in separation. Our usefulness must not be measured by the numbers which come on with us, nor by the approbation of fellow believers. I am rather disposed to think it is better indicated by opposition and persecution, which shews that we are used to exercise people. However, all is in the hand of the Lord by the Spirit, and we have just to go on quietly, letting our light shine in holy separation to the Lord Himself and seizing every opportunity of speaking a word to him that is weary of that which He is still going on with. . . .

The work of God in souls is not in view of any improvement or alteration of this present world ; it is all in view of the world to come and eternity. How could we expect things to be right according to God in a world which has crucified God's beloved Son, His anointed Man, and is using the blessings and privileges of Christianity to exalt the natural man during His absence. God will never allow peace in such a scene at such a time.

It is most interesting and instructive to notice in Luke's gospel how peace is presented

in four distinct aspects or connections. This gospel is the good news of the second Man, in contrast to the first man. The second Man is priestly, and presents that kind of being called man to God in His own person, in all divine complacency and infinite satisfaction and delight. The introduction of a second man supposes the first man set aside, which strictly took place at the cross, after the public ministry of the second Man had demonstrated that there was absolutely no point of similarity between Christ and any one else, save the fact that both are of the order of that kind of being called man. Whatever answered to Christ on the part of any one was the product of His word in them by the Spirit. It did not lie in anything they were naturally.

It is most important that we should understand that God has brought in a second Man, who displaces the first in judgment declared at the cross by the place He took, and by the work of the word in the power of the Spirit in our souls, in view of being bodily and actually like Him at His return. Therefore we can understand that peace is inseparable from the second Man, for the second Man is the only man God can regard with perfect complacency. Peace is first mentioned in Luke ii. in connection with the birth of the

second Man: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." In Genesis it is stated that God repented that He had made man. The answer to that is in the second Man. Immediately on the first man's fall the second Man, the seed of the woman, is announced. The babe in the manger in Bethlehem furnished God with an object on which His eye could rest, yea, and His heart also, with perfect complacency, for all that God ever desired or intended that kind of being called man to be, was there before Him.

All heaven was moved by it; and earth also, but in an opposition which manifested itself at every stage of His blessed pathway, right to the very finish at the cross. In chapter xii. He is regarded as definitely rejected by the first man at his best, after having been under divine culture for hundreds of years. "Think ye," says the Lord, "that I have come to give peace in the earth? Nay, I say to you, but rather division." (Ver. 51.) Households and nearest relatives are divided, for those who receive Him and those who refuse Him can never agree. The second Man is thus the touchstone of everything, whether it is according to God or contrary to God. Anything short of the Person of the Christ, even the Bible itself as to the letter of it, can be

used to deceive by the transformed “angel of light.”

We may rest assured that there can be no peace on earth while the Prince of Peace is away. Thus in chapter xix. we are let into the blessed and comforting secret as to where peace is now. This blessed One has gone away to heaven to receive His kingly position in His glorified condition in heaven. Before going away He rides triumphantly into His capital in humiliation, receiving the acclamations of the multitude, who say, “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.” (Ver. 38.) It is still glory in the highest, as in chapter ii., but the peace is in heaven and division on earth, because He is rejected on earth and accepted in heaven.

The fourth and last instance (chap. xxiv.) is in the assembly on earth, a spiritual circle indwelt by the Holy Ghost, in which the risen Man after His finished work can exhibit Himself as the second Man, the offering Priest, the last Adam, announcing peace. Thus, wherever He is there is peace, and wherever He is not there is no peace. Let us take this seriously to heart, and in this understand the reason of all divisions of every kind, at all times, and in all places. It is right that there should be no peace apart from Him;

indeed, it would be ruinous if there were, for we should settle down away from God. The Lord keep us true to Himself in holy separation from all that cannot be connected with Him.

GOD IN A MAN, THE MEDIATOR.

. . . It is most striking how little the thought of God in Christ, in a Man who is the Mediator, is in the minds of God's people. Yet this is the gospel; nothing less than that which God is for and toward all men in the Mediator who gave Himself a ransom for all. ¶

. . . Yes, God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, "for God is one, and the Mediator of God and men one, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." The testimony of God to Israel was that there was one God whose name was Jehovah, in contrast to the false gods of the nations. Israel was put in a land to themselves and held responsible to own no other God save Jehovah, the one and only God. . . .

The testimony to be rendered to God in the gospel . . . is not only that there is one God, which is still true, but that God is One. The Godhead is revealed. One divine Person

has entered the condition of Manhood and the one God of the Old Testament has become Man. It is most important ever to bear in mind that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is now the Jesus of the New ; the divine Person of the Son in the Godhead, the true Jehovah God, is now presented in a Man. As a divine Person He was Jehovah, and as a Man He is Jehovah's Servant. You find this continually in the prophets. . . .

The wonderful thing is that God supplies in a Man all that He ever demanded by the law. He is His own Mediator, in a Man who gave Himself as the ransom price which settled every liability which lay on man, enabling God to approach all men in Christ, and answering every need without a single demand.

Our preaching should never be less than a presentation of God in Christ, the Mediator, on the basis of the ransom given by Himself. Such a presentation of God is the true and full gospel preaching and meets the need of all of every class or nation. Christendom has got right away from this idea of God. Even where the idea of God is entertained it is seldom God in Christ, the Mediator, who gave Himself a ransom for all. . . . Christendom is fast rushing on to a bloodless profession, assuming man's capability to fit himself for heaven by his conduct here. All

this ignores the blood, and the ransom price paid, and thus presumes on God's mercy and goodness apart from the Mediator.

Let us not fear to present God Himself as set forth in a Man, who is His Son, the blessed revelation of God as Father, the Source of all, and who is the one and only spiritual authority as Lord. This testimony will always have the support of another divine Person, the Holy Ghost, for He has come to dwell in believers in order to glorify the Son, the glorified Son in Manhood, in whom the Father is revealed.

God is one. These three divine Persons are perfectly one in character, nature, and attribute. There is no disparity with divine Persons. The Father is the Source of all; the Son in Manhood is the expression of all that has its source in the Father; the Holy Ghost is the operative power in believers for the realisation in faith of that which has its source in the Father and is expressed in the Son, the only divine Person in Manhood.

May we have grace and power, faithfully and clearly to present God in Christ.

THE MISSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

. . . You may welcome a few thoughts on the mission of this wonderful Person—the Holy Ghost—in and through the saints as a heavenly family. . . . John xiv., xv. and xvi. give most blessed instruction as to that which the Holy Ghost has come to do, in connection with those whom the Father has given to the Son out of the world which has rejected Him, and during His rejection. We have very little about the Spirit in John's gospel until chapter xiv. He is from thence often emphatically spoken of as "He," that is, in a personal way. Also it is in these chapters that He is spoken of by the lovely name of "Comforter." As Comforter He has come to take entire charge of the whole heavenly family in this world, while both He and they are absolutely unknown to the world. We may be assured of His perfect competency to do this, according to all the love and will of the Father and the Son toward this holy, heavenly family circle.

He is first presented as the "Spirit of truth," in contrast to the falsity of the world and its prince. This warns us not to rely on appearances, mere natural feelings or intellect, in regard to spiritual matters, but to listen to the voice of the Spirit of truth. He will always tell us the truth, thank God.

He is next spoken of as the Teacher and Remembrancer of all that had been presented by and in the Person of Jesus, who has bequeathed peace to this family circle, and given it His own peace in and by the presence of the Comforter. How wonderfully this family circle is cared for in regard to all its spiritual needs while in a hostile world.

The end of chapter xv. speaks of the Comforter as sent by the Son from the Father, the Spirit of truth, as to the testimony aspect of His mission. "He shall bear witness concerning me." This is indeed most comforting, and assures us that as long as the Holy Ghost is here, and that will be as long as the family is here, there will be a witness maintained in and through the saints concerning the absent Jesus, the Son of God. Chapter xvi. enlarges greatly on the mission of the Holy Ghost. We are first reminded that the presence of the Comforter is absolutely dependent on the absence of Jesus: "It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you." Here then we have the situation. The Son, the only divine Person in Manhood, gone back to the Father, and another divine Person, non-incarnate, come in His place and on His behalf, to dwell in His own.

We have first His, the Comforter's demon-

stration as to the condition of the world. It is most important to recognise that the Holy Ghost's presence, and all that He does, affords the fullest demonstration that this world is in a condition of lawlessness, proved by rejecting the righteous One. The world is without righteousness, according to God, for the righteous One has left it and gone back to His Father. This world is under judgment because the ruler of it is already judged. If we attend to this demonstration we shall not be ensnared or deceived by the world's enticements and attractions.

Next, "He shall guide you into all the truth," for He is the Spirit of truth. How blessed to have such a guide while in such a scene as this.

Next, "He will announce to you what is coming," in order that we should be intelligent as to that world which will succeed and supersede the present one in the day of Christ.

Lastly, "He shall glorify me" in your spiritual affections by announcing to you the things which belong to the Father and the Son. How precious to have those things announced to us, as the heavenly family, which pertain to these two divine Persons. . . . How effectually and completely the Father and the Son have provided for the spiritual

needs of this heavenly family by and in the Comforter. . . .

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” The Holy Ghost has come to make the whole family know these three wonderful things. May we each so walk in the Spirit with His object before us that He may lead us into the spiritual consciousness of this spiritual family, and its tone, character, privileges, and joys. We must remember that the whole family circle is in view in these chapters, and each one ought to feel his obligation to answer to and be in accord with the family character. A natural family does not lose its character by an individual child acting contrary to it. Yet such an one fails to fulfil his obligations, and misrepresents and dishonours the family character. So it is spiritually, for what scripture says God’s children are, they are as to spiritual family character, yet it behoves each to learn the character of God’s family and seek to accord therewith in spirit, words, and ways.

PERSEVERING IN PRAYER.

. . . COLOSSIANS IV. is a very useful chapter in the way of exhortation as to some very necessary and important matters. “Persevere-

in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving." How necessary this is, for Satan will ever seek to hinder us from prayer, and it is so easy to allow ourselves to be diverted from private prayer. The exhortation to watch in it is very striking, for no doubt we are able to detect hidden workings when engaged with God, and the Lord alone, that we could never be conscious of at other times.

There is a wonderfully simple way indicated whereby it is possible to walk in wisdom toward those who are without: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." If I maintain a spirit which is under the influence of divine favour, or grace, towards others, in holy separation of heart to God, I shall answer them rightly. We also have a practical instance of labouring earnestly in prayer for the saints as the means of enabling them to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." Would to God we all served the saints more in this way. . . . Such help on the great work of the kingdom of God, subduing souls and spirits under the blessed sway of the grace of God, by the Lord and the Spirit. . . .

Then we are admonished as to the possibility of having a ministry given from the Lord, and yet neglecting to fulfil it. This is

very serious, for while it is sadly possible to assume ability to minister by remembering what we have read and heard, yet, on the other hand, we may allow ourselves to hold back what we have really received from the Lord. Persevering in prayer, and watching in it, is the great safeguard against assuming ministry which is not from the Lord, or neglecting to minister what we really have from Him.

These are days when we are apt to neglect private waiting on God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We must not expect the Holy Ghost in us to give us divine communications apart from divine Persons. He is ever free to shew us the things of the Father and the Son when the Father and the Son are truly and sincerely before our hearts.

DIVINE TEACHING.

IT is well to regard all our circumstances and exercises in the light of divine teaching. The two main features of the new covenant are forgiveness of sins and divine teaching. Forgiveness closes our past history, to be remembered no more, and divine teaching brings us to give place to God.

As Elihu said to Job when he justified

himself rather than God, "Who teacheth like him?" Elihu presented God to Job. The Lord presented Himself to Job. The grand result was, "I am vile . . . I will lay mine hand on my mouth." "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

We may safely conclude that all our instruction is to one end, and that is to give place to God; of course now to God as Father, revealed in Jesus His Son in Manhood.

Isaiah prophesied of Israel long before Christ came: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." When the Jews opposed the Lord He answered them with the above prophecy, adding: "Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." Thus we see the point of the Father's teaching is the Son as the one Object of our spiritual affections.

In John's first epistle the unction of the Holy One teaches us to abide in the Son and the Father. He makes us conscious of every intrusion between our spirit and the Person of Jesus the Son of God.

The Lord teaches us to respect His position of power as evidenced in Acts xiii. 8-12, when they were astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

The Christ teaches us, as the Head, the things concerning His Headship, and His body and bride, as in Ephesians iv. 21.

So you see all three divine Persons are engaged in teaching us and all our circumstances are overruled to this end.

May we accept all from God's hand and be concerned to learn in every exercise just what He would teach us.

NEW CREATION.

. . . I AM thankful you have suggested the subject of new creation to me, because it is not only very interesting, but immensely important, inasmuch as it involves the whole divine purpose, and the means of its accomplishment.

The consummation of it will be nothing less than the new heavens and the new earth, and there can be no doubt that this was in the mind of God when He created the first heavens and earth.

It was, however, necessary for many reasons that the natural order of things should come on first. The first man and the earthly man, and all that has come in by him, must precede the spiritual and eternal, because the first order must pass away.

When we use the word creation in regard to the first or old creation, we, of course, mean the heavens and earth, and their furnishing, and also the first man and woman.

I think this idea must be retained in considering the new creation, the great difference being that in the old the sphere and the furnishing of the sphere preceded the creation of the man and the woman, whereas in the new order the man is provided first, that is, the second Man, the heavenly Man, God's Anointed. The woman, the bride, is being provided now during the time of Christ's absence in heaven and the Holy Ghost's presence on earth, all in view of the millennial reign and the new heavens and the new earth. Wherefore Christ, the second Man, the divine Person of the Son in the Godhead, announces Himself to the church in Laodicea as the "beginning of the creation of God."

A divine Person in Manhood is now everything that will eternally exist in the new heavens and earth, when God will be all and in all, as revealed in the Son as Man.

So we can understand why new creation is at the present time said to be "in Christ," the second Man, glorified in heaven, the expression and embodiment of the whole purpose of God, as it will exist and be accomplished and displayed in the new heavens and earth

He is now the beginning of this creation of God, in resurrection, and in His glorified condition. Therefore we may conclude that all the work of God now by His word and His Spirit in souls is to form and reproduce the man in whom this new creation exists, in view of having spiritual bodies like Him at His coming again, in which the whole heavenly company will be presented to Himself all glorious, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish."

Thus the first stage of this new creation is the glorified Man, the second is the presentation to Himself of the heavenly company, all with Him and like Him, and fitted to reign with Him as His bride on His throne with Him.

Therefore I think in considering new creation we must include all the work which has been done in souls in the past, and that which is going on now, and right on to the first resurrection.

Of course it is but a reproduction of that which existed in Christ Jesus when glorified, and it is all new from new birth onward. This new creation work in nowise alters anything we are by natural birth, nor does it affect the natural order of things. It is superior to it all, and is intended to subordinate the natural, but it is really a reproduction of

Christ in us, of that which was never there before, all new, and a kind of new that can never become old.

The next stage in new creation is the millennial reign in the old creation order. During this reign Christ, the new order of Man, and those who are newly created in Him, will so influence all upon earth that the whole earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord, and all be prepared for the new heavens and earth, when the last of the followers of Satan have been consumed by fire from heaven. Then the reconciliation, which we have already received through Christ (as in Rom. v.) and which has been effected by Christ's death (as in Col. 1.) and which has been ministered to us by the Spirit (as in 2 Cor. v.), will be universal, enabling God to tabernacle with men in perfect complacency, without a disturbing element, for ever. Then it will be that the new creation is an accomplished fact, and entirely complete and finished.

All is new now in Christ, old things have passed away by His death, and all is become new in Him glorified, and all is of God in the Man in whom the reconciliation exists. This is the blessed *reality*, and the present stage of new creation, taking in the Person of Christ objectively, and all of Christ formed in souls subjectively. All this is new, and a new that

never existed before, and will endure for ever. The actuality of it all is described in Revelation xxi. 2-7, when it is said, "Behold, I make *all* things new." All actually new! . . . A new creation completely. The glorification of Christ, and the present work in souls, is all in view of this grand finale. Our glorification with Christ, and our reign with Him on His throne is to the same end. The new heavens and earth are spoken of twice in the end of the prophet Isaiah. The vision of the prophet did not stop short of this grand end. In 2 Peter iii. we are told that according to His promise we wait for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. May our vision be clear and long-sighted enough to look right through to God's end.

THE NEW SUPERSEDING THE OLD.

. . . WE do well to regard all our outward circumstances, and all our inward exercises as means to one end. It is our privilege to accept the former from God our Father direct, above and beyond causes and channels, and to most prayerfully and seriously consider the latter as divinely intended to increase our appreciation of Jesus, as the one object and delight of the Father's heart, and as the Man

of all His counsels and purposes. The outward circumstances and soul exercises of believers are not meaningless, nor accidental, really, because a believer is a distinct subject of the purpose of God. When the purpose of God with us is understood and realised we have a most powerful incentive to yield ourselves to His supremacy. The supremacy of the love of a Being who could have such a purpose with such an one as I, outweighs every other consideration, and gives a key to all that is mysterious, and subjection of heart and spirit to all that which is seemingly against us. The latter part of Romans viii. furnishes us with words and ideas with which to answer every suggestion of Satan, while passing through the fiery ordeal of the trial of our faith.

“What shall we then say to these things ? ” There is just one answer, an answer which silences the enemy, stills our murmurings, and enables us to walk with God in simple faith : “If God be for us, who can be against us ? ” We know God is for us, for He has shed His love abroad in our hearts, a love which abides in us so long as the Holy Ghost is there, and that is always. We know God is for us because He has called us according to His own purpose with us, and therefore so long as God is God, all that occurs to us, and

all that His Spirit produces in us, must work together, and work together in harmony toward God's end with us. That end is nothing less than conformity to His own Son in glorified bodies, when every bit that God has wrought in us here in the pilgrim path will shine out to His and our glory for ever. The contemplation of the work of God in the heavens and earth of the first creation is most blessed, yet wonderful as this is it is not worthy to be compared with the work of God in providing the second Man, Christ, the Son of God, and reproducing Him in souls here by the word and the Spirit in view of their having bodies like His.

The posterity of the second Man will outlive the natural order of man, and the new heavens and the new earth will supersede the old. As Peter reminds us, it is the new we look for, according to God's promise as stated in the end of Isaiah the prophet. There is but little comfort and satisfaction in considering the works of men, however clever they may be—and they will all pass away. The wise man assures us that all under the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit. We are exhorted in many places in scripture to consider the work of God. Yet all the work of God in the old creation will give place to the new. . . . Then the second Man will remain

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and all who are of Him, and God will be all and in all in the eternal sphere, for every one will be filled with God Himself as revealed and known in His beloved Son in Manhood.

This is God's end for the satisfaction of His great heart of love. All that is of God to-day is in view of this great end when the heavenly company is completed and glorified and the millennial reign has done its work: "Behold, I make all things new," is the word; and it is sure of accomplishment.

May we be long-sighted, able to see right through to God's end, and see all the details in the light of God's grand purpose.

THE LORD'S PRESENCE IN MEETINGS.

. . . IN considering the Lord's presence when we are assembled in meetings, we need to distinguish His presence as Lord in and by the Spirit, and His presence as the Son and Head. As the Son He is the central Object of all divine, spiritual affections, the Father's whole delight. As Head He gives character in resurrection to an entirely new order. As Lord we are under His authority; as Son and Head we are associated with Him as His brethren and His body in life beyond death. Matthew and 1 Corinthians give the

former, and John and Colossians and Ephesians give the latter.

As Lord He controls, directs, and supports us individually in the kingdom of God in order that we may as spiritually subdued accept death to the whole sphere of the flesh, and by way of His death pass out of it in spirit into life beyond, where Christ is known and enjoyed as the Head and beginning of an entirely new order of man and things, all of and according to God.

For the realisation of His kingdom-power as Lord by the Holy Ghost we must be truly gathered together to His name, calling on the Lord out of a pure heart, in separation from all that is of and in the name of man here. Without this we could not have His presence in the power and leading of the Spirit, nor would we be able to take the supper in real announcement of the great fact of His death, which is a necessary preliminary to a true and real remembrance—or calling to mind—of Himself.

We need always on every occasion to bear in mind that it is only by the power of the Lord, exercised by the Spirit, that we can have any meeting clear of system, habit, creed, or usage, and carried on in the freshness and liberty of every movement which is from the Spirit.

I Corinthians describes the assembly of God as a spiritually constituted sphere, for the exercise of the administrative power and wisdom of God in Christ, exercised by Him as Lord, in kingdom character, during this the time of His absence and rejection.

The name of Lord, the name of supreme administrative spiritual authority, occurs all through the epistle, also the Holy Ghost is often mentioned, but Christ as Head of the assembly is not once mentioned. We may therefore regard the supper, as here given, to be introductory to Christ Himself, in His personal character, and Headship position.

I think, therefore, that Matthew xviii., "There am I," should be carefully distinguished from John xiv., "I will come." One is connected with responsibility to spiritual authority, and the other with special privileges enjoyed in life beyond death, and through His death.

We should not assume that we have His presence in His Sonship and Headship character previous to the supper, for His death must be announced, and He remembered or called to mind, before we can have Him consciously present in our spiritual affections according to His present heavenly and glorified position and character.

John xx. gives us most blessedly the pattern

of the assembly, as associated with Christ in resurrection; as the last Adam, by His in-breathing of the Spirit of life, and as the source instrumentally of all true testimony.

We may safely conclude that if the Lord as Lord by the Spirit did not first control and support us, we should never be able or willing to go over to Him through death into a resurrection-order of things.

Now in order to do this together, we must be assembled with the supper before us, and sincerely announce His departure from this life.

We can thus call Him to mind in a true and real way, and enjoy Him and the new order of things now connected with Him in view of His coming, when all will be enjoyed actually..

May we have grace to rightly divide the word of truth, and be enabled to give each and every scripture its proper place and application.

Thus we shall be approved unto God, and workmen that need not be ashamed.

POWER BELONGS TO GOD.

. . . How true is the statement in Psalm lxii. that power belongs to God. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power

belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work." God said it once, but the writer heard it twice before he took it in. The changing the name from God, the supreme Being, to Lord, the name of authority over us, is very beautiful and most instructive and suggestive. It is not Jehovah here, the relationship name, but Master. How sweet to have one for master to whom mercy belongs, in view of our weakness and frailty. I have often thought that God holds the reins in regard to all mankind in this way, in that power belongs to Him. Power, or strength, is an absolute essential to every one and cannot be substituted by anything. However much riches, honour, glory, or learning any one may have, all is unavailing when strength fails. God deals the strength out to each one, and thus has each one in His hand. It is well to know and own this, and to be assured that He knows how to use His power consistent with His love, grace, and mercy, so that if He sees fit to deprive us of bodily strength, it is always in view of spiritual strength, and of a stronger sense of the unseen and eternal.

THE DIVINE TEACHER.

It is important ever to remember that being born of God and indwelt by the Spirit of God we are always under divine teaching. The divine Teacher is able to make all outward circumstances and all inward exercises instruct us in that which He wishes us particularly to learn at any time. The circumstances and exercises necessary for one lesson would not do for another. . . . I well remember a remark of dear Mr. Darby: "Public prayer is important, but God always answers private." The blessed Lord's instruction in the gospels confirms this when He says: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matt. vi. 6.)

What a wonderful thing it is to have such a Being as God for our Father, and to have the Spirit of God in us as a witness that we are His children. We may be sure that He will be true to that name on His side. May we have grace and simplicity to respond to it sincerely on ours. . . .

Of course faith is tested by outward circumstances, and many exercises result mainly because we lack the simplicity of children. . . .

Let us cherish the hope of our beloved Lord's return. "Behold, I come quickly," thrice repeated in the last chapter of the Bible, is as true as ever. Let us not give way to the thought or feeling that He will not come quickly because He has not done so. We do well to cherish the expectation; it helps to keep us loose to things here; and makes the unseen more real to us. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORD.

. . . THE Lord's ways with individuals and gatherings are much the same in principle now as ever. The Book of Judges, and the historical books, abound with examples of the faithfulness of the Lord in recalling the hearts of His people back to Himself when they had forgotten or neglected Him. I do not think there is one instance of oppression by an enemy while they were true to the Lord Himself. He only allowed trouble and defeat when other gods, or men, or means, substituted Himself in their hearts and minds. When they were humbled enough to turn to Him with all their hearts, deliverance was prompt and effectual. The process was repeated through different channels and in different

ways, but always for the same reason and with the same result. It is so now in a spiritual form, for the Lord is even more jealous of His present people's affections and attentions than He was of old, for we are God's children, and Christ's body and bride.

Philippians iv. is our chart to guide across these stormy seas raised by Satan, under the hand of the Lord. The end of chapter iii. introduces the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who will change our bodies at His return, and subdue all things to Himself by His millennial reign. Therefore, says he, "Stand fast in the Lord"; "Be of the same mind in the Lord"; "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice"; "Let your moderation [or yieldingness] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." What a resource we each and all have in Him who is effectually Satan's master, and superior to every influence which can pull our souls and spirits down from Himself.

The apostle had learned the power, faithfulness, and jealousy of the Lord Jesus by bitter experience in that prison house confinement after his memorable journey to Jerusalem.

The dear disciples had yielded to the authority of the Lord when Paul would not be persuaded to forego what he was so anxious

to do. He doubtless had this in mind when he counselled the dear saints at Philippi to be anxious for nothing, but in everything ask God to do what they felt was needed instead of trying to do it themselves. We poor weak creatures are so easily upset, and especially so in regard to divine things, because they are nearest and dearest to us, and rightly so. The peace of God which passes all understanding is a grand exchange for anxiety, and is available at all times, if only we are humble enough to bring our requests to God. Yet, alas, how ready we are to try and do instead of to ask.

. . . I would encourage each one to wait on the Lord privately, and diligently seek the Lord so as to understand what He has to say to each one, and where His mind is known and His judgment accepted, all will be of one mind. The Lord allows troubles and difficulties beyond our capability in order to exercise us after Himself. We may try everything and every one before we turn to Him, but it will not meet the case. He will teach us that it is only by His grace we are saved at any time from the enemy and his influence, or from the world, or the flesh. Salvation is of the Lord, and in no other name; salvation from all we need saving from, and as we need it.

THE WORK OF DIVINE PERSONS.

. . . SURELY God is carrying on His blessed work in souls, and will not fail to do so until all is done which He purposes. It would appear that God has always been a great worker, and we do well at all times to consider the work of God. . . . Truly the first heavens and the earth, and man and woman were a great work. . . . As we behold the greatness of God in His work, we are proportionately conscious of our own littleness and find our true level. Psalm lxxvii. gives a fine instance of this. The first part is self-occupation and consequent dissatisfaction, but when this is owned as infirmity, the work of God becomes the happy, triumphant theme.

. . . Whatever men have discovered of the "forces of nature" was all there before it was discovered, and should be regarded as the work of God, and as a testimony to His power and wisdom as a Creator, rather than a display of man's greatness. Now if the contemplation of God's work in the natural order be so profitable, how infinitely more so is the consideration of God's work in the spiritual order. Think of what God the Father did by and through His Son in manhood. What a marvellous presentation of God there was in His blessed Person, words, and ways.

He declared, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Yes, Jesus was a wonderful worker, and worked while it was day. That day closed with the most wonderful work of all on the cross, when God was fully glorified and fully revealed in righteousness and love. This work of righteousness was speedily followed by that great act of God's power in raising the Man out of death who had so glorified Him on the cross. This blessed Worker has been exalted to the right hand of God, and seated on the Father's throne, and has sent the divine Person of the Holy Ghost down by whom these divine workers have carried on the work in souls, which will be complete and appropriated by them at the Lord's return and displayed at the "appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Whatever may be the state of things in the world; or the corrupt profession, we may rest assured that the present work of God, which really began at Pentecost, and will terminate at the rapture, cannot be prevented eventually although it may be greatly obscured.

The purpose of the Father to have a heavenly family of sons will surely be accomplished, and the purpose of God to secure a body and bride for Christ, the second order of man, is sure. May we all be intelligent as to and

spiritually conscious of the present work of God. His over-ruling hand can and will make all events and occurrences turn to the promotion of His work, a work which is now carried on in secret in souls in view of a grand display in glorified bodies.

A survey of the outward condition of things is both perplexing and disheartening. A consideration of what God is doing is ever encouraging. This wonderful work of God is described in Ephesians as a work already done, described in its totality as in Christ Jesus. Thus we have God's plan in regard to all the details, and are able to see what all the details are to result in. It is indeed a great help to see what God is doing, and what the Holy Ghost has come to do, as set forth particularly in John xiv., xv. and xvi. Then there is the wonderful work which will go on through the millennium, until God is all and in all, and eternal rest is brought in when all work is over. How blessed it is to know and consider the wonderful works of God!

DIVINE PERSONS AS PRESENTED IN THE EPISTLES.

. . . I HAVE had much joy and comfort in considering the character in which divine

Persons are presented in the epistles. In 1 Corinthians viii. 5 we read: "Though . . . there be gods many, and lords many, but to us there is one God, the Father . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ."

How blessed to have such a Being as God made known to us according to all that the name of Father implies, and how precious it is to have such a Being as the Son in manhood, glorified on the Father's throne, announced to us as our one Lord. These two Persons, by these two names, introduce nearly every epistle, saluting us with grace and peace. They are the two names which the Holy Ghost teaches every one in whom He dwells. By this divine Person indwelling we say Father to God, and we are told in 1 Corinthians xii. that no one can say Lord to Jesus without Him.

I think we may conclude that when we are following the leading of the Spirit we shall find ourselves saying Father to God and Lord to Jesus, and that when we are neglecting to own God as Father and Jesus as Lord, we are not led by the Spirit. Divine Persons ever take the lead in our hearts and minds when we walk in the Spirit, and divine things are thus ever subordinate to divine Persons in our souls, as indeed they ought to be.

Divine love and goodness and care of us

are always found in the Father, and divine grace, power, wisdom, and direction are at all times available toward us in the Lord. The gospels of Matthew and John give us the Father in the way of care and love. The greater portion of Matthew applies to a people of God while they are on the earth and passing through a scene of hostility, trial, and need. We who are a heavenly people shall need this aspect of the Father no more when with and like Christ in heavenly glory. How blessed it is to have it while we are here, and how important it is to appreciate it and diligently ask our Father for every need. How wonderfully He cares for us, and may we not say only allows the difficulties of the path as occasions in which we may prove His faithfulness with thanksgiving and praise. How could we as God's children go through this world doing the will of God without the Father's care, and how necessary it is for that freedom of spirit from things here which precedes an entrance into life beyond death through the death of God's Son, where the Father's love is known and divine Persons enjoyed. The Father's love revealed in the Son, as in John's gospel, will be our eternal portion. All of John that is held, known and enjoyed now will be enjoyed eternally when actually and bodily with and like the Son as Man. May

we cherish the name of Father more and more, and so keep on good terms with the Holy Ghost.

Then surely the Spirit in us delights to enable us to bow to Jesus as the One supreme spiritual authority during this the time of His absence and rejection. We have thus an opportunity and a privilege which we shall never have again. Satan is dead set against this and has succeeded in influencing men to usurp the place in the christian profession which God has given to Jesus and of which He alone is worthy. The confession of Jesus as Lord, sincerely made by each one to the Lord, is ever accompanied by the realisation and enjoyment of salvation from the power of Satan. This great enemy has only one master in manhood, a Man who overcame him completely when here and who has all power over him now, a power wielded by the Holy Ghost in those who truly own Him their Lord. How blessed to have such an one to appeal to in all things which occur in the christian profession, or in meetings, which we feel are not right. How often the word "Lord" occurs, as applied to Jesus, all through the epistles, and how happy we are when His authority is sincerely owned and obeyed in and by the Spirit. May we so walk in the Spirit that we may be found constantly

saying Father to God, and Lord to Jesus. Divine things will then be held in proper order in our souls, and the path of God's will realised clearly in our circumstances. Thus we shall abound in faith, hope, and love, as known and connected with God our Father and Jesus our Lord.

THE TESTIMONY AND CURRENT MINISTRY.

. . . IN regard to your question : "What do you think is the special distinctive feature of the testimony since Mr. Raven's death ?" in my judgment, for some years after his departure there was nothing very distinctive, but for say the past twelve years or so the Old Testament has been very much to the front in prominent ministry. The interest in the Old Testament has seemed to be remarkably general. In many gatherings the public readings have been in the Old Testament. I am not impressed with any other very distinctive special feature of prominent ministry. I say "ministry" because I think we should distinguish between the idea of ministry and "the testimony." I know many are using the word "testimony" in the sense of what prominent gifted brothers are ministering, ap-

parently assuming that is what should be regarded as the testimony.

1 Corinthians iii. declares all ministry is given by the Lord to each one, and doubtless what the Lord gives through any one will be in harmony with and for the furtherance of the testimony. There has always been great diversity in this, both as to vessels and the ministry needed and suited for the moment, whereas the testimony is always the same in its real character, although presented in various aspects. In a word it is Christ, the second Man, and God as thus presented, and the whole world-to-come order of things displayed in heavenly glory.

No sooner had the first man fallen than the second Man was announced, and we may conclude that the second Man was the testimony from that moment. Testimony, I think, always refers to something made known before actual display ; so the second Man was ever before the Spirit in the prophets, before He actually came in the flesh, and now the second Man glorified is ever before the Spirit in those who are espoused to the heavenly bridegroom. I should judge of all ministry by the testimony, that is, God in Christ and all that is established in Him. When we understand what the testimony is we can form some judgment as to the true character of the ministry.

The testimony is presented in four distinct aspects in the New Testament :

(1) The testimony of God ; that is, I think, the testimony of God in Christ toward man to be received. It is really Christ as the Mediator, who gave Himself as the ransom. This is the gospel aspect which Paul declared by preaching.

(2) The testimony of our Lord, the new and only spiritual authority, in whom the kingdom of God is established at God's right hand on the Father's throne while the kingdom is in mystery. The faithful man is exhorted not to be ashamed of this authority in heaven in the rejected Man, when human authority is coming in amongst the saints.

(3) The testimony of "the Christ," the Head ; the One who now gives character to all that is of and according to God. A new order of man whose bride is now being prepared and about to be presented by Him to Himself.

(4) The testimony of Jesus ; the testimony of the Old Testament Jehovah in Manhood. This aspect of the testimony will be much to the front against Antichrist and the Beast, and is prominent therefore in the Revelation.

All these aspects of the testimony refer to Christ in His present glorified condition and position while hidden, but in view of future

display. The Spirit has never ceased to call attention to this glorious Man, this divine Person, whether in type, figure, shadow, or illustration, and all ministry by whomsoever ministered, may be tested by this standard.

Mr. Darby gave out the whole scope of the truth relating to God in Christ and the new order of things in Him. Mr. Stoney and Mr. Raven came on to give the practical working out of Mr. Darby's teaching. Others are being used to open further details as to what is set forth in Christ in mystery now, and about to be displayed in glory. May we all have grace to contribute to this knowledge, which in Paul's estimation was transcendent, and minister that which will make the true testimony better known.

THE SPIRIT OF A MAN.

. . . THE spirit of a man is much referred to in the Old Testament. Man as a being is composed of spirit, soul, and body, and his spirit is doubtless the highest part, and is nothing less than the breath of the Almighty God. This places man in direct relation to God, his Creator, in a way which does not apply to any other creature, and makes God indispensable to him. . . . When man sinned it

was in his spirit that he fell from the uninterrupted consciousness of God as his Creator, and was henceforth dominated in his spirit by the visible and material. Thus he has become a materialist in his ideas. He cannot recover himself to his primitive condition, and so God announced another Man at once, the woman's seed, by whom through redemption and the indwelling Spirit of God believers are restored to the consciousness of God in Christ, in their spirit. . . .

Practically and experimentally one's spirit is always according to the influence it is under at the moment. Therefore it is most important that we should ever keep the One before us . . . who as a Man ever was when here, and is now, in a right spirit.

"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." How can we be unmoved by what is here apart from having the Lord before us? When He is the one object, in purity of heart, we are supported by the Holy Ghost controlling our spirit according to God.

Let us watch the effect any one or anything has on our spirit in regard to the one object that the Father and the Holy Ghost ever set before us. No object save the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, has that effect on our spirit . . . which enables us to exercise a right

influence on those with whom we come in contact. We are sure to affect others in the way we ourselves are affected in our spirit. What a blessing it is to have a divine Person indwelling us to keep us consciously in touch with the Son and the Father. All else must be subordinate to this.

WORKING *OUT* WHAT GOD WORKS *IN*.

. . . ALL our circumstances are over-ruled, if not directly ordered, by an almighty, all-wise hand, but in the day of grace everything is in view of the wonderful work which God is accomplishing in our souls, for eternal display in glorified bodies. Therefore our main concern should be to faithfully and obediently work *out* what God works *in*. This alone is real obedience according to this the Spirit's day. On believing the gospel, the Holy Ghost is given to indwell us; a divine Person, who is truly God, and by whom God works in those who are born again, born of God, children of God, reproducing in them that which has been here already in the Person of His Son. All outward circumstances are subsidiary to this; therefore our great concern need not be as to the circumstances them-

selves so much as obedience to the work of God within us.

The majority of believers seem to be on the line of outward control, and are absorbed with external considerations. This is seldom or never happy. The great inquiry with us all should be in the words of Elihu to Job, "that which I see not teach thou me," for all we pass through is under God our Father's hand for the education of souls in Christ as the revelation of God, who is the Father of our spirits, to bring them into line with Himself that we may be partakers of His holiness. Therefore we are entitled to regard everything as for our profit, our present and eternal profit. In view of our soul's education, our High Priest was made perfect through suffering, and has become the originator of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. Everything has been provided in Christ and can be effected in us by the inward working of God Himself by the Spirit. . . . We have always abundant resources in the highly exalted Lord, who was perfectly obedient to the utmost point, for the working out what God works within, and this is our salvation, realised in deliverance from all the workings of self.

HIS PLACE OURS, WE OF HIM.

IT is a great thing to be intelligent in what God is doing in our souls by His word and His Spirit through our Lord Jesus Christ at the present time.

All external circumstances and occurrences, all our bodily ailments and weaknesses, are under God's hand made to contribute to the wondrous work of God going on in secret between each one and God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit ; and will every bit come out in heavenly glory, and qualify us to reign on the throne of the universal King, as a royal family, and as His body and bride.

We need confidence in God our Father and our Lord Jesus as to the particular outward circumstance, the measure of bodily strength, and character of inward working, which they consider necessary for the promotion of this wonderful new-creation work, and spiritual growth. We need wisdom to act in harmony with it, so as not to hinder it ; we need patience to endure the process which these divine operators think well to use.

We need to contemplate Jesus as the Apostle in whom all that has to be wrought in us is presented objectively. We need to surrender our souls entirely into the hands of our great

High Priest, who knows so well how to handle them for the attainment of the divine purpose in us. We now belong to a new order of man in whom God, and the kind of man who is according to God, is set forth. We are exhorted to consider this Apostle and Priest of our profession. God's design for man is fully set forth in Him. "A little lower than the angels"; this He has been, and this for the moment we have to be. "Crowned with glory and honour"; this He is now, and soon we shall be. "Over the works of God's hands," universal dominion; this He waits to share with us. "All things in subjection to him"; this we share, and it is the purpose of the millennium.

Furthermore, we are His brethren, of His stock, sanctified by Him as the Sanctifier. We are His assembly for Him to sing praises in. We are put into the same path of faith: "I will trust in him." And we are His offspring, to be with Him and like Him for ever. He gives us the word of God for our souls at any moment, which if acted on will guide us into the rest of God in our souls now. What a mercy to have soul rest in such a scene as this. He has suffered everything here that obedience to the will of God involves in passing through such a world. He therefore understands us perfectly, and feeds us according

to the integrity of His heart, and guides us by the skilfulness of His hands.

What a teacher we have; what an education we are having; what a destiny awaits us. Let us then come boldly to the throne of grace; let us run the race with patience, knowing that we are sure to arrive shortly at the same place where our Forerunner is now.

WHAT IT IS TO BE GATHERED IN THE LORD'S NAME.

. . . I HAVE no doubt that the Lord allows things to occur which are beyond any one's competency in order to cast us on Himself; not only as individuals in our personal circumstances, but as those who take the ground of being gathered together in His name. It is so easy to assume that we are gathered together in His name in sincerity, when really it is only the so-called "Brethren's" form of meeting which is adopted as being a more scriptural and simple way.

Being gathered together in His name involves much more than this, and in days like these, when everything is so imitated, without personal exercise and faith, it requires nothing less than calling "on the Lord out of

a pure heart," that is, out of an unmixed, individual affection to the Person of the Lord. There is to us "one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." He is the same Lord in every place, and the Holy Ghost in every true believer in every place never fails to answer to Him. Therefore in every place there is the one and same Lord to call upon, and the same Holy Spirit to enable us to do it. When things occur in other gatherings in other places than where we reside, we need to remember that the same Lord is there to whom we can and ought to appeal where we are. Confidence in His faithfulness and appealing to Him, is our unfailing resource and preservation from anxiety, which is always misleading, especially in regard to divine things.

When I hear of individuals in other gatherings doing what I feel to be inconsistent with the Lord, I have to remember that the Lord is there, and is faithful and sufficient to deal with the matter where it is. Also I have to consider that I may not know the facts, and if at all anxious I must act as directed by our Apostle: "Let your requests be made known to God," and then I have the "peace of God" instead of my anxiety.

The Lord is our only resource in these last days as to all matters of gathering together

all matters of public service and local discipline, and all matters of a spiritual character, whether as to meetings or as to our individual behaviour. We have the sects on the one hand, where human authority is distinctly recognised, and on the other hand, meetings assuming to be gathered to the Lord's name without any sense of subjection to unseen spiritual authority. We therefore need most seriously and prayerfully to consider how far we are each one owning the Lord Jesus as our one and only authority, and the only bond of our fellowship, and of course as the same One in every place. The recognition of this saves one gathering from interfering with another, or one gathering acting independently of another. All who are indwelt by the one Spirit are responsible to the one Lord, and such are divinely intended to so meet together and so act that the rejected and absent Lord Jesus may have a circle or spiritual sphere on earth where He can exercise His kingdom authority and sway during His absence, and His rejection by the world. The few in the path of separation are separated to the Lord to give Him His place in present subjection to His authority as wielded by the Holy Ghost.

THE FATHER.

. . . . GOD is now known to us as the Father ; that particular Person in the Godhead who is the source and spring of everything : "One God and Father of all, and in us all" (Eph. iv. 6) ; "to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we FOR him." (I Cor. viii. 6.) This God is now not only THE Father, but He is OUR Father, and His Spirit in us is the witness that we are His children, "and if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." We are saluted at the opening of nearly every epistle with grace and peace from God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. We are invited to behold the manner of the love bestowed upon us, in that we are the called children of God, destined to be with and like His Son for ever in heavenly glory.

The most prominent, and indeed the peculiar feature of the mission of Jesus as recorded in John's gospel is the declaration of the Father's name, and the glorification of Him on the earth. This was carried out by faithfully presenting God the Father as the source of everything, as the giver of everything. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." "The Father loves the Son, and sheweth him all things that

himself doeth." The Father gave the Son authority to lay down His life. The Father has given us as a love gift to the Son; indeed, in every particular the Father was always put forward as the source of everything. This should greatly interest each member of the heavenly family. . . . How blessed to have all our ideas of God from the Son, the Word made flesh, the only begotten Son. . . . We thus know God as love itself, and are prepared for the understanding of His ways. We need ever to consider God's ways with us in the light of who and what He *is*, for He cannot deny Himself. All He does is necessarily consistent with who and what He is as revealed in the Son. . . .

The knowing God as Father in the Son by the Holy Ghost prepares us for the realisation in the details of our daily path of the Father who cares for us as the One who over-rules and orders all the circumstances of His children, and turns all things to account as the Father of our spirits in the holy discipline of love, that we may be partakers of His holiness. The Father in John's writings is known in the Son by the indwelling Comforter, and answers our spiritual affections. The Father in Matthew's gospel is a most merciful provision for us while here, and enables us to maintain separation from the world and its

associations. Myriads of angels are at the Father's command. The Son could have had more than twelve legions to defend Him if He had asked for them: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" "Do not err, my beloved brethren. *Every* good gift and *every* perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." May we in every difficulty and in every need wait upon Him and expect from Him. Thus we shall be saved from disappointment, and get what is good for us, soul satisfying and in harmony with the Father's purpose with us. . . . The days are difficult, but they furnish us with a fine opportunity for proving the reality of the name of Father. . . .

All this will help us to be more subject to Jesus as Lord in the kingdom, and to know Christ Jesus better as Head in life beyond death.

THE EDUCATION AFFORDED BY THE CHRISTIAN PATHWAY.

. . . All scripture seems to be more or less in view of the day of the Lord. A large portion of the holy writings describe man and man's day. . . yet I think this is done to shew

the grand contrast of the second Man and His day. Every bit in any one according to God was produced by the Spirit of the second Man, and it is not difficult to see the difference in one and the same individual between what was natural and what was spiritual. Some, indeed, of the Old Testament characters were remarkably free from the exhibition of the first man, but every one was allowed to shew that in himself he was only a man. The natural order comes on first, yet it is only suffered to go on in view of the spiritual.

Evidently it was always the divine intention to supersede the first creation and the natural order of man and things. God is pleased to use the natural order and natural circumstances as a school in which to discipline those whom He has taken up in grace for divine teaching. Had it been possible to have been put into heaven by some Almighty act without coming into the natural order, we should have known nothing as we are intended to know it. We usually learn by contrast, and our knowledge of sin, sorrow, trouble and difficulty is succeeded by the knowledge of righteousness, joy, peace, and victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The second Man, although a divine Person in the Godhead, as the Son and a Man of a new and heavenly order was born of woman,

subject to His parents, learned obedience by the things He suffered, and had every experience that a holy life and perfect obedience to the will of God involved in passing through this world. We may therefore conclude that the believer's circumstances are either ordered or over-ruled of God, in harmony with the inward work of His Spirit, and both work together toward the education of our souls in the moral and spiritual character of the second Man, a Man who is in every particular according to God, and a Man in whom God can only be known in a true way.

It is therefore our privilege to accept everything from the hand of God our Father down to the smallest incident of daily life as necessary for our instruction in Christ. It is one thing to kneel down and devoutly and sincerely ask God to lead us on in our souls and give us more spiritual prosperity, and quite another to accept all that comes as from His hand and as His way of answering our desires.

The path of a believer through this world is not by any means a meaningless, haphazard thing. God's children are the subjects of God's purpose. He has a definite end in view for each one, and a distinct way with each one. What Christ was here shews us God's way for us; what Christ is now as the glorified One shews us God's purpose for us. . . . It

has pleased God to put a man through every kind of experience in order that we may be assured of the practicability of all that is enjoyed, and be encouraged in the present and eternal gain of it. . . .

Whatsoever things were written aforetime are for our instruction, and to encourage us to bring all our matters to God our Father, to wait upon and for Him. The one remedy for anxiety is to let our requests be known to God, for the peace of God thus given displaces it. . . . We are in a wonderful school ; we are under a marvellous Teacher ; we are being educated in eternal lessons. The love of God our Father makes everything work toward our spiritual and eternal profit. We have a Man who is a divine Person as our ideal. We have the same One as Lord for our refuge from Satan, self, and the world. We have Jesus the Son of God for our sympathising, succouring High Priest. We have Christ the Head as the embodiment of the whole mind of God. We have God for our Father in the Son for love, and for almighty faithful care by myriads of angels. We have a divine Person indwelling us who is able to lead us into all these wondrous things, and this knowledge of divine Persons.

. . .

SPIRITUAL CHASTITY.

IT is surely fitting that those who are of the body and bride of Christ should be interested in that which interests Him. While we are here there is the constant tendency to run our minds on that which is interesting to *ourselves*, and the more we find this supported by scripture the more we are liable to be encouraged to pursue it. No doubt this line has its place, because we have spiritual needs which must be met, yet all that meets the need of our souls should be regarded as a means to an end rather than the end itself. I have been much affected by our apostle's solicitude in 2 Corinthians xi. . . . What pressed most on the apostle's heart and mind was that which the whole of his apostleship was in view of, namely, a bride for Christ out of the scene of His rejection. "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to *one* husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

These words are not only written to the church of God, but also to those who were underrating the one Christ had chosen to

be the minister of all that which had His bride in view. We need to take heed to this admonition, and to keep the end in view of all gift and ministry which the Head may give at any time.

Apostolically, Paul espoused all the saints from Pentecost until the Lord returns to one Man, Christ, in view of the presentation to Him in present spiritual chastity. . . .

The great end of all the Father's counsels, the great end of all the work of God in souls, the great end of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and of all meetings, preachings, and teachings, is to secure and present this chaste virgin to Christ.

Surely there never was and never will be a woman to compare with this. All the saints during the heavenly Bridegroom's absence will be required to form this bride, all for the love and joy of His heart, and for the adornment of His glorious Person as the second Man.

What place will the thousand and one things which are engrossing believers now have at that presentation to Himself ? Keeping the end in view enables us to have a right judgment of what should be pursued now. The craft of Satan has ever been to substitute something for that which God has before Him. A visible piece of fruit was preferred to the invisible God ; so now the visible

system of things, misnamed Christianity, etc., is preferred to the unseen, heavenly Man.

Satan is transformed as an angel of light, and his ministers as the ministers of righteousness, and what for? Just as of old, to divert from the unseen; and now from the Man to whom we are all apostolically espoused, and about to be married, and displayed as His very own, exclusively His own, before the whole universe.

This grand, heavenly vision exposes all the subtlety of Satan, and makes all appear as dross in the glorious light of our glorious future.

May we pay more earnest heed to these last three or four chapters in 2 Corinthians, where our apostle beseeches us personally to be true to Christ, our Man, our eternal Husband.

This world is only suffered to go on for the sake of that wondrous work in souls which is securing and fitting each one and all to be the suited companion of the second Man.

THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES.

I HAVE been much exercised some time to write to you, hoping thereby to encourage you all in the path of faith in these difficult times. You are often in my thoughts as a

gathering, and mentioned in my prayers, especially those young in the faith among you.

I have been much impressed with the divine suitability of each of the epistles to those saints who were addressed in each one. Especially is this so in the Thessalonian epistles. It is generally considered that they were quite young converts in all the freshness of uncorrupted spiritual affections. Divine Persons were such a reality to them, that they could be addressed as "in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." . . .

How happy indeed it is when God as Father and Jesus as Lord are in the ascendancy in every heart, over and above everything visible and material in the power of the Holy Ghost. How suitable is the ministry of the return of the Lord Jesus to such, and it is not difficult to see that this theme is paramount in both epistles. The return of the Lord Jesus was not at all to them an event to occur, but the expectation of a Person who held a very distinct place in their faith and affections.

As yet the Person had not been displaced by things of any kind. . . They were here just for two things, to serve a living God as known in a risen Jesus, and a true God as known in His Son, and while serving such a God to await His Son, even Jesus, from heaven.

They were clearly expecting Jesus, God's Son, from heaven. Are we? There is great danger of postponing the Lord's return in our minds, because nearly two thousand years have rolled along since His return was first announced.

The worldliness and usurpation of spiritual authority, so widespread in the christian profession, is largely due to the thought that "my lord delayeth his coming." A true and real expectation of our Lord's coming will affect our every thought and movement. This first mention of the Lord's return in this first epistle is much more than the expectation of an event. It is the waiting for an absent Person. There are, indeed, aspects of Christ's presence in a spiritual way by the Spirit, but that is not what is meant here. He is indeed absent actually and bodily, and the hope of His return involves the sense of His absence. May we all feel His absence more, and be more in the hope of His return. There are two necessary things for practical, faithful testimony. May we not apply to ourselves what is here said of these young believers? We are here to serve God and wait for His Son, as our Deliverer from the wrath which will come on this corrupt Christendom after we are gone.

We have in these epistles much instruction

as to the character and effect of the Lord's return, for it is presented in different ways. At the end of chapter ii. these exemplary servants say, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of boasting? are not ye also before our Lord Jesus at his coming?" Surely this way of regarding the results of service accounts much for their spirit and manner of service as recorded in chapter ii.

At the end of chapter iii. the Lord's return is connected with love and holiness; or rather love and holiness are in view of God the Father's approval at the Lord's return.

The manner and effect of the Lord's return in regard to our bodies is beautifully unfolded in chapter iv. We do well to meditate upon it, for we all need the comfort which this special revelation was given to minister to us. What a blissful moment that will be when we are all taken away together to meet the Lord in the air and be for ever with Him and like Him.

In chapter v. we have quite another aspect of the Lord's return, and a very solemn one as regards those who have formed the christian profession without Christ. In self-confidence they will be pursuing their wilful way when sudden destruction comes upon them.

The contrast of believers with such should greatly affect us. "Ye are sons of light and

sons of day ; we are not of night nor of darkness." The practical conclusion is that we should not be like those who are in darkness, but watch for the Lord and not be carried away with the popular current. The way we are exhorted in these verses is most touching and should be valued and heeded.

The second epistle is solemnly instructive as to the doom of Christendom, and all those individuals who have refused to obey the gospel. The climax of the apostasy after we are with the Lord shews what man is capable of, and what is the effect of privileges and benefits on those who refused the gospel.

The instruction as to the Lord's return in these two epistles was addressed to young believers and is no doubt most suitable and necessary for such ; but however old we may be, let us not neglect the teaching here given, so that our Lord's return may be a real expectation with us and have its proper effect upon us. . . .

THE MIND AND THOUGHTS.

. . . WHAT you mention as to mind and affection is important. I have no doubt that the mind is the avenue to the heart. All evil or good begins with thoughts, and the longer

the mind dwells on a thought the more hold it gets, until eventually the spirit and the heart or the affections are laid hold of by that which was but a thought at the commencement. We may therefore appreciate the importance of the apostle's counsel in Philippians iv. as to what to do with our thoughts. We do well to ask ourselves, Now is this that I am thinking on true, noble, just, or right, pure, amiable, of good report, is there any virtue, or praise in it? If not, dismiss it; turn from it in mind to Christ, the blessed Head in whom every divine and right thought has its place. . . .

The spirit of a man being the breath of the Almighty makes him capable of receiving ideas, thinking them over, and giving them out. Man was thus intended to be a being with whom God could converse. Satan has robbed Him of this possibility in Adam, but, blessed be His name, He has recovered it in Christ. We have to mind what thoughts we entertain. Right thoughts will find their object and answer in God in Christ, and therefore thoughts which distract from Christ should be refused: The refuge from them is Christ, the second Man, the heavenly Man, at the right hand of God. . . .

I am glad you have been reading Colossians, for it gives us right thoughts as to the Person

of the Son of the Father's love. . . . He is the image of the invisible God. He is the Firstborn of all creation. He is the universal Creator. He is before all. He is the Head of the body, the assembly. He is the beginning. He is the Firstborn from the dead. He is the Reconciler of us and of all things to the Godhead. All the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him. He is the subject of all ministry, and God's intention in this day is to make Him known in the saints as the hope of all that will be displayed in the day of glory.

Chapter ii. brings the saints in who compose His body, and gives us thoughts in which to think of ourselves, and of all saints, according to Christ. If I think of Christ according to what is said of Him in chapter i. and of the saints according to what is said of them in chapter ii., I have my mind on things above where the Christ sitteth, and not on things on the earth. I know the saints of whom these things are said are personally on the earth, and hence the "above" referred to is a morally "above," not exactly positionally, as "heavenly places" in Ephesians.

The more these precious thoughts are thought on, the more will the spiritual affections be found according to them. Therefore I think that chapters iii. and iv. give the practical

result of the mind being formed by the thoughts given in chapters i. and ii., otherwise the conclusions and exhortations in these later chapters would take the form of legal doing instead of being the outflow of the ideas of the new man "renewed into full knowledge according to the image of him that has created him," in which there is no national distinction, no religious distinction, no educational distinction, no civil distinction, but Christ, the second Man, displacing the first man in our minds, then in our hearts, the Man who is everything and in every one.

Practical conduct follows the soul being formed morally by these wonderful thoughts admitted through the mind, and in meditation and prayer finding their way into the affections. Christian conduct is thus the spontaneous outflow of a moral condition, formed by the reception of divine thoughts, and by the Spirit. . . .

It is remarkable that in an epistle so much occupied with Christ as the Head, and the saints as His body, the apostle's great desire was that they might "walk worthy of the *Lord* unto all pleasing." . . . This again confirms, what may be gathered from many scriptures, that the realisation of the kingdom, indicated by the word "*Lord*," is preliminary to and necessary for any true understanding

of Christ and the church. Subjection to divine, spiritual authority must precede spiritual intelligence in Christ as Head and the new order of things associated with Him. Christ is our life; our life is hid with Him in God. Subjection of spirit to Him as Lord is the way into this life, for it is through His death. . . .

Let me encourage you all to pray much, both privately and publicly. The Lord is not limited to our prayers, but it is His way for us.

. . . LET us ever remember that a divine Person indwells us, and is grieved when we neglect His object under any influence whatever.

Divine things, however blessed in their place and important for our intelligence and instruction, are not after all divine Persons, who are intended for our spiritual affections. Affections are of necessity reciprocal and therefore must have *persons*. Things never return affection, however much may be bestowed on them.

In the christian revelation of God we have divine Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The mission of the Holy Ghost is to glorify the Son in our hearts, and to make known the Father to us in the Son. There

is no knowledge to compare with this, and it is a necessity to all who are born of God, for full joy.

May our God and Father and our Lord Jesus be more and more to us in and by the Holy Ghost.

THE KINGDOM.

. . . WE are doubtless in the last days, the difficult times, where men in the christian profession are lovers of themselves, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. We need not, therefore, wonder at the general confusion and disorder and prevailing lawlessness. On this account it behoves the faithful all the more to appreciate the blessed fact of the kingdom of heaven established in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Father's throne, and the kingdom of God in connection with the Holy Ghost in all true believers. How thankful we ought to be that there is supreme spiritual authority in existence in the Lord Jesus, and available to each of us on the principle of faith and by the indwelling Spirit, by whom we are able to say "Father" to "God," and "Lord" to Jesus.

The kingdom is as really established in the Lord Jesus now as it will be in the coming

day, only it is now in mystery and carried on in a hidden spiritual way. We are apt to overlook its importance and our great and constant need of it, and to assume competency to take part in meetings and to engage in service because we are believers, overlooking the necessity of subjection to the spiritual authority of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Ghost. The necessity of conversion for the kingdom of heaven is clearly stated in Matthew xviii. ; and John iii. affirms that no one can enter the kingdom of God without new birth. Thus conversion and new birth are both in view of the kingdom, while many scriptures shew that the kingdom in its present form and character is absolutely necessary for entrance into life, and for an answer to Christ the Head and to the church, His body.

So long as believers are here they must carry about with them wherever they go bodies compassed with various infirmities and sinful flesh. We are not able to control ourselves according to the will of God, and therefore need salvation constantly from the power of Satan, the influence of the world, and the lusts of the flesh. The importance of the kingdom is manifest all through the New Testament. The blessed Lord preached it Himself ; the twelve and the seventy also. Peter had the keys of it given to him, and Paul refers

to it in nearly every epistle, and preached it in his own hired house at the close of his life. This fact gives great interest and importance to the Epistle to the Romans which . . . appears to be mainly on the line of the kingdom of God. . . . Paul speaks of fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God who had been a comfort to him. The new converts at Thessalonica suffered for this kingdom. We are exhorted to seek it first and the supply of all our needs will follow.

May we know more what it is to be so subdued by and to the Lord Jesus that our spirit may always yield to the leading of the Spirit of God.

THE HIGH PRIEST.

. . . OUR outward circumstances are divinely ordered and over-ruled in harmony with the work of the Spirit within, and hence we always need the sympathy, succour, and support which the Son of God, as our great High Priest, is ever able and willing to give to all who are willing to come to Him for it. The natural independency of the flesh is our great and constant hindrance to our availing ourselves of this gracious provision, and hence we must all have something which humbles us and brings home to us the weakness of

the flesh as well as its utter sinfulness. Against this weakness priesthood is provided. We are indeed weakness itself against the tempter, but our all-sufficient Priest has perfectly overcome him. We must remember that being born of God and indwelt by the Holy Ghost we have to answer in mind, heart and spirit, and in walk, work and ways to what God is as set forth in His Son in Manhood as the Apostle of our profession. What God has to say to each one is expressed in His Son, now a Man, and thus the *Word* has taken a personal form. No lower standard than what God is, as revealed in the Son, can be allowed, and our Priest is well able to save us from everything in thought, word or deed which is contrary to what God is.

We have to learn how constantly we need the Priest for this because of our weakness and the ease with which we succumb to influences which are all contrary to God as love, and which appeal to natural desire. Without priesthood we cannot possibly answer to God. In this the imitation in the christian profession is instructive, for it is maintained that no one can have to do with God without a priest. This is true, but how foolish of mere men, who need Him even as others, to assume the place which only the Son of God can fill.

Our profession is simply who and what God is as announced in the Son in Manhood. None save a divine Person in the Godhead could possibly reveal God, and Jesus became a Man in a body prepared for Him for this very purpose. Our Priest's lips are full of knowledge as to God, and by His instruction and support are we able to profess the truth as to God. Our Priest has not only suffered on the cross from God in bearing His righteous judgment against what we are in ourselves, and what we have done, but He also suffered from Satan and from man the totality of their opposition to what God is, as so faithfully expressed in the life of Jesus here, and above all in His death.

While the natural sphere around us gives abundant evidence of God's power and skill as Creator, it is only in the Son, a Man of an entirely new order, that God as love is known. Against this blessed light of God the tempter is dead set. He began by falsifying God in Eden, and all his temptations are to the same end even now. We cannot get the truth as to God from circumstances nor natural feelings, for sin has come in. The Priest is the only one who can teach us the truth as to God. He is indeed "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. . . . For in that he himself hath suf-

ferred being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. Wherefore . . . consider," study, attend to "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, · Jesus," the Jehovah of the Old Testament in manhood.

Satan in the wilderness and in Gethsemane used all his power and influence to induce this blessed One to entertain some thought of God contrary to the truth, and to accept something as a substitute for God. Here he found a Man who was more than a match for him, and having suffered every temptation He became practically and experimentally qualified as a Man for the office of saving God's people from all error as to God. We have to learn by many failures how much we need our Priest against the tempter's insinuations as to God when He is pleased to test us. We are exhorted to hold fast our profession that God is love, God is good, God is righteous, yea, always right. May we present Him better as taught and supported by our Priest, who so faithfully and truthfully presented God when here, and is our Priest in order that this may be continued in testimony until He comes and be displayed in the world to come.

I would encourage each one to attend to the Priest as the only way to maintain a true profession of what God truly is before men who are led astray by Satan. May the true

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light of God in Christ shine brightly in and through each one to His praise and glory.

ABILITY BY THE SPIRIT TO MEDITATE UPON CHRIST.

. . . ONE thing is certain, that the Father has given all things into the hand of His Son, in His love to His Son, and has made Him Lord, Head, Priest, and Object, in order that He may carry into effect all the Father's counsels. We are sure that this divine Person, now a glorified Man, is fully qualified to do all that is needed for the accomplishment of all the will and purpose of God. Therefore, on our side everything hangs on the place we give our Lord Jesus in our minds and hearts, for another divine Person dwells in us and supports us, leads us, guides us, and comforts us, according as we give the same place to our Lord Jesus, in our minds and hearts, that God the Father has given Him actually and bodily, in heaven on the Father's throne, at God's right hand.

The epistles describe at great length and in considerable detail the position and characteristics of the glorified Jesus, so that we may by the Spirit meditate on God's thoughts of

Christ as there recorded, and as a result of such meditation in prayer be able to give the absent One a home in our hearts, and thus be able to apprehend the vast domain of which He is Head even before the time of display comes on.

How we ought to value the ability given us by the Spirit to meditate on the Son as the object of the Father's love, and the centre of all His counsels. Also, how precious it is to have a Man set before us who, as God's first-begotten, is the beginning of such a new order of man as will eventually people the new heaven and the new earth according to what God is. It is always profitable to think of Christ according to who He is as a divine Person in the Godhead, and according to what He is as the second Man, the last Adam ; a Man in whom we can read the full truth as to God and the Father, and what the saints are as viewed in Christ and the Spirit. Two or three can be gathered together to the all-powerful name of the Lord Jesus, and where it is real have His presence by the Spirit in divine power for guidance and support. The same two or three may announce His departure from this life, and call Him to mind accordingly, and so have His presence in His present character of Son and Head of a new order of things. There is no gain in assuming

these things when the affections are away from Himself. It must be real.

May the Lord encourage you to go on with Himself, true to His word and name. You cannot follow the extent of the influence of your stand and separation, but you may be sure the Lord will not fail to use it. It is our privilege to let people see that He is enough for us absolutely.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE PERSONS.

. . . ALL true spiritual progress hangs on the place which the Person of Jesus our Lord has in one's heart, and mind, and spirit, and soul. We shall have bodies like His shortly, but meanwhile the great work of God in us is to form this blessed Person, the second Man, in each of our souls.

The babes in 1 John ii. are exhorted to let that abide in them which they had heard from the beginning. This exhortation indicates that we are intended to go on—right through—with the Person we began with, for it goes on to say, "If what ye have heard from the beginning abides in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which he has promised us, eternal life."

We all need, whatever our stage of spiritual

growth, to give earnest heed to this admonition, for there is a constant tendency with every one of us to give in our minds and hearts that place to divine things which exclusively belongs to divine Persons. Every one of God's children begins his spiritual history with the Person of Jesus, the Son of God. All else was quite subordinate to this blessed Person when we first truly believed and received the Spirit of God's Son and could say "Father" to God and "Lord" to Jesus. The subtlety of Satan is to substitute something for this Person in our spiritual affections, and the better the thing the more it suits the purpose of the one who is transformed as an angel of light for this peculiar opposition to Christ in the affections of God's children.

As God's children we are being educated in the Father's love to His Son and in God's thoughts of Christ, the second Man, the last Adam. Forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, knowledge of scripture, ministry, meetings, yea all christian privileges should simply be held and regarded as but means to an end, and this end is the knowledge of divine Persons. Doubtless the mass of God's children have got corrupted in their spiritual affections, and are not abiding in the Son and in the Father, divine Persons not having the ascendancy in their hearts and minds over

every one and everything here. Surely this paramount place is due to Him who gave His life for us, and due to Him exclusively, for neither persons nor things, however good, have done this for us, nor could they do so. Now in these last days it has pleased the Lord to put forth His mighty hand in the power of the Spirit and separate a few of His own from the whole condition of things in Christendom to Himself absolutely as the only One who remains holy and true. Holy, apart from all that is of man and contrary to God, and true to God in every feature of His character and conduct as a Man. It is in this character that He addresses the faithful in these last and closing days and we may conclude that His object in calling us into the separate path is that He may be absolutely everything to us without a thing beside.

The temptation which began in Eden and has continued to this day is ever to substitute something for God Himself. This is not less so now that God as Father is presented in His Son, a Man. The vital question, therefore, is not whether a thing is good or bad, right or wrong, but how does it affect my mind and heart in relation to God in Christ, in relation to the Son and the Father. Let us not plead for persons or things when they substitute divine Persons in our spiritual affec-

tions. They may be all right in their proper place, so long as in our affections we abide in the Person of the Son and in the Father. In order to this we must learn to feed on the death of Christ, the food which so nourishes our spiritual affections that we abide in Him and He in us. Abiding in Him we sin not ; abiding in Him we enjoy His love and the Father's love. This is the grand purpose for which we are gathered out into a separate path from all around us in the christian profession. It is not at all to make us a superior, a more correct company, of a more scriptural character. Our separation is neither real nor effective unless it be purely and only to Himself as the one and only Resource in these last days.

Whether we realise it or not, I am assured that the Lord Jesus Himself is the only Resource for all power, wisdom, grace, or love, in order to render a true testimony to the christian revelation of God as Father in the Son in a scene where mere man is exalted on every hand.

May the Lord give you all a genuine separation to Himself, and a true testimony to Himself, as everything that God desires in man, and all that any one needs. Thus may we impress every one with the greatness of Christ, the Son of God, the second Man.

So the first man will have no place either in our hearts or amongst us.

My brethren, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." I am very happy and contented, thank God. I can pray for the saints and write a little to them. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

WAITING ON THE LORD BEFORE MINISTERING THE WORD.

I FEEL that we are in great danger in these days of widespread knowledge and facilities for numerous meetings, of ministering from our knowledge in routine and habit. Occupation with divine Persons, patient waiting on and for the Lord in prayer, and meditation as led by the Spirit, should always precede the giving out the word, whether to individuals or to companies.

I feel assured that if this course were sincerely pursued much more good would be done; mere questionings would be avoided, and as saints we should understand one another better.

The word of God and prayer are two things which God has joined together, and let not man put them asunder. By the word God

speaks to us ; in prayer, if real, and in the Holy Ghost, we speak to God the Father, and to Jesus our Lord. . . .

Let us be much in prayer, listening to God in Christ, and only giving out what we have first received from a divine source in waiting on Him. So I think we shall be useful.

DEUTERONOMY XXXII. AND GOD'S WAYS WITH US IN THE PATH OF SEPARATION.

I HAVE thought much of the song of Moses in Deuteronomy xxxii. It is a most important chapter of instruction in what we all are in ourselves and in God's wonderful ways with us as His own beloved people. . . .

The history of those in the separate path is no exception. Think of the marvellous blessing through one and another bestowed from the Lord in the way of ministry the past eighty years. Has not this abundance of food made "Jeshurun" self-sufficient and insubject ? Has not the Lord allowed the enemy to oppress for this neglect of Himself, and always shewn Himself faithful to deliver when there has been the least real humbling before Him, and real obedience to Him ?

The world and the church present a sad spectacle to-day through the will and the pride of man. The faithful have a fine opportunity to stand for God and for Christ against all this exaltation of man. To do so requires that we seriously observe God's ways in the light of His purpose in Christ, and not be carried by anything visible or material. There is nothing more unreal than a life of sight, and appearances were never more misleading than to-day. Our God has worked out the great principles of His ways in the Old Testament, and has unfolded His glorious purpose in a glorified Christ in the New. . . .

The church is not independent of Israel, nor is Israel independent of the church. How we need both the ways and the purpose of God. It is a great blessing to be instructed divinely in these things. Thank God, there are still a few in the separate path. Only the Lord can bring us there in reality, and He only can keep us there. Let us, therefore, beware of self-sufficiency by reason of gift and abundance of knowledge. Let us think much of God and of Christ, and of the church as viewed in Christ. Let us think much of the love of God in its supremacy over everything contrary to itself, also of the love of the Father to the Son and to the sons in Him in all its holy joyfulness, and, not least by any means, let us think

much of the love of Christ, that wondrous love which passeth knowledge.

May we all abound in divine love, and in love to one another, and toward all men, and so have our hearts established in holiness before God and our Father. May the Lord preserve you all for Himself in holy, happy testimony, unspotted from the world.