

# Parish Papers eBook

## Parish Papers by Norman Macleod

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# Page 1

## THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIANITY.

### I.

#### *What is Christianity?*

This question refers to a matter of fact. I do not ask whether the Christian religion is true, but only, What is the Christian religion? What is that religion which has existed for eighteen centuries; which is professed by Christendom; and which has been more precious than life itself to millions who have died in its faith, and is so still to millions who possess it as their peace and joy?

But how are we to obtain a satisfactory reply to this question? Are we to examine the opinions of all the various “churches,” “sects,” or “bodies,” professing Christianity, in order to determine what it is they profess? If we adopted such a process of investigation as this, I believe we would reach, by a longer road, the very same point which may be reached by a shorter and more satisfactory process.

For I suppose it will be admitted that the Christian religion is what Jesus Christ and His apostles taught, and that we may rely upon the information conveyed to us in the New Testament as to the sum and substance of that teaching.

I do not even insist, as essential to my argument, upon the inspiration of Scripture, according to any theory whatever of that doctrine; but assume only that we have in the New Testament a true account of the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles, and that we are able, therefore, to ascertain from its pages what their Christianity was *as an historical fact*, with as much certainty, surely, as we can learn from the Koran what Mohammedanism was as taught by Mohammed, or from any work of philosophy what were the opinions of its author.

Now, if we read the New Testament with ordinary attention, we must, I think, be struck by one feature which is repeated in almost every page, and is manifestly the all-pervading spirit and life of its teaching,—that is, the peculiar place which Christ occupies in relation to all other persons mentioned there. This person, Jesus Christ, whoever He was, stands out prominently before every other *teacher* of Christian truth. The apostles speak of *Him*, point to Him, plead for Him, labour for Him. He is not the greatest Teacher merely among themselves, but the *only* Teacher, and they but His scholars, who glory in having nothing of their own to impart, and in being ministers, “stewards,” only of what they have received from Him their Master. The subject of all their preaching is this Person—not a system of morality, or doctrines, or truths, apart from, but embodied in Him who was *the Truth* and *the Life*—Jesus Christ. The text of all their teaching is, “God forbid that we should know anything among you save Jesus

Christ.” In order to see this, take up any epistle, and mark how often the name of Jesus Christ appears as the ever-present thought, the centre of every idea.

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Again, consider how this Person is inseparably connected with every motive, every duty, every joy and hope of the Christian as he is described in the New Testament. Christian love is there, not love merely in the abstract, (if such is in any case possible,) but love to Jesus Christ, and to all men because “in Christ” The grand question proposed is, “Lovest thou *me*?” Christian obedience is not obedience merely to a code of moral precepts, but to Jesus Christ and “*His* commandments.” Christian faith is not faith in “mysteries,” or things unseen, or truths revealed, though such faith may be Christian, but its essence is faith in Jesus Christ the living Person; the supreme command being, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” The Christian’s hope is “hope in Christ;” his joy, “joy in Christ;” his peace, “peace in Christ;” his labour, “labour in Christ;” his strength, “strength in Christ;” his life, “life in Christ;” his death, “death in Christ;” his immortality, “rising in Christ;” his salvation, “salvation through Christ;” and his heaven, “to be with Christ!” On the other hand, all that is evil and disastrous to the soul is summed up in being “without Christ.” To reject Christ, not to believe in Christ, to be enemies of Christ, to despise Christ, to be ignorant of Christ, to lose Christ, to be commanded at the last to depart from Christ—these are the characteristics of the wicked and lost: for “there is no other name given among men whereby man can be saved than the name of Jesus Christ.”

You will observe that I am not at present discussing what Christ has done for us, but what, as a matter of fact, Jesus Christ claimed from us and from all men, and recognised to be the religion which He came to establish upon earth. I repeat it, therefore, that whether these claims were founded on fact or fiction, whether the religion which He taught was true or false, in accordance with, or opposed to, the will of God, that nevertheless its sum and substance is *supreme love to Jesus Christ*.

Now, if this, or anything even approaching to this, is true, my reader will, I am sure, acknowledge that it is not possible to separate Christ from the Christianity of the New Testament. The person and the “religion” become, in fact, identical—so far at least that both must be received or rejected. That a code of morals may be extracted from the New Testament, and Jesus himself, as its centre, be put aside, is quite possible; or that the character of Jesus may be recognised as a perfect example of what He taught, a living embodiment of His “beautiful precepts,” is also possible, without recognising His claim to the supreme love and unlimited obedience of every human being; but the question still remains, whether this “philosophic” or “rational” system—*this* Christianity is really the Christianity taught by Christ, or by Peter, Paul, and John? I do not argue as to which “religion,” “system,” or “Christianity” is the best, but ask only a question of fact, Which

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do you candidly believe to be the Christianity of the New Testament? If you hesitate ere you reply to this question of historical fact, open again the New Testament, with a manly resolution to examine it, and obtain information, and ask its pages, *What is Christianity?* Read even such passages as the following:—John x., xiv., and xv.; Acts. first four chapters; the Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians—portions of Scripture which may be read almost in an hour or two. You do not require to master the whole world of truth which is there revealed, but only to notice the *Sun* of that world; and say, is it not faith in Jesus, love to Jesus, obedience to Jesus as to no one else in the universe except to God Almighty?

I at once frankly express my earnest conviction that this, if true, involves the truth of what are recognised to be the other “peculiar” doctrines or facts of Christianity—such as the divine, as well as holy and perfect character of the Person so loved;—His atoning work, as the grandest expression of His love to us, and that which most of all kindles love in us to Him;—the teaching of the Holy Spirit, through whom alone we, who are spiritually blind, can so perceive the spiritual character and glory of Jesus as to admire and love Him;—and prayer, by which we can hold actual, personal intercourse with, and thus come to know and love Jesus more and more from experience: these, I say, and other doctrines appear to me to be involved in the very idea that Christianity is supreme love to Jesus Christ. But I shall not consider any of them except one, the first and all-important, the very pillar and ground of the truth—viz., the divinity of Christ’s Person. Let us therefore inquire—

## II.

### WHO WAS JESUS CHRIST?

A more important question cannot be proposed for our consideration! Who is this, I ask with absorbing interest, whom I am commanded to honour as I honour the living God? Who is this who claims my unreserved faith, my unlimited obedience, my devoted love? Who is this who promises to pardon my sins through faith in His blood; to purify and perfect my nature through faith in His power? Who is this in whom I am to abide in life; into whose hands I am to commit my spirit, and the spirits of all who are dear to me, in the hour of death; whose voice is to call me forth from the grave when He comes again, and who is finally to judge me, and to determine my eternal condition?

That Jesus Christ *does* make those claims upon us, and those promises to us, is certain; and it is equally certain that they have been, and are, joyfully acquiesced in by the Christian Church. The question, then, which I have proposed for your consideration, is confessedly one of equal importance with the truth of Christianity. We cannot, with sincerity and intelligence, profess a willingness to examine into the nature of the

Christian religion, much less profess faith in it, and yet reject the consideration of the question regarding the Person of Jesus Christ as being unimportant or unnecessary.

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But before proceeding further in this inquiry, let me remind you, and be myself reminded, of the moral importance of *truthfulness*. I do not allude to the truthfulness which despises all hypocrisy in *word*, and seeks to maintain with sacred care an exact harmony between what is believed in the heart, and confessed with the lip; or which boasts, perhaps, of the honesty that never conceals a creed, however offensive its doctrines may be to others. Let us not undervalue this kind of honesty when real. But, alas! how often is it only apparent, while the real feeling is selfish vanity craving notoriety, or moral indifference which is insensible to the pain of either the existence or confession of unbelief. And thus where that truthfulness of character exists, which cannot give to others a false impression of what is really believed, how often is there wanting the kind of truthfulness, so much rarer and more difficult to attain, so much nobler and more important to possess, which seeks to harmonise not only profession with belief, but belief with truth itself. For it is in the innermost sanctuary of the spirit, into which no human eye can penetrate, and where truth, as a holy messenger sent from God, presents herself, seeking for admission to dwell there, and take possession of the soul's temple for ever,—it is *there* that the reality of a man's truthfulness, sincerity, and honesty must be tried and decided upon by the all-seeing Judge, who can alone search the heart. How do we deal there with what claims to be truth? With what spirit do we listen to her voice? With what care do we examine her credentials? These are questions settled in the secret of our own personal experience; and just as the process of investigation is conducted before the eye of conscience, can it be determined whether or not we are really honest. But as sure as there is in us a genuine truthfulness of spirit, it will, by a divine instinct, recognise truth when revealed. Like a string rightly tuned by God, the truthful soul will strike an harmonious chord with the note of truth wherever it sounds. The "single" eye will perceive the light from whatever quarter it shines. When, therefore, I ask my readers to consider, with sincerity and honesty, the teaching of the Scriptures regarding the Person of Jesus Christ, I crave from them that *kind* of honesty which is evidenced by the whole tone and spirit with which they deal with what *professes* to come from God, and what, therefore, claims their faith because it is true, and their love because it is good.

I. *Consider this question in the light of His own teaching.* By this I mean, read the Gospels, and from all Jesus said regarding Himself, say what impression did He intend to convey as to His own person. Remember I am not asserting the *truth* of His claims, but proposing merely to inquire into what His claims as a matter of fact were, in so far as we may fairly gather these from His own words.

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Nor do I dispute the possibility of giving a different meaning to His words, for I know, and most gladly acquiesce in the righteousness of the fact, that revelation is not demonstration, which necessarily overcomes even the truth-hater, but such evidence as by its nature may satisfy the truth-seeker. The criticism which is essential for our inquiry is that which will *receive*, and not *give* a meaning. With such a principle, let the readers peruse any one Gospel—especially the Gospel of St John—and in the presence of God say, Was it the intention of Jesus himself to teach that He was human only, or that He was divine also?

Now, to illustrate what I mean, and to aid the reader to follow out this first branch of Scripture evidence for himself, let us look, for example, at the Sermon on the Mount. This wonderful portion of our Lord's teaching is most frequently referred to by those who profess to admire the precepts of the gospel, but not its "doctrines," and to accept of Jesus as a teacher of morality, though rejecting Himself as divine. Yet is it possible to hear that sermon even without perceiving a consciousness on the part of the speaker of an authority, a power, a dignity, which, belonged to no mere creature? This is not so much brought forward in distinct doctrinal statements, but is *assumed* by Him, as that which gave to fact and doctrine all the additional authority which could be afforded by the lips of one who had come from God. Consider such words, for instance, as the following:—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Marvellous words indeed! Who is this, we naturally ask after hearing them, who at the general judgment is to be addressed by "many?" How should *He* be thought of at all amidst the awful solemnities of that day, and be singled out and appealed to as one of such authority and power? Who is this that is addressed as "Lord, Lord?" What "name" is this in which many prophesied, and by which many were able to cast out devils, and to do marvellous works? Who is this that utters the sentence, "Depart from *me*?" and who is He that such a sentence should be an object of dread, yea, the very climax of human woe? He who uttered these words was a poor man indeed, a Jewish artisan, at that moment seated on a grassy hill surrounded by many as poor and unknown as Himself! But did He wish to give the impression that He was nothing more? "The people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." No wonder! For what scribe—what teacher—what apostle—what mere man who ever lived had authority to utter such words as those we have just read! (Read also in connexion with this, Matt. xxv. 31-46.)



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Almost every chapter in the Gospels contains similar assumptions, on the part of Jesus, of a dignity which was divine. Think of the following assertions from the Gospel of John, every portion of which is irradiated by the glory of His person:—"The Father loveth the Son, and hath *given all things into his hand*. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and *he that believeth not the Son shall not see life*; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so *the Son quickeneth whom he will*. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: *that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the *voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live*." "Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. *He shall glorify me*; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. *All things that the Father hath are mine*; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast *given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him*. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, *and Jesus Christ*, whom thou hast sent."

Again I ask, What impression regarding His own dignity were such words as these intended to convey Consider them, and give an answer to God.

2. *Consider Christ's Person as it was seen by His enemies and friends.* Now, I bid you observe how both received from His words the very impression which I assume He intended to convey by them.

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His *enemies* did so, and alleged that He claimed to be Divine in the strictest sense of that word; accordingly they attempted to stone Him, and in the end put Him to death on the very ground that He was a *blasphemer*. “Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.” “I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them. Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and *because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.*” “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him. Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand.” “The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die,[A] because he made himself the Son of God.” “And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying. *He hath spoken blasphemy*; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands.”

[Footnote A: “And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put, to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death.”—LEV. xxiv. 16.]

Nor did the *friends* of Jesus endeavour to undeceive His accusers. They did not say, “You have misunderstood His meaning! He is not guilty of such blasphemy! He is a man like us, and does not claim to be one with God, as you understand Him to do.” Instead of this, they too recognised His claims as divine, and worshipped, loved, served, and preached Him accordingly. I will return to this part of the subject afterwards. I remind only the reader of it in passing.

But before the force of such teaching as this of our Lord’s can in any degree be appreciated, two things should be borne in mind: one is, the previous training of the Jewish nation with reference to the being and character of God; and the other is, the moral character of Jesus.

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As to the first of those points, remember only how, from the very beginning, God had revealed *Himself*—that men might know the One living and true God; and worship and serve Him alone with heart, soul, and strength. This was the lesson of all lessons. This was the mighty theme of all God's teaching and training of His people, from Adam to Christ, by patriarchs, kings, and prophets; by national blessings and national judgments; by captivities and restorations. On the other hand, the sin of all sins was idolatry; not the bowing down to stocks or stones merely, but the giving, in any degree, that glory to another which belonged exclusively to the One living and true God. Had not their whole history been determined by their adherence to God, or their falling away to idolatry? Enter, then, into the Jewish mind with reference to this training, think how hallowed God's name was above every other name—how enshrined it was in the very holy of holies of the national faith, and how it had become so only after a discipline of much suffering, prolonged through many centuries, until at last idolatry had been banished on the return from Babylon;—think! of this while you read those utterances I have quoted of a Jew to Jews. Do you wonder that they called Him a blasphemer? for so, indeed, He certainly was unless He was Divine.

But could such a one have been a blasphemer? Was it morally possible that He could have uttered what He did about Himself, unless it was true? To establish His high claims, it might be sufficient to appeal to His miracles, and assert that no such works of power and love could have been done but by one who verily had God with him; as He himself said,—“Believe me for the very works' sake. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.” Or I might appeal to the witness God gave to His Son at His baptism, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and, above all, when He raised Him from the dead, and thereby declared “Him to be the Son of God with power.” But, putting aside all this evidence, I ask you to contemplate *the moral character of Jesus*, and say, Is it not as impossible that such a person could have spoken untruly or blasphemously regarding God, as that God himself can be aught else than true and holy? Do not let us evade this awful question of Christ's character—He was an impostor unless he was Divine! Either Christ never uttered those things regarding Himself which are here recorded, and so the history which we have assumed as true is false in fact; or, having uttered them, He spoke falsehood, and was a blasphemer, or spoke the truth, and was Divine. To deny the Divinity of His Person is to deny the truth of His character.

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If any man replies that those sayings of Christ *may* be interpreted differently, then I ask, What impression did Christ *intend* to give? If He was a mere creature, how could He have used language to which it was *possible* to give such an interpretation as would imply Divinity? Only imagine any other man on earth daring so to speak that his language could, with difficulty be interpreted as not necessarily implying his assumption of Divine attributes! But Jesus certainly did so speak, and did give this impression to friend and foe; and He has left the same impression, in the form of a living faith, more indelibly on the mind of the Church than if it were engraven with a pen of iron on the rock for ever. If this impression is blasphemy. He himself, and none else, is to blame for having given it to the world.

3. Consider Christ's Person as it was seen *by the apostles*. What did *they* believe regarding Him? Yea or nay, did they recognise Him as Divine?

While quoting from their writings, I beg my readers to keep in mind the previous education of these remarkable men, in what may be termed the grand fundamental principle of the Mosaic legislation,—viz., the worship of the one living and true God.

But, remembering this, let us hear some of the things said by the apostles about Jesus of Nazareth.

We shall begin with *Paul*. His education was, if I may so speak, intensely Jewish. He was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” “After the strictest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee.” So devoted was he to “the religion of his fathers,” so entirely one in his views of Christianity with the priesthood and men of authority, both civil and ecclesiastical, in Judea, that he thus describes his feelings with reference to Jesus:—

“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and, being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities,” (Acts xxvi. 9-11.)

Paul had never seen Jesus while He lived on earth; yet suddenly, and to the utter astonishment of friends and foes, he becomes a believer in His name, and ever after, for thirty years, until his death, preaches that name as the only one given whereby men can be saved. Now, what did Paul say of the dignity of this Person? A full reply to this question can be given only by reading his epistles, and there seeing how saturated they are with the Divine Presence of Jesus in every thought, every doctrine, every command, and every hope; and how His name occupies a place which that of no mere creature could occupy without manifest blasphemy; and how his own past, present, and future were seen by him in the light of Christ, without whom he would have been most

miserable. But a very few passages, out of many, may be selected from two or three of his shortest letters, to illustrate his teaching. In writing to the Philippians, he says:—

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“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” (Phil. ii. 6-11.)

To the Colossians he writes:—

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath, delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: *for by him were all things created* that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; *all things were created by him, and for him*: and he is before all things, and *by him all things consist*: and he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence: for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell: and (having made peace through the blood of his cross) by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight,” (Col. i. 12-22.)

Once more, when addressing *Hebrews*, he says:—

“God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, *by whom also he made the worlds*; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and *upholding all things by the word of his power*, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they,” (Heb. i. 1-4.)

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Could Paul, I ask, have written in such language as this, or anything approaching to this, unless he *believed* Christ to have been divine, in the fullest sense of that word? But believing this with all his heart, his whole life and preaching were consistent with such a belief. He preached Jesus as the Person whom all men were to love and obey as God, confide and rejoice in as in God, and to whom they were to commit themselves, both soul and body, for time and for eternity, as to God. What he wished others to do, he himself did. For what was the source and strength of his life? "The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "I live; yet not I, Christ lives in me." "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." What was the one object of his holy ambition? "That I may win Christ." What was his heaven? "To be with Christ." And after thirty years passed in His service, and after having endured such sufferings as never fell to the lot of one man, so far from uttering the language of disappointment or regret, as of one whose early convictions had not stood the test of experience, but had failed to sustain him when most needed, he thus writes, with calm confidence and perfect peace, in his old age, and from a prison, to his dear friend and follower Timothy:—

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen," (2 Tim. i. 12, ii. 1-3, iv. 5-8, 16-18.)

Was that man an idolater and blasphemer,—the dupe of his own fancy,—deceived in his faith and hopes,—or was he the ignorant deceiver of others?



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Moreover, let it be remembered that with this mighty truth, as with a hammer, Paul went forth to destroy the idolatries of the world, and gave them such blows, that in Europe they finally tottered and fell. But did he then only substitute one idolatry for another?—did he preach to Greece and Rome love and obedience to a man, a better man, possibly, than any of the persons whom they worshipped, but still a mere creature like themselves? Hear Paul's memorable and glorious words to the Athenians, and believe this if you can;—

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,” (Acts xvii. 22-31.)

If from Paul we turn to the other apostles, we shall recognise in them the same convictions regarding the person of Jesus. Let us hear, for example, some of the declarations of the apostle John:—

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the *Word was God*. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things were made by him*; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, *which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. He was in the world, *and the world was made by him*, and the world knew him not. *He came unto*



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*his own*, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them *gave he power to become the sons of God*, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And *the Word was made flesh*, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth," (John i. 1-14.)

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," (John xx. 31.)

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life," (1 John v. 20.)

"Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; *I am the first and the last*: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and *have the keys of hell and of death*," (Rev. i. 5-8, 10, 12-18.)

Could John have written such things of a mere man? Could a pious Jew have done so without conscious blasphemy? It is in vain to reply that I have quoted much of this from a vision. But would he have dared to record such a vision, unless he believed Jesus to have been Divine?

I am compelled, therefore, to admit that the apostles *believed* Jesus of Nazareth to have been a Divine Person. I am not asserting, at present, that what they believed was true in fact, but only that they in fact believed this to be true.

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And here I might inquire, whether there was anything in their personal knowledge of Christ which could have suggested such a thought to those men. We have seen that the grand lesson of their education as Jews was, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Whatever other faith or worship did not harmonise with this was deadly idolatry. It is true that, with the exception of Paul, all the apostles had seen Jesus in the flesh, and John specially pleads for His humanity, and presses it home with every form of expression. "That," says he, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." But if we lay aside all supernatural and miraculous evidences of our Lord's person, what was there in His life which could have produced this impression, or awakened this strange conviction of His divinity? Not surely His lowly birth, nor the long years in which He was known only as the carpenter's son; not the sorrow and grief with which He was familiar, or the real though sinless infirmities to which He was subject; not the reception He met with from His countrymen, or the death by which His short earthly career was ended! What was there in an earthly life so intensely human, to convince such true, thoughtful, godly men as the apostles that this man was one with the Holy One of Israel, the Almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth? Yet such was the conviction of John, who leant upon His bosom at the Last Supper, watched Him in Gethsemane, beheld Him in the judgment-hall, and stood by Him at the cross! Such was the faith of Paul also who never saw Him in the flesh, or ever heard His voice while He tabernacled among men. If, however, the alleged supernatural facts in the Bible are true,—including the gift of the Spirit who was to "glorify" Jesus,—we can easily account for those convictions, but not otherwise.

And let me here notice in passing, how beautifully harmonious the facts of this Person's life were as a man, yet also as "Emmanuel, God with us!" These, when "called to remembrance," were such as must have confirmed and established the faith of the apostles. If there were evidences of a humility belonging to Him as the Son of man, there were equal evidences of a dignity which belonged to Him as the Son of God. He was born of the Virgin Mary, yet by Divine power. "The Holy Ghost," said the angel Gabriel to His mother, "shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He was brought forth in a stable, and laid in a manger, but wise men from the East, guided by a star, came to worship Him, and to present Him with kingly offerings, while the hosts of heaven announced His birth with songs of rejoicing. He was baptized of John, yet a voice from heaven said,

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“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” During His life, while He submitted to every trial and temptation to which, humanity was liable, “that in all things He might be like His brethren,” yet never was evidence wanting of a dignity and glory which were divine. He was hungry, but fed thousands; wearied and asleep amidst the storm, but He rebuked the winds and waves, so that there was a great calm; He was tempted of the devil for forty days, but Satan did homage to His dignity, by offering Him as a bribe the kingdoms of the world, while His grandeur was revealed in the command, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” He was so poor that pious women ministered to Him of their substance, and so sorrowful that He often wept; yet He dried the tears of thousands, healed all who came to Him of every disease, and by a word of power raised the dead, from their bed, from their bier, and even when corruption had begun to do its loathsome work. He had His days of darkness, when He could say, “Now is my soul troubled;” yet a voice from heaven even then witnessed to His glory. He washed the feet of His disciples, yet it was at the very moment when, “knowing that God had given all things into his hands, that he came from God, and went to God.” He died and was buried, but though, during all the hours which marked that saddest of all tragedies, there were signs of human woe and weakness, as if “Himself He could not save,” yet what signs of dignity and superhuman majesty! For He was addressed on the cross as a King by a dying criminal, and as a King He promised to save him; while the darkened sky, the rending rocks, and all the august circumstances which attended His humiliation, proclaimed, with the centurion, “Truly this was the Son of God!” He lay in the grave, and His body received the tears and affectionate ministrations of attached friends; but an angel descended and rolled away the stone; the Roman guard became as dead men; “the Lord was risen indeed!” and He appeared to His disciples, and so overcame the unbelief of Thomas by His very presence, bearing the marks of His human sufferings, that the doubter fell down and “worshipped Him,” saying, “My Lord, and my God!” Jesus remained on earth for forty days, and we still “behold *the man*.” He conversed familiarly with His apostles, ate and drank with them, and instructed them in the things pertaining to His kingdom: but He ascended to heaven before their eyes, while angels announced His second coming; and soon the descent of the Holy Ghost, with the great ingathering to the Church which followed, testified to the truth of the apostolic preaching, that Jesus was the *Son of God*, and that all power was given to Him in heaven and on earth!

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Now, in all this eventful history, there was that very combination of earth and heaven, of the human and superhuman, which received an interpretation from the fact only of Christ's divine and human nature, and which, along with Christ's own words, and the teaching of His Spirit, made the apostles accept the doctrine with profound conviction and deep joy; although, without some such overwhelming evidence, the very thought must have been to them a blasphemous idolatry. They believed, because they had sufficient grounds, from facts, for their belief. We cannot, therefore, think that those who rejected the claims of Jesus, and executed Him as a blasphemer, were right, and that the apostles, who acknowledged Him as one with God, were wrong, or that their faith will ever be put to shame!

We have thus considered the Person of Jesus in the light of His own teaching, as that too was understood at the time, both by enemies and friends, and also in the light of the faith and teaching of His apostles.

4. But there is yet another aspect in which we may view this question—viz., *the faith and views of the Christian Church*.

As to the *faith* of the Church, using that word as expressing its *creed*, it is historically certain that since the days of the apostles till the present time, this doctrine has formed a *sine qua non* of the creed of the whole Church, whether called Popish, Protestant, Greek, Armenian, Nestorian, &c.—of every branch, in short, with the exception of the Unitarians. Amidst all differences, the millions of professing Christians have agreed from age to age in this article. No theological strifes or angry passions, no dissents or reformations, have disturbed this truth as the foundation-stone of the Temple. Now, if Christ is *not* a divine person, it follows that the Christian Church is one huge institution of idolatry. We do not, observe, attempt as Christians to conceal our faith in Christ's divinity, or to modify it so as to escape, if possible, such an imputation. We necessarily accept this conclusion, unless our faith is grounded on *fact*. We boldly declare that we believe in Jesus of Nazareth; love Him, trust Him, obey Him, *as we do God Almighty*, and with the same degree of faith and reverence. In the one name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, we have been baptized, and that name we honour as One, ascribing equal glory to each Person in the Godhead. Such a creed as this may startle some and offend others, but it is nevertheless the creed which is and has been the faith of universal Christendom, which millions with ourselves believe unhesitatingly, and confess as boldly as they do their faith in the being of God. Now what we assert is, that if Jesus was a mere man, or was not "God manifest in the flesh," we and all Christians so believing are *idolaters* in the strictest sense of that word. Our churches are idol temples where a dead man is worshipped; our

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ministers idol priests, who ever preach and commemorate this man, pray to him, sing praises to him, and consecrate generation after generation to his service; our people commit their souls and bodies to the keeping of this man for time and eternity, and all their hopes are inseparably connected with him as their Lord;—while amidst this universal defection of the human race, this wide-spread idolatry which has taken possession of the most cultivated and intellectual nations, and threatens to overrun the world and absorb all other idolatries into itself, there appears but a trifling number who maintain the pure light of theism, and preserve the truth of God unsullied for the coming, and it is to be hoped, therefore, for better, ages of the world. And who are these? Jews, Deists, and Unitarians. On these depend the world's hopes of its ever becoming regenerated by a theology of truth regarding God. Now, does it seem probable, we ask, under the government of God, that these have discovered the truth on such a fundamental fact in religion, while universal Christendom for eighteen centuries has believed a lie?—and such a lie! As a question of probability, what weight can we attach to this testimony, balanced not against numbers merely, but numbers along with the intellect, culture, and character of those who have believed in, derived their soul's good from, and perilled their soul's existence upon, Christ's divinity?[A]

[Footnote A: Mr Greg in his *Essays*, which at first appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, admits this alternative. His language is, "To a philosophic inquirer there will appeal little doubt that Trinitarianism and idolatry—the *worship of Christ as God*, the worship of saints, the worship of the golden calf, have one common origin, the weakness of human imagination and the unspirituality of human intellect."—Vol. i., p. 61. Mr Greg also says, in a note to the above—"To accept the orthodox view of the Christian Revelation," (i.e., Christ's divinity,) "is to our apprehension to deny the divine origin of the Jewish religion." But was not "the view" of Jesus himself and His apostles the "orthodox" one? And did *they* deny the divine origin of the Jewish religion? Who is right—Mr Greg or —?]

Consider also, as I have suggested, the *effect* produced by such a faith when real upon the religious ideas *regarding God* of all who really hold it. On the supposition, for example, that the Christian's faith in Jesus is vain—that he is worshipping, loving, serving a creature, or a mere creation of his own mind, instead of the *only* living and *true God*,—how can we account for the actual results of a faith so false and blasphemous upon his ideas regarding God?

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It is not denied that a vast body of men and women in every age have had sincere faith in Jesus as God, and loved Him with their whole soul. Now, what effect has such faith upon their views of God, and their feelings towards the Supreme Creator and Upholder of all things whom “pure Theists” profess alone to worship? Has this faith in Jesus as divine had the effect of producing false impressions of God on the Christian’s heart; of exciting low and degrading views of His being and attributes, lowering as it were the Majesty of the heavens from His throne, bringing Him to the level of our every-day humanity, and presenting Him to the mind and imagination in an aspect which inspires no reverence? Or has it not had the very opposite effect, and that, too, just in proportion as the worshipper has apprehended the oneness, in His divine nature, of the Son with the Father? Has not God, then, appeared more glorious and majestic than ever; His throne more elevated above every other throne; His glory more visible in heaven and earth? Can any Jew, we ask, however devout, appreciate more fully than a Christian the Old Testament descriptions of the unity and perfections of Jehovah, or prostrate himself with a more simple, undivided, and confiding heart before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Can the synagogue sing David’s psalms with more truth than the church? or does Unitarianism withdraw any veil which conceals the perfections of God as Creator, Ruler, or Father, from the eyes of him who has intense and undying faith in Jesus as the Eternal Son? Oh! where on earth can we find more exalted and pure thoughts of the one living and true God, as revealed in nature and in the Old Testament, profounder admiration of His character, or deeper reverence for His will, than among Christians who love and honour the Son even as they love and honour the Father? But how is this to be accounted for if they believe a lie? How has an idolatry, a baseless and profane hero-worship, had this remarkable moral power of producing such true and spiritual views of God, as all men must admit to be most worthy? and producing, too, we dare to add, such strong faith and affectionate reverence towards this God, as exist in no other human bosoms? Is it possible that the true God can be thus apprehended and loved through a medium so false as idolatry? On the supposition, however, but on no other, that Jesus is really one with God, the knowledge and love of the Son must necessarily lead to this very knowledge and love of the Father. “He that seeth me, seeth the Father also.” “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.”



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5. Consider, again, the Person of Christ, not only in the light of Christian character generally, but with the addition of *Christian knowledge as to its cause*. It will surely be admitted that, to whatever extent the term Christian has been misapplied as indicating character, and in however many cases it has been unworthily or only formally assumed, yet it includes within its widest embrace the best men and women this earth possesses, or has ever possessed. There is a certain *kind* of character which all men whose moral sense is not blunted recognise as the culminating point and perfection of humanity. They may not themselves attempt to realise it, or they may deem it unattainable, but nevertheless the idea of what constitutes a good or perfect man is no sooner presented to their minds than conscience accepts it as that which *ought* to be. Now, it is admitted even by the atheist that such an idea is embodied in the historical character of Jesus Christ, and in the life, consequently, of every man just in proportion as he possesses His Spirit, obeys His precepts, and walks in His steps. But there are, and have been in every age, persons who have done this, if not in a perfect, yet in a more perfect degree than by any others among mankind. Or supposing it were admitted, for the sake of argument, that, so far as we had the means of judging, there has occasionally appeared, without faith in Christ, a certain product of character, apparently as pure, lofty, self-denying, loving, and devoted to God as any which ever professed to owe its origin to Jesus Christ; yet, where has there been on earth such a *body* of living persons as those Christians who, within the bosom of the universal Church, during eighteen centuries, have manifested that kind of character which all men profess to admire and reverence? In vain one tries to conceive the flowers of moral beauty and glory that have sprung up within the garden of Christendom! Being rooted in the earth, they may have been soiled, indeed, by its dust, but they yet expanded in loveliness to the sky, and sent forth a fragrance to the air, peculiar to the plants raised by the Great Husbandman. Number, if you can, the saints of the Christian Church; the young and old, the poor and rich, who in every age and clime have been truthful, simple, sincere, patient, forgiving, and compassionate; who have enjoyed an inward life of peace with God, maintained an outward conduct, and possessed a reality of abiding love to their Father in heaven and to their brethren on earth peculiar to themselves. Their lives have been a blessing to the world, and a happiness to their own hearts; their deathbed has been freed from the fears of a dark future, and brightened by the pure prospect of continued life and joy. The Christian Church, and the Christian Church *alone*, contains such characters; and these are the lights of our homes, the salt of the earth, and the only security of the world's progress.

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Now, to what is this great result owing? How is this product of character, which is affecting the world's history, and gradually leavening the whole lump of humanity, to be accounted for? What power has originated it, or by what has it been sustained? Who are more entitled to give a reply to such questions than Christians themselves? They alone can know by what motives, they have been actuated, by what strength supported, and by what hopes animated. Ask them, then, and what will be their reply? Each and all will but echo the words of Paul, as expressing the secret of their life: "I live, yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*; and the life I live in the flesh I live *through faith in the Son of God*, who loved me, and gave himself for me." "The *love of Christ* constraineth us," "I thank *Christ Jesus, our Lord*, who hath enabled me." "The *Lord* stood with me, and strengthened me." "*The Lord* shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, *to whom be glory* for ever and ever!" "I can do all things *through Christ*, which strengtheneth me." This is the experience of the living Church of Christ, of all lands, and of all time,—the creed of each genuine believer; of the early martyr and mediaeval saint; of the pious Protestant and Papist; of the cultivated Christian philosopher and the half-taught Christian negro; of the young man who has overcome the wicked one, and of the old patriarch who departs in peace, because his eyes have seen salvation; of the Christian Greenlander who died yesterday, and of the sweet Christian girl who died to-day, leaving the bosom of her mother for the bosom of her God; of each and all the ten thousand times ten thousand who have so lived and died, with one conviction of truth the strongest in their minds; that whatever strength, peace, or good they possess as true *life*, they owe all to the One source of life,—*the Lord Jesus Christ!* What are we to conclude from these unparalleled facts, which can no more be denied than the realities of human history or of human experience? Have all Christians been deceived? Have they been believing a lie, and has this great life of life in them been sustained by a delusion? Is there no such person as Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, the living Saviour of sinners? Is this not a fact but a fiction? Can it be that the moral government of God exists, and yet that it admits of such a moral anomaly as this,—the regeneration of human character by a falsehood! Impossible! I say it with deepest reverence,—as sure as there is a God of truth, *impossible!* The Christian Church has *not* been deceived. Unbelievers in Jesus have *not* had the light of truth given them, while those who have loved and served Him have been permitted to walk in the darkness of intellectual untruth and in the vain belief of an idol! Jesus is Divine as well as human. "He was, and is, and liveth for evermore!"



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### III.

#### WHAT CAN WE BELIEVE IF WE DO NOT THUS BELIEVE IN JESUS?

If all this evidence is insufficient to prove the Divine nature of Jesus Christ, it may be well to consider on what religious fact or truth we can fall back, as being based upon surer evidence, and affording, therefore, a surer ground of faith and hope.

1. On what part of Christ's "work" on earth can we fall back? We can no more recognise God the Father as truly revealing Himself in Jesus as his co-eternal Son; and the whole light and life of such a revelation in Christ, as hitherto seen and received by the apostles and the Christian Church, is for ever extinguished and destroyed. We can no more believe Jesus as our *Prophet*, when we do not accept the very truths to which He gave most prominence: nor can we trust Him as our *King*, when we believe Him to have been a mere man only, who neither possesses nor could wield power adequate to govern the world: nor can we trust Him as our *Priest*, for in Him is no longer manifested the love of God in sending His own Son to be a propitiation for the sins of the world. And who, we may add, will believe in a Holy Spirit as a Divine Person, whose very work is represented by Jesus to be that of convincing the world of sin "*because it believes not in Him,*" as "*glorifying Him,*" and taking of *His* things to shew them to the spirits of men?

2. Can we, then, accept of Christ as a perfect example? How is this possible? For remember, it was the example of one who is assumed to be a man like ourselves, but yet a man who never, by one act of contrition or confession, acknowledged the existence of personal sin or defect of any kind; a man rarely endowed, and yet who never once expressed gratitude to God for His rich and varied gifts; a man who prayed indeed to God, yet as one who was His equal, and who in His last hours uttered such words as these—"All mine are thine, and thine are mine! Father, *I will* that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me *where I am*, that *they may behold my glory!*" Can we, sinners, follow this example, as that of "our model man, *in everything?*" Dare we closely follow a life like this, and then end it by voluntarily giving ourselves up as a ransom "for the remission of the sins of many?"

3. Can we even retain *the character of Jesus*? The atheist admits that Jesus was the greatest man who ever lived on earth. A worshipper of heroes says of Him in his *Hero Worship*,—"The greatest of all heroes is one whom I do not name here." The character of this wonderful Being has indeed been generally recognised as a bright spot amidst the world's darkness; as the only perfect model of goodness ever seen on earth—yea, as moral beauty itself! But unless the history we possess of Jesus is untrue, and He was, therefore, no historical but a mere ideal

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person,—or if He was a real person, as represented in the gospel, yet not divine,—we cannot defend His character without losing our own. For we have seen how He certainly represented Himself as one with God,—as one who alone knew God and truly revealed Him,—as one who demanded the same honour and love from man as were due to God,—who required men to be willing to part with their dearest friends, even life itself, rather than with Him,—who asserted His right to assign to mankind their eternal destinies according to the relationship in which each man stood to Him,—who, when standing before an earthly judge, crowned with thorns, insulted by the rabble, with every sign of weakness, and as if literally forsaken by God and man, did not abate one jot or tittle of His claims, but asserted them in all their magnitude, announcing His return to the world in glory as its mighty Judge; and much more to the same effect. Now, can any man, we ask, of common honesty defend such a character as this from the charge of wilful imposition and daring blasphemy, unless what He asserted was true? With reference to all the good words or deeds which His professed friends may claim for Him, yet so long as He falsely claims to be divine, we are constrained to reject Him, as the Jews did, and to say with them, “For a good work we stone thee not, but *because thou, being a man, makest thyself God!*” It is not possible, therefore, to fall back on Christ’s character, if we reject Christ’s divinity; for His character was manifest untruth, and His claims an unprincipled deception!

4. Can we preserve *the character of the apostles*? That, too, has hitherto been considered worthy of our respect and regard. Never did men leave such a record of moral teaching, and such an impress of a holy life behind them, a life so pure, wise, loving, so suited, in every respect, to bless mankind, and to make a heaven below in proportion as it is received. In these men we can detect no trace of avarice, ambition, or selfish aims of any kind. They lived, laboured, and died, that the world should become better and happier, and they have so far succeeded that civilisation can never more be separated from their names. But what was the substance of their teaching, and the one grand object of their existence? I again reply, without fear of contradiction, it was to persuade mankind to trust and love Jesus Christ as God! The first Christian teacher who died a martyr’s death resigned his spirit into the hands of this Jesus, as his Lord in glory; and the last and oldest apostle who first knew Him as his friend, represented Him as the Alpha and the Omega, the King of kings and Lord of lords. But if He was not this, how can the character of those teachers be defended? As Jews they could not be ignorant of the being and attributes of God, nor as men of the earthly life and history of Jesus; yet they professed to preach Jesus as divine, and *to work miracles in His name!* They could not possibly have been themselves deceived, and must therefore, if their faith was vain, have attempted to deceive others. Common sense rejects every other explanation. Anyhow, they were the successful heralds of an idolatry which, we may boldly affirm, will never leave the world, and of a blasphemy whose praises will never be silent on earth. Their character must perish with that of their Master!

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5. What, then, have we left us? The *morality of the New Testament*? No! for all that is *peculiar* to its morality are the duties which spring out of the assumed relationship of Jesus to mankind. The gospel morality of supreme love to Jesus becomes *immorality*, if Jesus is not one with God. Prayer to Christ, personal communion with Christ, personal attachment to Christ, hymns of praise to Christ, abiding through faith in Christ, advancing the kingdom of Christ, labouring for Christ and keeping *His* commandments—in one word, that whole life of the Christian towards God and man, every portion of which is permeated by Christ as the sunlight fills the atmosphere, can never be separated from the morality of the New Testament.

Nor can we any longer rely upon Old Testament facts, or on anything there revealed regarding God, as distinct from what could have been discovered without such a revelation, if our faith has been shaken in the facts and the characters of the New Testament. He who can reject the Christ of the New Testament, must necessarily reject the God of the Old; and he who cannot rely on the apostles, cannot possibly rely upon the prophets. All must be given up, and the Bible become a mere curious record of falsehood.

6. Is this all? Enough one would think! But can we even fall *back on God*? What evidence has any man of the existence of a living personal God, stronger than what he possesses of a living personal Saviour? Can *any* revelation of God during *the past*, and recorded in history, be received as worthy of credit, if *this* alleged history of Jesus is rejected as unworthy? If the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not the only living and true God, where is the true God to be found? If Jesus neither knew Him truly, nor truly revealed Him, who can do either? And when, moreover, we have thus lost faith in the character of Jesus and of His apostles, from what better evidence of moral character or moral design on earth can we henceforth reason upwards as to the moral character of a Divine Being?

In what position do we thus find ourselves? The Church of Christ must be given up as a great falsehood, a huge idolatry, a society of weak, deluded, or bad men. The character of its early founders, and the Person to whom it owes its name, must, for the same reason, be abandoned. The Old Testament can form but a feeble barrier to the flood which has thus swept away the New, with all which has arisen out of the assumed truth of its history. And thus each man, cut off from the past, is left to discover a God for himself, from evidence which, to satisfy him, must necessarily be more overwhelming than that which he rejects, and on which the faith of the Christian Church has rested for eighteen centuries. Can any man be satisfied with such a basis of religion as this? Having rejected God as revealed in Jesus, *can* he peril his soul in peace on the God discovered

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by himself? Having fled from Christianity as a religion whose foundations are insecure, can he repose with confidence in the building which he himself has reared? Or, if he moves at all, must he not gradually slide into universal scepticism, and conclude that, since he cannot believe in Jesus, he can believe in no one else,—that if deceived by Him he may be deceived by all,—that if there is no such Person as the Divine Son, there is no such Person as the Divine Father,—that if he must be without Christ, he must necessarily be without God!

He may, indeed, in such a case, profess to believe in a God; but is He the living and true God, or one who is but the product of his own mind, the shadow cast by his own human spirit? Oh! hear the words of Him who is truth itself: “Ye believe in God, believe also in me;” “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him;” “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!” May the Lord’s last prayer be answered in us: “Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

### IV.

#### WHAT IF CHRISTIANITY IS NOT TRUE?

Now to prove the Christian religion untrue, or to prove that the evidences on which it rests are insufficient, is a more difficult task than some of its opponents appear to imagine, if we may judge from the boastful language in which they record their supposed achievements.

Let it never be forgotten, that the Christian religion is founded upon certain alleged *historical facts* that must be disposed of before it falls.[A] The holy temple of a loving soul filled with the glory of Christ is spiritual, but it is nevertheless based upon facts as on foundation-stones, the chief corner-stone being Jesus Christ the personal Saviour, “who was dead and is alive, and liveth for evermore!” Without these facts Christianity could not exist. The duty, for example, of supremely loving and devotedly serving Jesus Christ, implies the truth of other facts, such as the fulfilment of prophecies, miracles, the life and character of Jesus, His atoning death, resurrection, &c., all of which establish His claims to our faith. But in addition to these, and as their evidence also and result, there is the experience of the whole living Church, derived from faith in Jesus as the resurrection and the life.

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[Footnote A: Neander, in his preface to his “Life of Christ,” quotes from Niebuhr what he calls “the golden words of one of the greatest minds of modern times.” “The man,” says Niebuhr, “who does not hold Christ’s earthly life, with all its miracles, to be as properly and really historical as any event in the sphere of history, and who does not receive all points in the Apostles’ Creed with the fullest conviction, I do not conceive to be a Protestant Christian. As for that Christianity which is such according to the fashion of the modern philosophers and pantheists,—without a personal God, without immortality, without an individuality of man, without historical faith,—it may be a very subtle *philosophy*, but it is no Christianity at all. Again and again have I said that I know not what to do with a metaphysical God, and that I will have no other but the God of the Bible, who is *heart to heart*.”]

But before Christianity can be destroyed, it is absolutely necessary to destroy the evidences of those historical facts on which it rests. This, as I have said, is no easy task. There are many high walls, many encircling lines of defence around the old fortress, each and all of which must be taken, ere the citadel itself can be reached and laid in ruins. *Now this has never yet been done*. The enemy has made many attacks during the last eighteen centuries, and on several occasions the last grand assault which was to decide the long campaign has been threatened. Every method has been adopted which critical skill could apply, which the most subtle genius could invent, and the most untiring perseverance execute; but, in spite of all, “the strong city,” with “salvation for walls and bulwarks,” still remains strong as ever. For, to drop all metaphor, in whatever way we may account for it, the fact is undeniable, that Christianity, in the form of supreme love to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, not only survives, but in no age of the world’s past history has it been so strongly rooted in the convictions and affections of so many men, nor has it ever been given such promise of filling the whole earth.

Let us suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that by some process hitherto undiscovered, Christianity, as the religion of supreme love to this living Person, Jesus Christ, is at last proved to be a fiction; that the millennium of infidelity has arrived; that the religion taught by Christ and His apostles has become as dead to the world as that of Buddh or Confucius is now to the mind of Europe; that our Christian churches, like the heathen temples of Greece or Rome, remain but as monuments of a superstition long ago exploded by the light of science and philosophy; that all those supernatural Christian facts and truths, which like a mighty firmament of stars, now cluster around the name of Jesus, have departed as lights from the visible universe; that Christian truth is as silent before the world as Christ himself was when He stood before

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Herod, and answered him nothing; until even the wailing cry has ceased of the last desponding and disconsolate believer on earth, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where to find him!" Well, then, the work is done! The energetic teachers of the propaganda of unbelief have accomplished their long-cherished purpose, and the professors of an earnest and devoted faith in Christ have perished, leaving no memorial behind them except their "curious books," or their hoary tombstones, which record their old faith in Him as the resurrection and the life.

When such a crisis as this has at last arrived, the world will surely pause, and count the fruits of victory. Wise men will then doubtless consider with an earnest spirit what has been gained to humanity by this tremendous revolution in all those opinions and ideas cherished during so many ages; and the well-wishers of mankind will examine the spoils which the conquerors have ready for enriching the poor and needy as the result of this triumph over a religion that was clung to by the best and noblest men with a tenacity overcome only when earth was old, and time was well-nigh ending. But may we not now anticipate such a solemn review, by asking those who are wishful to destroy Christianity, what they intend to put in its place when their object is accomplished. If they have anything else to give us, let us know what it is, that we may see and judge if it is better than the old religion; if it is better suited to meet the wants of man in every period and condition of his varied life; if it is likely to do better work on earth, and produce better fruit; if its truth rests on better evidence, and if, in short, it is such a gift from heaven that angels with songs of joy might announce this new gospel of peace on earth, and this new message of good-will to man. Strange to say, such questions, though often asked, have hitherto remained unanswered. If there be a something better in store for us than what we profess, the blissful secret has not yet been revealed. Infidelity, often so loud in attacking Christianity, is silent as a god of iron or brass when we ask at its shrine. If I give up faith in Christ, what wouldest thou have me be and do, and how live and rejoice as an immortal being?

What, then, I again ask, would be lost and gained on both sides after the war, in the event of Christianity being destroyed? We Christians know full well what we would gain and lose;—we know that we would gain nothing, and lose everything! We would lose all which we most love in the universe of God,—all which makes us rejoice in existence,—all which enables us to look at the past, present, and future with perfect peace; and of all men we would be most miserable! It is true that in regard to many an object of affection, it may be said—

"Better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all!"



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But not so in regard to our love of Jesus Christ. Better never to have seen that glory filling the heavens and earth, and making life a constant thanksgiving and praise, than, after having seen it, to be persuaded by any witchery that it was all a dream—a fiction of the imagination—a ghostly superstition—which it is wisdom to banish from the memory. For once we have lost Jesus Christ as our ever-living, ever-present, all-sufficient Friend and Saviour, what are we to do? Can we contentedly fall back upon our own being, or upon any other person, and live on “without Christ in the world!” Or are we in those circumstances to be told that we may still have comfort in “religion without the supernatural,” and rejoice in “the eternal and essential verities of morality!” Only think of it, Christians! The living man, the light and hope of the family, is murdered; but a disciple of pure science and calm philosophy enters it, and tells its agonised members that it is folly and ignorance to indulge in such grief, for science has analysed their friend, and preserved in a series of neat phials, which they may easily carry about with them, all his constituent elements, his “essentials,” his carbon, his silica, this and that gas—everything, in short, which made up the substance of him whom they were accustomed to call their beloved; therefore they may “comfort one another with these words!” And thus would the enemy of Christianity presume to comfort us with his “essentials,” when our living Lord is gone! Comfort indeed!

“Comfort? comfort scorn’d by devils! this is truth the poet sings,  
That a sorrow’s crown of sorrow is remembering happier things!”

But what can the unbeliever himself expect to gain by its destruction? “I have nothing to do with consequences,” may be his reply, “but with truth only; let every lie be tested and exposed, whatever may be the real or imaginary gain or loss to myself or others.” Brave words! with which we have the deepest sympathy; for if they are the utterance of a truly sincere heart, they evidence belief, and not unbelief; they assume that there is an order and government in the universe, which is on the side of truth, and that we may therefore, at all hazards, discover what is true, and cling to it in the full assurance of faith,—that ultimately the right and true are in harmony with all that is worth loving and worth living for. Amen! we say from our heart. At the same time, it is well to look at some of the consequences which the destruction of Christianity would involve even to him who destroys it.

It is obvious, for example, that should it cease to exist to us as a reality, other realities would remain irrespective of our belief. Existence would remain, and it *may* be one as eternal as the life of God; sorrow and suffering would remain, to gnaw the heart, darken the world, and cast deep shadows over a life which must end with that dread event, death, and the passing away of ourselves and of all we have

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from the memories of mankind as if we had never been—and whither I Worst of all, *sin* would remain—dark, mysterious, and terrible sin! And “obstinate questionings” would remain to disturb and perplex the mind in moments of earnest and silent thought. Men would still ask, What if we are responsible to God for this whole inner and outer life of ours, with its beliefs, purposes, and actions? What if sin and its consequences continue beyond the grave, with no remedy there unless found here? What if there is no possible happiness but in fellowship of spirit and character with God; and what if this is morally impossible for us to attain without a Saviour and Sanctifier What, in short, if all the evils which Christianity professes to deliver us from remain as facts in our history, just as diseases remain though the aid of the physician, who reveals their nature, and who offers to cure them, is rejected? or, as a vessel remains a wreck in the midst of the breakers after the life-boat which comes to save the crew is dismissed? or, as the lion remains after the telescope is flung aside which revealed his coming, and revealed also the only place of safety from his attack? For it is obvious that Christianity does not create the evils and dangers from which it offers to deliver us, and that these must remain as facts should it be proved a fiction. So far, then, the infidel has gained nothing by the overthrow of our religion. “Except truth!” does he exclaim? Yet, I again repeat it, truth in its negative form only, as destroying supposed falsehoods, but not in its positive form as establishing something to rest upon.

Is there any other conceivable gain, then, which would accrue to the unbeliever by his supposed success? Does he wish, for example, to relieve oppressed souls of some great burden which crushes them? But what alleged truths or doctrine of Christianity, if blotted out to-morrow from the circle of belief, would ease a single soul, while it would unquestionably be an irreparable loss to millions? Would a God be more acceptable, and appear with greater moral beauty, who was different from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Would He be more attractive to our hearts if He did not forgive our sins fully and freely, or if forgiveness was not offered through such Divine self-sacrifice? Would it be a relief to our moral being to be freed from the privilege or duty of supremely loving Jesus Christ? Would it lighten our hearts to be freed from the burden of having communion with Him in prayer? Would we have more security for light, life, strength, holiness, peace, or comfort, if there was no such Person revealed as the Spirit of God, who freely imparts His aid to all? Would it be glad tidings to hear that men were not to be born again, nor to repent, nor to deny themselves, nor to do God's will, but their own? What is there which a good man would gain by the destruction of the Christian religion!



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I have one question more to suggest with reference to the duty of an unbeliever towards us as Christians, and it is this, Why should he disturb our faith, or, as he might term it, our superstition? If he retorts by asking why we should disturb his unbelief, our answer is ready—because we wish with our whole soul to share with him the blessings which God our common Father has for him as well as for us; because we truly lament the loss to our brother who refuses the eternal good which he may now enjoy with the whole family of God; because we love our God, and his God and Saviour, and desire our brother to know and to love them too; because it is so unjust, so selfish, so hateful, not to love and obey such a glorious Person as Jesus Christ, who knows us, loves us, and has died to gain our hearts! These are some of the reasons, rudely and roughly stated, why we desire, with all our heart, that every man should believe in Jesus Christ. But if any man, for any reason which may be beyond our understanding or sympathy, desires to destroy this faith in all that is most precious to us, then I ask, not in Christ's name,—for it is unnecessary to appeal to Him,—but in the name of common sense and common philanthropy, why he should not only labour to do this, but to do it without apparently any apprehension of the untold misery which he must occasion if he succeeds in his attempt? Do not tell us, with a boast, that “the truth must be spoken, come what may!” Be it so; but surely the *kind of* truth which must be spoken must ever regulate the manner in which it is spoken? Again, I bid you picture to yourselves a person entering a family whose members were rejoicing in the thought of a father's return, and announcing the intelligence of that father's death, with a smile of pity or a sneer of contempt at their ignorant happiness! Imagine such a one professing to be actuated by a mere love of truth! Oh! if the terrible duty has been laid upon any one with a human heart, of announcing to others intelligence which, if true, must leave a blank to them in the world that can never be filled up, what tender sympathy, what genuine sorrow becomes him who breaks the heavy tidings! And such *ought* to be the feelings of every man who, from whatever cause, feels called upon to announce that the Christian religion is false. If he *must* make known that terrible fact to believers in Jesus; if he *must* tell them that the supposed Source of all their life and joy has no existence, and that their faith in Him is vain, let this be done with the solemnity and the sorrow which a true brotherly sympathy would necessarily dictate. If the missionaries of Christianity are warranted in preaching their gospel with joy, the missionaries of an infidelity which professes only to destroy and not to build up, should go forth on their dreadful vocation with the feeling of martyrs, and with no other notes of triumph than sounds of lamentation and woe! For if Christianity is false, we are “yet in our sins, all who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, and we are of all men most miserable!”

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### THOUGHTS UPON THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

There is no “fact of the future” more clearly revealed in Scripture, or more certainly believed in by the Christian Church, than that “God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

No doubt this fact is denied or explained away by many modern critics. But it would be difficult to say what revealed fact, from Genesis to Revelation, is admitted by them, or what things may now be “*most surely* believed among us.” We retain our first faith in the future judgment, and shall endeavour to look at it in a practical rather than in a speculative light.

There is, indeed, among mankind a general anticipation of a coming time when the mystery of God’s providence will be cleared up, and His righteousness displayed in the final judgment to be then passed on the evil and on the good. What the human race are led to anticipate, as likely to occur hereafter, from the many unsettled questions here between man and his brother, and between man and his God, Scripture reveals to us as certain.

While, however, every Christian believes in the coming of Jesus to judge the world as firmly as he does in the fact of His having risen from the dead, there seems to us to be very inadequate conceptions in the minds of many as to the designs of this day, or the ends which it is fitted to accomplish in the kingdom of God.

It is hastily assumed, for example, that the *day* of judgment will be short as the period included between an earthly sunrise and sunset; and that, during this brief interval, the dead shall rise, and be judged before the throne of Jesus Christ, along with fallen angels. It is accordingly asked, with doubt and wonder, what good can be gained, or what purpose served, by this summoning those whose doom has long been sealed to appear at the bar of Jesus, and there to receive a formal sentence? If Judas goes to his own place, and Stephen to the arms of his Redeemer; if the wicked rich man departs to the burning flame, and Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham; if Satan and his angels have long ago experienced the horrors of a state which they know to be unchangeable, because they are themselves unchanged; what conceivable reason can there be for appointing a day in which all the wicked and the righteous are to be assembled, only to receive their respective sentences of condemnation or acquittal?

I know not how such questions can be answered by those who suppose the day of judgment to be nothing more than one on which Jesus Christ will *publicly* declare what the eternal fate of His creatures is to be for ever; without any trial beyond that which has already taken place in the court of each man’s conscience, and in the presence of the living God.

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We at once admit that the difficulty, or impossibility even, of answering such questions, is no adequate reason for our denying any fact clearly revealed in Scripture which may suggest them. But if these belong, not to the fact itself, but to what appears to us to be a wrong interpretation of it; if a different view is freed from such difficulties, without others, more numerous and serious, being evolved; if the information afforded by Scripture is to be received as authentic; and if, moreover, while keeping strictly to the letter of Scripture, it is more in harmony with the grand ends to be accomplished by the kingdom of Christ, and discloses more of the glory of the great King, surely a presumption is thereby afforded in favour of its truth, though, perhaps, at first sight it may interfere with preconceived opinions.

Instead, then, of the day of judgment being a day of twenty-four hours merely for the passing of a righteous sentence upon the good or bad, it seems to us to be clearly revealed in Scripture that it will be a period of time long enough for the peaceful and orderly ongoing of all its august proceedings;—when Jesus Christ will summon to His immediate presence all who have been the subjects of His mediatorial kingdom, or have been placed under His authority for accomplishing the purposes of His reign;—when each person will be tried in the presence of the assembled universe, and his true relationship to his King must be proved upon evidence minute, sifting, and unquestionable;—in one word, when the whole government of the Mediator, from the beginning till the end of time, over men, angels, and devils, shall be fully disclosed, and its excellence manifested to the confusion of the wicked, the joy of the righteous, and the glory of the Triune God!

Difficulties will, no doubt, be suggested by the view we have thus so briefly stated, as well as by the others I have been obliged to discard. But instead of attempting to remove these, I shall at present pass them by, leaving them to be tacitly and satisfactorily answered by the positive truth regarding the judgment, which I shall now endeavour to establish.

### THE JUDGE.

The Judge will be *Jesus Christ*:—

“We must all appear before the judgment-seat of *Christ*.”

“*Jesus Christ*, who shall judge the living and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom.”

“The day when God will judge the secrets of men *by Jesus Christ*.”

“The Father judgeth no man, but hath *committed all judgment unto the Son*.”

Now, there are several reasons discernible by us why Jesus Christ should thus be “appointed to judge the world.”

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1. From the constitution of His *person*. As God, He is possessed of omniscience to discern every thought and intent of the heart; unerring wisdom and unsullied righteousness to try every case; with omnipotent power and sovereign authority to execute every sentence. On the other hand, as “the Son of man,” He will appear in His human nature, for “every eye shall see Him.” This “*same Jesus*” said the angels at His ascension, “who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Men will be judged by one who is their Brother, “who, in all points, was tried like one of us;” “who in all things was made like His brethren.”

2. Another reason why Jesus Christ will direct all the proceedings of the day of judgment, arises from the peculiar relationship in which, as the only Mediator between God and man, He stands to the human race. Let us dwell for a moment upon this point.

We are informed in Scripture, that *Jesus Christ is the Creator of this world*:—

“All things were made by him.” “He was in the world, and the world was made by him.” “God who created all things by Jesus Christ.” “All things were created by him and for him.”

He is also *Governor of the world*:—

“God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

To accomplish the various ends of this glorious government, He is *King of nature*; all the elements of nature which can in any way affect the history or destiny of the human race being directed and controlled by Him. “The winds and the seas obey Him;” pestilence and famine, the volcano and the hurricane, are ministers of His, that do His pleasure. *He is the King of providence*; armies and fleets, conquests and invasions, discoveries and inventions, migrations and settlements,—all are under the government of His wise and omnipotent sceptre. *He is the King of grace*; the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are dispensed to the persons and in the measure which seem best to Him. *Finally*, He is the *King of angels and devils*; so that their power and agency, in relation to the human family, are either controlled or guided by Him.

Now, this kingdom of Jesus Christ, which began with the history of the world at least, will one day be resigned into the hands of God. “Then cometh the end,” says the apostle, “when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God the Father, that God may be all in all.” But ere that end comes, the Mediator himself will, as we suppose; disclose the history of His kingdom to the assembled universe.

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He will make known “His ways and acts” towards the children of men. He will meet friend and foe, and disclose the real history of each person who ever lived, from the first moment of his birth to the moment of his trial; and of each family, and city, and kingdom, from their rise till their final extinction in the dust; and thus the universe shall know how His government over human affairs, in all ages and climes, has been conducted; and in what manner His authority and power over all things for His Church has been exercised; that it may be known on evidence, whether He is indeed worthy to have received such honour and power in the great and universal kingdom of Jehovah!

3. But there seems also a fitness in Jesus being the Judge, from *His peculiar relationship to the Church*. “He created all things, that unto principalities and powers might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.” And He is now, in virtue of what He has done as a Priest, the Head over all things for the Church as a King. “Because he humbled himself, God hath highly exalted him.” The grand end of His whole mediatorial reign is, “that unto God might be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus.” But the work of Jesus Christ as Mediator will not have terminated, nor will He have received His full joy and reward, until He raises His people from their graves, and gathers His elect from the four winds of heaven; and opens the Book of Life, and from this biographical record adduces evidence of the reality of their loyalty, and of their love to the King; and reveals the glory of all His dealings towards them in every age:—until, in one word, the living Church, of which He is the Head, which “He loved” and “purchased with His own blood,” and “sanctified and cleansed with the washing of the water of His word,” shall be presented to Himself, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. His judgment of the Church will be the consummation of His mediatorial glory, and the fulness of His reward.

As to the time *when* Jesus Christ shall judge the world, we are ignorant. “Of that day knoweth no man, not even the angels.” We know only that it will come suddenly—“as a thief in the night”—upon the whole world; and that “we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

No words of man can venture upon any description of the appearance of the Judge, or the accompaniments of that great and terrible day of the Lord. But here are a few Scripture statements descriptive of this solemn scene:—

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works,” (Matt. xvi. 27.)

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of

a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other," (Matt. xxiv. 30, 31.)

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“For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord,” (1 Thess. iv. 15-17.)

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (2 Thess. i. 7, 8.)

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up,” (2 Pet. iii. 10.)

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works,” (Rev. xx. 11-13.)

## WHO ARE TO BE JUDGED?

We reply, *men and fallen angels*.

“We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” If the government of Jesus Christ over men is to be revealed on that day, it is clear that all men, without exception, must be judged. So linked, indeed, is the history of each man with that of others,—as, for instance, the tempter with the tempted, the oppressed with the oppressor, the teacher with the taught, the child with the parent;—so necessarily is each man’s condition and character affected by that of all who have gone before him, up to his first parents;—so truly do all human beings make up *one* race, *one* family, from the life of each being more or less connected with that of all, that the knowledge of the real history of even one man, almost implies an examination into the real history of the whole human race. And we shall possess, for the first time, a true history of the whole world, when we truly understand the history of each person, family, and kingdom in it; and so also shall we possess the true history of each individual part, only when we know its relationship to the great whole; and the history of events, when we perceive what bearing they have had on the kingdom of Jesus Christ, whose history is that of the world.



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It has been questioned how far the sins of the people of God, which have been for ever pardoned, are to be revealed at judgment. But we see no reason whatever why this should not be the case, and every reason why it should. We might, beforehand, have thought it more likely that God would not have recorded in the Bible, and exposed in the light of all coming ages, the sins of His most eminent servants, as those of Abraham, Moses, David, of Peter, or of Paul. But He has told the *whole* truth regarding them for our warning and instruction; and so will the whole truth be told regarding every saint at judgment, “that no flesh may glory in His presence;” and that the reality of the wickedness of the old man may be proven, as well as the reality of the holiness of the “new man created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” And what saint can be unwilling to have revealed what he was, that so the glorious love of God’s Spirit may be made the more manifest, as the sole cause of what he has become, and will continue to be for ever and ever?

Fallen angels shall also be judged upon that day: “For God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them, down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,” “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” Under what dispensation those beings first sinned against God, we cannot tell. All we know from the information given us by God is, that they have been permitted to exercise their power in this world, on the side of evil, ever since the creation of man. Satan, the adversary, the tempter, the enemy, who is the head of these principalities and powers, has been a “liar and murderer from the beginning;” and in every age and clime, he and his wicked spirits have advanced the kingdom of darkness with indomitable perseverance, untiring energy, ceaseless hate, and “all deceivableness and unrighteousness in them that perish.” Fallen angels having thus taken so dreadful a part in the history of Christ’s kingdom, and being responsible for all they do, shall be tried at judgment; and what a revelation must their trial be of the character, the hellish plots and machinations of those enemies of Jesus Christ and His Church!

We have already alluded to the *individuality* of the examination at the last day,—how “every one of us must give an account of *himself* to God;” and “receive the things done in *his* body, according to what *he* hath done, whether good or evil;” and also, how each fact must be brought to light upon *evidence* whose truth cannot be questioned. Upon that day, mere assertions will not be sufficient to establish the right or the wrong condition of any one before the judgment-seat. The universe must know the truth! Evidence must, therefore, be adduced which will “convince all;” and that evidence, too, will be sifted. Before sentence is passed, overwhelming proof will demonstrate the righteous ground on which each individual must take his place among those on the left hand or on the right. Let us see if we can discover any sources of evidence for the detection and discrimination of character.



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“THE BOOKS SHALL BE OPENED.”

1. *The Book of Providence will be opened.*—In this book has been recorded, and from its pages can be shewn, by Jesus Christ, everything which has been done to us, and for us, by Himself, since the hour of our birth till that of our death. Every temporal mercy or spiritual blessing—every advice given by ministers, relations, or friends—every Sabbath which dawned upon us—every stirring of conscience within us—every visitation of sickness or domestic affliction—every item, in short, of that immense sum of things which, in His providence or by His grace, was given us each successive hour of life, and which was intended to mould our characters according to the will of God;—all shall be revealed at judgment, that the universe may know what Jesus Christ, the King, has really done for each one of His subjects, and what each subject has been, and done, in relation to Him.

2. *The Book of Memory shall be opened.*—An awful volume! It seems almost certain that anything once known to us must for ever abide in memory, and can never be absolutely and for ever lost. Out of sight it may be, but never really out of mind. It may appear to be dead, though it only sleeps, ready to start into vigorous life when touched by some hand which can reach it in the dim mysterious recess where it lies concealed. It is thus, before returning, after a long absence, to the home of our early life, we are unable to discover any page in the volume of our memory inscribed with more than a few incidents which filled up those early years of gladness. Every page seems a blank, or its records, if not obliterated, can hardly be traced. But when we *do* return, what a magic influence is exercised by every tree, rock, and stream, and by the old home itself with which these were once inseparably associated! The history of days and years now glow with the vividness of first impressions, where, until now, all was so indistinct and illegible. Old familiar voices ring in our ears, beloved faces of the old dead gaze upon us as of yore, and their forms flit before our moist eyes. But were not these things all the while in our memory, although unnoticed by us until called forth by fitting circumstances? And have we not seen evidence of the same mysterious life of the past within us, when in extreme old age a second childhood awakens all the incidents of the first; when memory, like a flash of lightning, irradiates the sky, otherwise dark and wintry, revealing the scenes of early days, which were before quite forgotten? More wonderful still—it is certain that things once known, which in health were as lost to memory as if they had never been, are suddenly recalled, and appear in all their former life and freshness, when fever touches the brain with her delirious hand. The sick man, in his ravings, speaks perhaps a language known only in his infancy, and recalls incidents belonging to a period which was a total blank in his recollections

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during days of robust health. And what does all this prove but the momentous truth, that anything which once was done,—anything which we have ever thought, uttered, or known, or was ever inscribed in the book of memory,—remains there engraven in characters more permanent than those which, cut deep in the hoary monuments of Egypt, have outlived teeming centuries of human history? Darkness may cover the page, but by a vivid and mysterious flash every letter is illuminated. That flash may be only some trifle, such as a note of music—the tone of some voice—

“The subtle smell which spring unbends,  
Dread pause abrupt of midnight winds,—  
An echo or a dream!”

And thus may it be at judgment; by the extension of the same *kind* of power, may our *whole* life, in its minutest details, pass before our eyes,—each minute of it delivering its own history of word or deed, of things done or things received,—and each recognised as true by the possessor of them all. Accordingly, every man is now, whether he wills it or not, unconsciously writing or *daguerreotyping* his own biography;—his whole life forming a work of more importance, to himself at least, than any other in the universe, —each volume a year, each chapter a month, each day or hour a page. At judgment memory will read the whole, and be compelled to feel that every word is true. It is strange, too, how rapid—reasoning from analogy—such a review may be, without diminishing from its distinctness. States of being, or successive acts, which occupied long periods of time, may very rapidly be recalled in all their minute features. In moments of sudden peril, when death seemed approaching, how frequently have men told us that they beheld, in a twinkling of an eye, the great features of their whole life like a panorama passing before their mind’s eye! And thus at judgment, clear, yet rapid—intensely real and vivid, yet sudden as light—may the life of the boy, and the man, and the patriarch, from, the first till the last moment of conscious and responsible existence upon earth, be presented to the mind with a self-evidencing power of truth, which cannot, which dare not, be denied or resisted! Jesus Christ will speak *to* the man from *within* the man, and, with irresistible power, say to him, “*Son, remember!*”

3. *The Book of Conscience shall be opened.*—This will afford abundant evidence, when read along with the books of memory and providence, of the witness in every man’s soul for the moral government of God, and that ever accused or excused his life. That tremendous power which has dogged the murderer in his flight, following him across the seas, tracking him to his refuge in some solitary island or savage wilderness,—that presence which, like an evil spirit from another world, has disturbed the guilty in the midst of his festivities, or sat heavily on his soul, brooding over him in his slumbers as a horrible

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nightmare, until he has started up in the agony of despair,—that judge which has made kings tremble on their thrones, and ruffians shiver in their silent cells,—that awful voice will be allowed then to speak out with the power, as well as with the authority, that belong to it. It will pass judgment upon all the facts in each man's life, which shall then, for the first time, be fully and fairly submitted to its inspection; and each page in memory's book will find a corresponding page in the book of conscience, on that "day when God shall judge *the secrets* of men by Jesus Christ," A thousand excuses will be silenced by it, and false hopes crushed, and a fiery law go forth to destroy all the coverings which the deceitful heart now draws over its own wilful and desperate wickedness.

4. "Another book will be opened, which is *the Book of Life*"—In that book are inscribed the characters of all God's people, and the evidence of the reality of their faith in Christ and obedience to Him. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them!" These works, which are the evidence, results, and rewards of faith, are recorded by that same Spirit through whose power alone the soul has lived, believed, and been enabled to bring forth such fruit to the praise of the glory of God by Jesus Christ. In the book of life will be found recorded by the omniscient Holy Spirit of Truth, that secret life of every saint which was "hid with Christ in God." Then shall be revealed the reality of their repentance and inward renewal of soul; the sincerity of their love to God and to His people; their secret prayers, thanksgivings, confessions, intercessions, and holy communion with God; their plans, longings, and sacrifices for the spread of the gospel, and for the glory of God upon earth; their deeds of charity for Christ,—every prison they entered, every naked one they clothed; the hungry they fed, or the offences forgiven by them from love to Him who forgave them;—that whole *character*, in short, which is the result of union with Christ, will be evidenced to the universe from what is recorded of it in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And is there not another book, even "*the Book*," which may also be opened at judgment as a witness for the Triune God in His dealings with mankind? How many millions of men have possessed the Bible, and acknowledged it as the word of God! Who, therefore, among them, will be able to plead ignorance of any truth—any duty—any danger—any promise—the knowledge of which could essentially affect their eternal salvation? True, they may never have opened the Bible, or have refused to believe it, or have despised and rejected its warnings, counsels, and reproofs; but the Bible was nevertheless given them, and their very ignorance may be their crime. Or, if not ignorant, but only "hating knowledge," and "not choosing the fear of the Lord,"—their condemnation is, that they preferred the darkness to the light, because their deeds were evil? Oh, what a witness will that Book be against the slothful, the wilfully ignorant and unbelieving!

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Are these sources of evidence not sufficient wherewith to determine, to the conviction of the universe, each man's character at the judgment of the great day? Should more be required, many other witnesses may be summoned, if necessary, before the white throne. Satan and wicked spirits are ready to accuse the sinner, and to prove how he yielded to temptation, became habit and repute in sin, and a willing and active instrument for destroying others. True, Satan is a liar; but is *this* testimony a lie? Can these accusations, if false, be disproved? Can Christ be appealed to either as to their falsehood, or for exculpatory evidences of genuine repentance or new life? And holy angels, too, are there, who will be able to testify as to whether this man ever gave them joy as a true penitent, was the object of their ministrations as an heir of salvation, or known to them as a fellow-worker in Christ's kingdom upon earth. Relations, friends, neighbours, church-members, are also there to tell, at Christ's bidding, what was the manner of his life in the family, in society, or in the "household of God." What has this man as a father, husband, or child, done? What example did he set? What temper and conduct did he manifest at home? What was his influence as a companion? Did he lead to hell or heaven? What did Christians find him to be as a fellow-Christian? Was he cruel and covetous, slothful and indifferent, uncharitable and censorious; or loving, zealous, and self-denying, the author of peace and lover of concord, a friend and brother? Oh! surely, even now we can easily see how there can be no want of means at the great day of judgment, by which, without any revelation from the unerring and all-seeing Judge himself, each man's character may be searched and known to its inmost depths, and in all its minute details be revealed.

And now, reader, before we proceed, let us here entreat of you to examine your present life. We ask, whether you think it possible that it can afford any evidence upon that day of sincere love to Jesus Christ?—anything which can warrant the Judge to say to *you*, "Well done, good and faithful servant?"—anything in your aims, wishes, purposes, pursuits, endeavours, which evidence the existence in the least degree of that *kind* of life which is the result of being born and sanctified by God's Spirit, and cannot otherwise be accounted for?

How many shrink from that examination *now*, which must take place *then*! But is it not wiser to know your sins, and see your danger now, when the one can be pardoned, and the other averted, than, for the first time, to awake to a sense of both, when your sins can never more, as far as man can discover, be removed, and your danger, if real, must end in ruin? We have many foreshadowings of judgment revealed to us by Christ; and we have the unavailing pleadings of those who desire to be recognised as among His friends. "Lord, Lord!" cry some,

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“open to us!” These are not infidels, but professed believers in Christ’s supreme authority. “Lord, hast thou not taught in our streets?—open to us!” is the plea of those who heard the truth spoken, it may be by Jesus personally; of those, at least, who had the privilege, and did not neglect it, of hearing the word preached. “Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence?—open to us!” appears to others sufficient evidence of friendship for the Redeemer, and such as might be urged by those who followed Him in Judea, and saw His person, heard His words, yea, sat at meat with Him as “His familiar friends.” “Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works?—open to us!” Thus could Judas have pleaded; and many a man, perhaps, who had the gift of miracles without the grace of God; or many more who have had rare gifts of talent, genius, eloquence, which have done good to others, in spite of their own selfish motives; and who, by many wonderful works, have cast out “evil possessions” of wicked principles and practices from others, while evil, nevertheless, possessed themselves. And with as imposing claims many too may seek admittance to God’s kingdom, because they “gave their goods to feed the poor, or their bodies to be burned.” Yet, to each and all such pleadings, Jesus represents himself as saying, “I know you not! Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity!” But if so, we ask you, reader, what evidence of Christian life can you adduce better or more satisfactory than all this? Nothing, be assured, will be accepted which does not prove a right spirit, or, in other words, the existence in the soul of *love to Jesus Christ* in some form or other. “LOVEST THOU ME?” will be the grand question, the truthful reply to which will determine our real state on that great day. Hence, while the evidence of doing wonderful works, or of giving our body to be burned, is rejected as worthless, inasmuch as the one proves only the existence of power, and the other of what may be but a sacrifice to self, and not to the Saviour,—yet the gift of a cup of cold water to a disciple for the sake of the Master, will suffice to open the doors of heaven, because affording evidence of the heart which loves Jesus, and for which heaven has been prepared. “Come, ye blessed of my Father! Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of my disciples, ye have done it unto me!” “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ; let him be accursed!”

We need not add that we have assumed that the persons thus judged have had full opportunities of knowing and serving Jesus as their Lord.

## RESULTS OF JUDGMENT.

What shall the results be of such a searching, impartial, and conclusive investigation into the history of mankind? Some of these we may, perhaps, be permitted to anticipate.

*The proceedings of the day of judgment will answer all the accusations of Christ's enemies.*

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The government of Jesus Christ is hated and opposed here. This fact, alas! in human history, cannot be denied. We do not speak of Satan and his angels, who war against the Lord, nor even of His unconscious foes among the heathen; but only of those men who possess the Bible, and all the means of knowing the will of their Divine King. Yet how many among them are His open and avowed enemies. There is not one feature of His character which men do not blaspheme,—not one act of His government at which they do not cavil. He is alleged to be unrighteous in His commands; unfair in His treatment of mankind; unwise in His arrangements; unfaithful in His words; and even vindictive, unmerciful, implacable in His judgments, and in no respect worthy of man's love and obedience. Jesus of Nazareth—believed in by the Church, known and loved by all its living members—is still “despised and rejected of men.” Nor are His enemies ashamed to speak out their thoughts, and openly to scorn and ridicule Him; asserting that He has no right to govern them or the world,—and thus “denying the Lord that bought them.” Now, as on the day of His crucifixion, a rabble of all ranks, talents, and professions, cry, “Away with this fellow;” while they demand in His stead some Barabbas “hero” of their own to worship. There is often manifested an opposition to Christianity which assumes the aspect of personal hatred. We do not at all allude in these pages to the sincere, reverential man, who doubts, questions, argues, opposes, sifts, denies, rejects, while endeavouring, with an honest mind, to discover and believe *the truth*, whatever that may be; nor to the sadness of spirit of one who *wishes* “the glad tidings” to be true, but cannot arrive at a conclusion so desirable for his own good and peace, as well as for that of society; nor to the effects of a peculiar constitutional temperament which has a tendency first to doubt and invest everything with darkness, and then endeavours in vain to dispel what itself creates. But when we speak of infidels and unbelievers, we speak of *ungodly* men who dislike the truth of God, and who manifest this dislike in their triumph when any supposed error in the life or the doctrines of Jesus Christ is detected, or any evil (for which He is held responsible) is exposed in His followers, and who keep an ample mantle of charity for those who disbelieve, but none for those who believe in Jesus Christ as their only Saviour.

This opposition to the government of God through Jesus Christ has not been a temporary outburst by a few only. The kingdom of Satan has existed here since the fall of man, side by side with Christ's kingdom, and opposed it in every age and clime. The kingdom of holiness and peace has never entered the soul of any living man, without first meeting, and then overcoming, enmity and ill-will by the power of truth and love. It has never entered a single country on the surface of the globe without terrible



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combats being fought again and again, in which the best soldiers and noblest subjects of the Great King have “had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments.” “We will not have the Lord to reign over us!” has been everywhere the awful battle-cry; and the conflict rages now as fiercely as it did in any age of the world! Nor, moreover, has this opposition been given by uncivilised savages; but men of knowledge and of genius have dedicated all the powers of their mind to the dread task of ridding the world of the Redeemer’s sceptre. What they have thought, they have spoken; what they have spoken, they have written and recorded in books, that their influence might extend beyond their own immediate circle and their own time, and that other nations and other generations might know what *they* thought of the Saviour,—how sincerely they themselves despised and rejected Him, and desired all others to do the same. What is every infidel publication but an accusation against Jesus Christ, a protest against His government, and an attempt to rouse the world to join in the rebellion? “They take counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us!”

And this hatred to Christ will continue till the end of the world: for we read, that “in *the last days* will come *scoffers*.” Nay, it is quite possible that accusations against Him are, and shall be, maintained by the wicked up till the very hour of judgment. For, even as the criminal before his trial will feed his pride, and soothe his conscience, by denying every charge alleged against him, or by blaming every one but himself; so it may be that the wicked, after death, will continue to cast the blame upon the Saviour, for all they are and have been, even when they can no longer doubt the reality of His existence or government.

And will Jesus ever answer those accusations? Why should He? you perhaps exclaim. His character, you say, cannot be affected in the estimation of the good by anything which the enemies of all righteousness can urge against it. His throne can no more be shaken by the puny attacks of men or devils than the everlasting mountains can be disturbed by the storm-blasts which howl around them. What more, then, is needed, than to shut up the wicked in a prison-house, through whose adamant walls the accusing cry can never pierce, and whose doors are for ever barred by the holy decree of the Almighty? Ah! were it so, even this thought might possibly gratify pride and enmity, could a *condemned*, though not *judged* spirit for ever carry with it a conviction of having waged a war in which *power* alone had conquered weakness, and *might* trampled upon right; and that all its charges remained unanswered and unanswerable! But let no one presume upon this. It is true that Jesus Christ now, as when on earth He stood before His enemies, “answers



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nothing.” Do not misunderstand this awful silence! You “marvel greatly” that He works no miracle to satisfy your doubts, or you deny His power of doing so, and therefore you imagine, that because He replies not to your accusations, He either hears them not, cares not for them, or cannot meet them. But be assured, a day is appointed when the question between you and Him will be fairly tried. Unbelievers of all ranks, and whatever be their ability, will have an opportunity of re-stating their case, and of proving the truth of their accusations—if they can. Let none suppose that Jesus will shrink from such an investigation. Every utterance is reported for review at judgment; every book is kept for that day. It is not the method of the divine government to put down its enemies by mere physical power, as if the question between God and man was indeed one of strength and weakness, and not rather of right and wrong. The Lord will indeed answer his enemies; but He will do so by the irresistible power of truth, and the omnipotent force of righteousness. He will crush and overwhelm them; but it will be in their own conscience, and in their own estimation. He will expel them from whatever refuge of lies they may vainly attempt to seek for shelter, and expose them to the full blaze of *principle*, until their inmost souls echo the dread sentence of “GUILTY,” which must be pronounced upon them, while they stand “speechless” amidst the assembled universe, and before the omniscient and holy Judge of all the earth. “He is coming with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to CONVINCe all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their HARD SPEECHES which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him!”

Do we address one who is a professed unbeliever in the truth, or rather, who “believes a lie,”—that there *is* no Saviour? We ask such a one to consider what the certain, or even *probable* consequences will be to him, if all we have said is nevertheless true? What if you shall see Jesus Christ face to face, and have your whole outer and inner history, as it *is known to God*, minutely revealed to your own mind, and to the assembled jury of the universe? Will your thinking, or saying, that the whole is a fiction, make it so? Will your scoff at God’s revelation of the future prevent the dead from rising, or the Judge from appearing? Will a foolish jest, or a proud callousness, or a subtle argument, or a brave indifference to what others fear, enable you, on the resurrection morning, to shut your ears against the sound of the last trump, or to disobey the summons of the Son of God to rise from the tomb, and to appear before Him? And if no unbelief can change the will of God, or make that false which He proclaims to be true, nor alter His prescribed order in things to come, no more than it can do His present order in the starry heavens,—what can you say to Jesus Christ in your own defence?

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How can you, in consistency with His Word, so justify your own opinions and conduct, as to make it *possible* for Him to say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of *thy* Lord?" But, blessed be God! the same Word of truth which condemns the sinner, and shuts out all hope of safety to him, *while in his state of unbelief and ungodliness*, invites him, and commands him, to come out of that state, and to share the life which is in Christ for every man. We cannot repeat it too often that Jesus offers immediate pardon and life through faith in His blood, to the chief of sinners—to the oldest and most bitter enemy which He has upon earth! Jesus offers His Spirit to every man, to enlighten his understanding, renew his will, and spiritualise his taste and affections, and shed abroad the love of God in his heart; so that even thou, whoever thou art, mayest yet love, and be loved by, Jesus Christ and His saints for ever and ever! "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and THOU shalt be saved!*" But should His long-suffering patience, and abundant mercy, and rich love, fail to gain your heart,—should you "*prefer darkness to light,*" and "*remain in unbelief,*" and live and die without Him,—how can you escape? Is it not righteous that you should walk in the darkness which you love, and be separated from your Saviour and His people, whom you dislike, and be permitted "to eat of the fruit of your *own* way, and be filled with your own devices?" On "the great and terrible day of the Lord," you will, alas! be "*convinced*" that the sentence pronounced upon you by the Saviour, of "Depart from me!" is but an echo of what your own heart is now saying to Him! Hear, I beseech you, the words of warning which God now addresses to you, in order that you may, in time, "flee from the wrath to come!" "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," (Heb. x. 26-31.)

But let us further inquire, What shall be its results with reference to the righteous?

1. The righteous will then fully understand the excellence of Christ's government over themselves.

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How profoundly mysterious, as yet, to ourselves, is our own individual history! If we attempt to gather up the past, and to trace the whole way along which we have journeyed, with the innumerable windings of the path, and all the dark valleys through which it has led, the rugged places it has passed over, or the many lofty hills up which it has ascended,—how endless, how perplexing does it appear! If, again, we try to measure the various powers which have helped to make us what we are, or to weigh the number and relative importance of all the things which have combined to produce the present result of character within, and of circumstances without us,—how soon are we lost amidst the mass of the infinite items which make up the sum of even our little history. How inadequate are all our attempts to solve the problems without number which every year suggests. *Why*, for example, has this or that happened? Wherefore this sorrow or that joy?—why such changes of place or of fortune?—why the loss of old friends or the gift of new ones?—why—But the questions are endless, and never can be answered till judgment. It is true, that we are often privileged to see very clearly the reason of many of Christ's dealings with us here. He shews us His ways as well as His acts—treating us as “friends” who “know what their Lord doeth.” The wheel of Providence often makes its revolutions in so short a period that we see the whole movement. It was thus in the case of Abraham. The mystery of God's command was resolved after three days on Mount Moriah. Thus, too, the darkness of family grief and of a distant Saviour, which brooded over the household of Bethany, was dispelled, and vanished before bright sunshine, at the cry, “Lazarus, come forth!” But it is not always thus; and though it would be so more frequently if we waited more patiently upon God and considered His ways, yet, at best, but a small fraction of our life is understood here. Moreover, our own history is so interlaced with the history of others, that what is more properly theirs, in some degree is ours also. Can Moses, for instance, yet fully comprehend his own life in its relation to the Jewish nation, whose fate is still involved in darkness? Can any one of the saints of old, whose deeds and words are recorded in God's Book, and are telling every day and hour upon the history of mankind, and must continue to do so till time shall be no more, comprehend what they really have done on earth? Must not the end of all things come before they understand the place and the work their Lord assigned to them? And so is it with the humblest believer. He is a part of a great whole; and to understand how Jesus has governed Himself as a part, he must be able to see his own life in relation to the great whole. But each Christian who has walked by faith, and held fast his confidence in Christ, will then also have revealed how the Lord has governed him, and all that He has done to him and for him, and what He has enabled

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him to be and to do on earth. The sackcloth and ashes of every patient Job will be turned into garments of praise; and the lamentations of every mourning Jeremiah into songs of gladness: and in adoring wonder and unutterable joy, every head will be bowed down, every crown cast at Christ's feet, and every heart will feel, and mouth confess, "He hath done all things well!" What an amazing disclosure will this be of the wisdom and love with which our gracious Lord has assigned to each servant his lot,—given to each "*his work*," and so prepared all things for him in the world, and so made all things work together for his good, that "the fruit has been holiness, and the end everlasting life!"

2. But the Christian will also behold at judgment the excellence of Christ's government over others, and over the whole world.

If we are such mysteries to ourselves, and if we cannot as yet truly write our own biographies, how much more perplexing to us is the personal history of any other in his relation to the Redeemer! How impossible to discover the reasons of all, or of any, of Christ's providential dealings with him, or to read aright any one day in his life! Was it possible for Job's friends to interpret, *at the time*, Job's sufferings? God alone could have corrected Jacob when, in the dark night of his sorrow, yet just before the daybreak of his joy in Egypt, he cried, "Joseph is not, Simeon is not, and will ye take Benjamin away?—*all these things are against me!*" Daniel in the lions' den, or the three young men in the furnace, with a wicked king in peace upon the throne; John the Baptist in the dungeon, with Herod in the banquet hall; Stephen falling asleep beneath the shower of cruel stones, and Saul gazing complacently at the murderers' clothes laid at his feet:—these, and a thousand other such incidents in human history, are, to beholders, involved in a portion of that darkness which hung over the cross of Christ itself, at the time, a mystery of mysteries to all who witnessed its agonies! But when, from the history of persons, we rise to the contemplation of the history of cities, countries, and nations; or ascend to a still higher region in order to take in, if possible, the history of the human race from age to age; and to comprehend what Jesus Christ has done for it, and how He has governed it,—how much more profound is the darkness! If, for instance, we endeavour to form any estimate of the effect which has been produced upon the character and destiny of mankind by the present structure of the physical earth, with its mountains, seas, rivers, winds, and climate—the house which Jesus Christ has built and furnished for His creatures; by the famines and pestilences, wars and conquests, migrations and settlements, arising out of circumstances more or less controlling man, and beyond his will; as well as by all that has come, as it were, directly from Jesus, through His Church, from Eden till this present hour;—how infinite

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to us is the field of observation! “O the depth of the riches both of the knowledge and wisdom of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” We gaze upon those majestic wheels of His providence, some of which take whole cycles to revolve, and “their wings are so high, that they are dreadful!” It is so, for example, with the history of Israel, which, commencing with Abraham, when earth was young, four thousand years ago, is still moving on as a distinct stream flowing amidst the waters of the great ocean, yet never mingling with them, though nearing the unfathomable gulf where all is still.

But “what we know not now, we shall know hereafter,” upon the great “day of the *revelation* of Jesus Christ,” when, in the light of unerring truth, the history of each man, and of the whole race, will be seen, and for the first time understood. “Now we know in part, but then we shall know even as we are known.” Every question which here perplexes or pains the thoughtful and conscientious inquirer, will be fully answered. The secret and hitherto hidden springs of actions will be laid bare, and their remotest results disclosed. We shall apprehend the real life—the true philosophy—of history. Then will the government of Jesus Christ over the whole family of man, and every individual member of it, be seen—what it has always by His Church believed—to have been one of righteousness, wisdom, and love.

3. Need I add, as the last grand result of judgment, that the Triune God will be glorified?

*God the Father* will be glorified! The prayer of Christ shall then be fulfilled: “Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee!” The doxology of the apostle will be realised: “To him be glory by the Church through Christ Jesus throughout all ages!” That glory will be seen in His having committed the government of the world to Jesus Christ. Then will be understood, as it never was before, how “God so loved the world in giving His only-begotten Son” to be its Creator and Governor, and the Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church.

*God the Son* will be glorified! Every event and act in His great mediatorial kingdom will shew the grandeur of His character. The whole world’s history will be as a mirror, full of the light of this Sun of Righteousness,—reflecting the greatness of His power, the depths of His wisdom, the beauty of His holiness, and the riches of His grace. He will “be glorified, too, *in His saints*.” Each believer will not only be a living monument of what Christ has done, but, as a child of God, will also be in his character an image of what Christ the first-born *is*!

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*God the Spirit* will be glorified when the results are made manifest of all He has done for and in the Church, and of all which men have received from this Teacher, Sanctifier, and Comforter! If many will have cause to mourn upon that day because they have resisted and grieved Him by their wilful impenitency and wickedness, what a multitude, greater than any man can number, will adore Him for the spiritual ignorance in the ways of God which He dispelled,—the all-sufficient strength for duty and trial, for life and death, which He imparted,—the holy love which He shed abroad upon their hearts,—the good fruit which by His aid they produced in their lives,—the calm peace which He gave to their consciences,—the prayers heard and answered by God which He prompted,—and the joy unspeakable to which He often raised their souls!

Thus will the proceedings of the great day of judgment, without one single exception, reveal to the intelligent universe the glory of God,—Father, Son, and Spirit,—as displayed in the government of the world through Jesus Christ.

Oh, how can we form an adequate conception of the overpowering effect which the revelations of this eventful period in the history of the universe must necessarily produce upon the saints and just men made perfect, and upon the innumerable company of angels, who, with intense interest and profound intelligence, watch the proceedings before the immaculate throne of the Son of man! As age after age passes in solemn review, and as each succeeding era, beneath the light of investigation, emerges out of the darkness in which it had hitherto been wrapped,—as city after city, and kingdom after kingdom, from their early beginnings, onwards through centuries of advancement in power and influence, till their final silence in the dust, are all reproduced in their living reality,—we may conceive how the awful interest in the world's trial must deepen itself in every bosom, and intelligent eyes must gleam with a brighter intelligence, and admiring souls burn with a profounder and holier admiration, as they are enabled to perceive how, over all this earth, to them hitherto so dark and cloudy, Jesus had ever reigned with unclouded splendour, as the sun reigns in the calm heavens, and pours down his beams of light from a region far above the tempestuous sky. And we can, in some degree, conceive how their lips should ever and anon give birth to accents of heartfelt praise, as a deep moral order and beauty are seen growing up, evolving out of the chaos of history, even as a holy temple might rear itself from what seemed to the eye of sense to be the very "lines of confusion, and stones of emptiness." We can imagine, too, when this long day of wondrous disclosures is about to terminate, and its sun to set for ever over the old order of things, how the joy of this great assemblage should reach at last its climax, and have a fulness of glory in it never before experienced; until, as judgment ended, and



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the whole government of their blessed Lord was disclosed, their sense of the grandeur and infinite majesty of His character and ways should be such as to call forth from ten thousand times ten thousand ecstatic souls, as the grand verdict of the universe, those bursts of praise: *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”*

Such are a few of the more obvious results of a day of judgment. But who will dare to deny that these may possibly be extended to other worlds and other orders of beings, and be made influential for the good and happiness of the universe throughout limitless ages, and be the means of impressing unfallen yet peaceable creatures, with a more profound sense of the glory of God and the unchangeableness of His government? We ourselves possess an experience somewhat analogous to this, in the fact of God’s righteous dealings with another order of beings—the fallen angels—having been revealed to us for our instruction and warning; and thus, for aught we know, the transactions of the coming day of judgment may, in whole or in part, form such a living record of God’s government by Jesus Christ, as may be revealed to millions, of whose existence and circumstances we are as yet ignorant, and be to them for ever as a great Bible, for their warning, comfort, and instruction in righteousness.

We have now brought our thoughts upon “judgment” to a conclusion. May they suggest others more worthy of the theme to all who may peruse them! We have tried to view it in the light of Scripture statement; yet feeling deeply conscious of how dimly and inadequately we perceive and judge of the awful future; of God’s relationship to the human family; and of the manner in which the only wise and merciful God will apply the eternal principles of justice (which is but love dealing with sin) to the infinite varieties of human character, or to the circumstances of each human being. Questions innumerable suggest themselves, which we cannot answer now, but which will be answered then, regarding the heathen, and regarding millions who have lived and died without knowing or loving Jesus Christ; doubtless we shall all then be amazed at our own ignorance and sin, and overwhelmed by the majestic glory and excellence of God in Christ. But whatever the results of that day may be, one thing is certain, that they will afford satisfaction and joy unutterable to just and good men, yea, to every human being who has any real sympathy with Him whose “name is Love!”

But let us never forget that every day of our lives is a day of judgment, in which Christ is searching our hearts and judging our lives, condemning the evil and blessing the good, and seeking to separate the one from the other. If we are able to welcome Him as our judge and deliverer in our present day, we shall be able to do so also on “the last day.”

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I conclude with these words:—

“For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have *boldness in the day of judgment*: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us.”

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”

*“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”*

## THOUGHTS UPON FUTURE LIFE.

It is obviously impossible to treat a subject so vast and so profoundly interesting as this within the limits of a *Parish Paper*, except in the most cursory and superficial manner. Yet I am induced to make the attempt, in order, if possible, to impress my readers with such ideas of our life in heaven as are more in accordance with the nature of man and the Word of God, than, I am inclined to think, obtain among many sincere Christians, who accordingly are deprived of encouragements in duty, comforts in sorrow, and bright hopes to cheer them amid the world's darkness, which they might otherwise possess.

Let us inquire, then, in what shall consist the believer's happiness in God's presence.

Now, it will greatly aid us in answering this question regarding our true life in eternity, if we first consider what constitutes our true life in time, or what would constitute our



perfect happiness now, if in the full enjoyment of all our mental and bodily powers, and if, in the best possible circumstances, we perfectly fulfilled upon earth God's purpose in our creation.

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In endeavouring to solve this question, I remark that our perfection consists in the gratification of every part of our many-sided nature. Thus, for instance, enjoyment might be derived through our senses, though the intellect was comparatively weak, and our moral being depraved; or from the exercise of our intellectual or spiritual nature, while the body suffered from pain: or delight might be poured through all those channels, but yet if we were doomed to be solitary beings, without any companion or friend with whom to communicate or share our gladness, or were prevented from expressing our thoughts and desires by action, the result in either of these supposed cases would not be perfect happiness. But, on the other hand, if we can imagine a man with his whole nature in a state of perfect health, each portion demanding and obtaining its appropriate nourishment, and with all his powers beautifully balanced and in perfect harmony with the plan of God, “according to the effectual working of the measure in every part,”—the senses ministering to the most refined tastes,—the intellect full of light in the apprehension of truth, and strong in its discovery,—the moral being possessing perfect holiness and unerring subjection to the will of God,—the love of society able to rest upon fitting objects, and to find a full return for its sympathies in suitable companionships, while ample scope was afforded for activity by congenial labour;—then would such a state be perfection or fulness of joy in God’s presence here below. I do not, of course, allege that every part of our being has the same capacity to afford us joy, or that the flood can pour itself into the soul with the same fulness through each of these channels, as if, for instance, we depended in the same degree for enjoyment upon our sentient as we do upon our intellectual or moral nature. All I mean to assert is, that whatever proportion may come through each, God has so made us, that perfect joy is derived only through all. Such is man’s actual constitution as he came from the hands of his Maker; and such would have been his happiness had he remained unfallen. Placed, as Adam was, in a material world so rich in sources of physical happiness, with an intellect capable of unlocking the countless treasures of science,—with a nature pure and spotless, delighting in the excellent God,—with society begun with woman as a helpmeet for him, and with the active labour required “to dress and keep” his earthly paradise,—he possessed, in such perfect adaptations, a heaven upon earth. And had perfect man been translated to another region, we cannot conceive his joy thereby to become essentially different in kind, though different in degree, supposing him to remain the same being, and to possess the same human nature. Now, man’s fall has not altered this principle. Sin is a perversion of human nature, not its annihilation; a disorder of its powers, not their destruction. Nor is restoration by Jesus Christ the gift of a different

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constitution, as if He made us something else than human beings, but the renovation of the old constitution after its original type. It is making the “old man,” diseased, bent down, paralysed, deaf, blind, the “new man,” with frame erect, limbs strong, eyes and ears open, and all his powers fresh and vigorous for immortality; and, therefore, that which would constitute the happiness of man were he perfect on earth, will be his happiness, though in a higher degree, when he is made perfect in heaven. This supposition, I repeat, only assumes the fact that we shall be the same persons for ever; that human nature will never cease to be human nature, or be changed into a different species of existence, no more than Jesus Christ, the Head of His Church, will ever cease to be what He is—“*the man* Christ Jesus,” with a human body and a human soul, “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

There is another way in which I might describe the nature of our future life, although I shall base my remarks on the principles now stated. We must admit that the perfection of our being is fellowship with God the Father in the possession of that spirit of son-ship which was revealed in Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Son of man. This, and this alone, must insure fellowship with Him in His character and joy. We shall consequently rejoice in all that He rejoices in—as *far as this is possible for creatures*. Thus, if He rejoices in the glory of His own Being, as Father, Son, and Spirit, so shall we; if He rejoices in all His works, so shall we; if He rejoices in what He does, in what He knows, in what He purposes, so shall we; if He rejoices in the communion of holy and happy men and angels, so shall we. In one word, if “our chief end is to glorify God,” when that end is fulfilled, we shall “enjoy Him for ever.” And this was our Saviour’s prayer when He said, “The glory Thou hast given me I have given them, that we may be one!”

But as those two lines of thought would lead practically to the same conclusion, it seems to me that the nature of our future life will be best understood by most of my readers if I endeavour to shew “what we shall be,” according to the arrangement already proposed.

Let us, then, meditate on the glorious supply which God has provided for filling up every part of this our complex nature in heaven.

### I.

#### OUR PHYSICAL LIFE IN HEAVEN.

Speaking of the materialism of heaven, Dr Chalmers truly says:—“The common imagination that many have of paradise on the other side of death, is that of a lofty, aerial region where the inmates float on ether, or are mysteriously suspended upon nothing; where all the warm and felt accompaniments which give such an expression of

strength, and life, and colour to our present habitation, are attenuated into a sort of spiritual element, that is meagre, and imperceptible, and wholly uninviting to the eye

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of mortals here below; where every vestige of materialism is done away with, and nothing left but certain unearthly scenes that have no power of allurements, and certain unearthly ecstasies with which it is impossible to sympathise," The sensitiveness with which many thus shrink from almost alluding to the physical element of enjoyment in heaven, because it is unworthy to be compared with the spiritual glory that is to be revealed, arises, no doubt, from the half suspicion that there is some necessary connexion between materialism and sin; thus forgetting that the body, and the outward world which ministers to it, are God's handiworks as well as the soul; and that it is He himself who has adjusted their relative workings. And surely it is quite unnecessary to remind you at any length how exquisitely God has fashioned our physical frame, as the medium of communication with the outer material world. The nostrils inhale the sweet perfumes which scent the breezy air, and rise as incense from the flowers that cover the earth. By the eye the soul perceives the glories of the summer sky, and searches for its midnight stars; recognises splendour of colour, and beauty of form; gazes on the outspread landscape of fertile field and hoary mountain, of stream, forest, ocean, and island; and contemplates that world of profounder interest still, the human countenance, of beloved parent, child, or friend, strong with the power of elevated thought, sublime with the grandeur of moral character, or bright with all the sunshine of winning emotion. The ear, too, is the magic instrument which conveys to the soul all the varied harmonies of sound, from the choirs of spring, and the other innumerable minstrelsy of nature, as well as from the higher art of man, that soothe, elevate, and solemnise. It is true, indeed, that there are grosser appetites of the body which many pervert so as to enslave the spirit; thus abusing by gluttony, drunkenness, and every form of sensuality, what God the merciful and wise has intrusted to man to be used for wise and merciful ends. But even here there is already perceptible a marked difference between those appetites and the more refined tastes alluded to; inasmuch as the former are found in their abuse to be, strictly speaking, unnatural, and destructive of man's happiness; and even in their legitimate use they decay with advancing years, thus proving that the stamp of time is upon them as on things belonging to a temporary economy; whereas such tastes as those that enjoy the beautiful in nature or in art, for example, abide in old age with a youthful freshness, and more than a youthful niceness of discernment; and so afford a presumption that they are destined for immortality. To the aged saint "the trees clap their hands, the little hills rejoice, and the mountains break forth into singing;" and when the earth is empty of every other sentient pleasure, it is in the beauty of its sights and sounds, still full to him of the glory of his God.

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And so must it be for ever! The glorified saint is not “unclothed,” but “clothed upon.” He inhabits “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The future body is called a “spiritual body” to express, I presume, its pure and immortal essence; for though it will be somehow related to the present body,—as the risen is related to the sown grain which has perished through corruption,—it must be changed into a new and higher form. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” “We shall all be changed.” “He shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like to His own glorious body.” It is in this new body, once sown in weakness, corruption, and mortality, but raised at length in power, incorruption, and immortality, no more to suffer, and no more to die, that we shall tread upon the new earth, gaze on the new heavens, and walk in the paradise of our God.

And who can tell what sources of refined enjoyment, through the medium of the spiritual body, are in store for us in God’s great palace of art, with its endless mansions and endless displays of glory! Well may we say of such anticipated pleasures what good Izaak Walton says of the singing of birds: “Lord, if Thou hast provided such music for sinners on earth, what hast Thou in store for Thy saints in heaven!” For if this little spot of earth is full of scenes of loveliness to us inexhaustible; if, contemplating these in a body buoyant with health and strength, we feel it is joy even to live and breathe; and if when, seeing God in them all, the expression of praise rises to the lips, “Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches!”—oh, what visions of glory may be spread before the wondering eye throughout the vast extent of the material universe, comprehending those immense worlds which twinkle only in the field of the largest telescope, and vanish into the far distance in endless succession; and what sounds may greet the ear from the as yet unheard music of those spheres; while, for aught we know, other means of communication may be opened up to us, with objects ministering delight to new tastes; and sources of sentient enjoyment discovered which do not exist here, or elude the perception of our present senses. Add to all this our deliverance from those physical evils and defects which are now the causes of so much pain, and clog so terribly the aspiring soul. For how affected are we by the slightest disorganisation of our bodily frame! A disturbance in some of the finer parts of its machinery, which no science can discover or rectify; a delicate fibre shadowed by a cloud passing over the sun; or a nerve chilled by a lowering of the temperature of the atmosphere, will tell on the most genial temper, relax the strongest intellect, and dim the brightest imagination; while other physical causes, quite as mysterious, can make reason reel and lunacy become ascendant. The very infirmities of old age; the constant toil required

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to satisfy our cravings for food and raiment; the wounds and bruises the body receives, and which agonise it, and the deformity which so often disfigures it, cramping the spirit within a narrow and iron prison-house—these form a terrible deduction from that joy which we are capable of deriving even now through the medium of our physical organisation. Such evils cannot here be rectified. They are the immediate, or more remote consequences of man's iniquity; and under Christ belong to that education by which bodily suffering is made the means of disciplining the soul for immortality. But in the new heavens and the new earth the body will no longer experience fatigue in labour, or be subject to hurtful influences from the elements, nor ever grow old; but be glorious and beautiful as the risen body of Jesus Christ! "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." I wonder not, indeed, that Paul should exclaim along with those who had the first-fruits of the Spirit, "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the *redemption of our body*."

With these bright hopes let us who are now alive seek to glorify God in the body which is to be glorified together with Christ. "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" "Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost? If any man defile that temple, him will God destroy." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." Let us honour the body as a holy thing; and beware how we put the chains of slavery upon it, or from our selfishness expose it to hunger and nakedness. Let us endeavour even to make art, that ministers to our sense of the beautiful, minister also to our sense of the true and good; and ever speak to us of God as seen in His works; or in "His ways among the children of men." And finally, as we contemplate the body of a departed saint, let us behold it in the light of this revelation. Let the grave in which it lies no longer be associated in our thoughts with the worm and corruption only, and with all the sad memorials and revolting symbols of mortality. Let the voice of Him who is the resurrection and the life be heard in the breeze that bends the grass which waves over it, and His quickening energy be seen in the beauteous sun which shines upon it; and while we hear the cry, "Dust to dust," let us remember that the "very dust to Him is dear;" and that when He appears in His glory, He will repair and rebuild that ruined temple, and fashion it in glory and in beauty like His own!

## II.

### OUR INTELLECTUAL LIFE.

Let us consider the joy which God has provided for our *intellects* during our immortal life in heaven.



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There are many dear saints of God who have little sympathy with those who associate happiness with the pursuit or possession of intellectual truth. These persons, perhaps, have had themselves such weak intellectual capacities, as made the acquisition of knowledge impossible for them beyond its simplest elements; or their minds have been stunted in early years from want of education; or in the providence of God they have been made “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” rather than intellectual princes among the people. Yet let none of us who are so ignorant, and who as yet think and speak like children, be discouraged by a conscious sense of our weak intellectual grasp and scanty information; but rather rejoice with Christ in the dispensation by which God reveals Himself not to talent but to goodness; not to the giant intellect but to the babe-like spirit: “I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!”

God has, nevertheless, made the acquisition of truth by the intellect a source of supreme delight. You well know how every field in nature has been searched, and every quarter of the globe ransacked, and many days and nights of patient intellectual toil consumed by men who have endured incredible labour, supported by no other motive than their love of knowledge. The immediate joy which is experienced by a great discoverer when a new fact or truth flashes on his mind is to others almost inconceivable. We read that when Newton, after years of difficulty, was just about to step on the summit of that mountain from which he knew he was to hear such intellectual music as never before had sounded in the mind of man, and to catch a glimpse of the hitherto unseen glory of that new ocean of truth which he alone had reached,—for

“He was the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea!”—

his joy was so great that he was overcome by his emotions, and wept! This passion of acquiring knowledge is not the least remarkable fact recorded of Solomon. We are told that “he spake of trees, and of beasts, and of creeping things.” He himself says of God, “He hath made things beautiful in time: also He hath put it into man’s heart to survey the world, and to find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.” “When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.” There was in all this no doubt “vanity and vexation of spirit,” for the attempt was vain to find satisfaction for the soul in the knowledge of things themselves apart from the knowledge of a personal God, or in any truth rather

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than in Him who is true. And therefore many, perceiving how intellect is often allied to ungodliness, and fails of itself to insure either goodness or happiness, are disposed to refuse to it the high place which God has assigned to it in the soul, and to suspect the reality of the exalted delight which He has designed His saints and angels to enjoy in its exercise. But while the deifiers of mere intellect are ever reminded that it alone cannot deify, but may be abused so as to demonise man, yet let those who slight it remember also that it is the head without whose inventive genius or directing skill the strong arms of labour would be idle. Let the man of material wealth or material power recollect that it is the wealth of science and the power of mind, possessed perhaps by unknown and lonely students who have all their lifetime been struggling to obtain their daily bread, and to snatch "the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table," which have created our manufactures, filled our warehouses, crossed our oceans, healed our diseases, and reared the fabric of law and government.

And God, who has made the intellect the source of delight to the individual, and of good to society here, will surely perfect it hereafter. Whatever its capacity may be, it shall then be filled to its utmost limit; and be characterised by a clearness, vigour, and precision, unknown here to the greatest thinkers. All barriers to its progress shall be removed, which were occasioned here by the mortal body, the poor culture, the little time, the few opportunities, the weak or sinful prejudices; so that the poorest saint will shine there as the sun in its strength! And with this increased power of knowing, how inconceivably increased must be our sources of knowledge; how boundless is the field which supplies them; how inexhaustible the treasures it contains; how unlimited the time for gathering them; how helpful the society that will sympathise with and join in our pursuits! No one surely imagines that on entering heaven we can at once obtain perfect knowledge—perfect, I mean, not in the sense of accuracy, but of fully possessing all that can be known. This is possible for Deity only. For it may be asserted with confidence that Gabriel knows more to-day than he knew yesterday. Nor is it difficult for us to conceive how, throughout eternity, and revelling with freedom throughout God's universe, we may be occupied by the contemplation of new and endless displays of the inexhaustible wisdom and power of God in His works; and see more and more into the life of all things; and continually read new volumes of that great book of nature and of truth, whose first letters we are now learning with difficulty to spell. And could we ever succeed in gathering together the present treasures of all worlds, why may not new and varied creations for ever renew the universe, and grander displays be made of the glory and majesty of the Creator? Besides all this, must not the ways of God, as well as His works,

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and the wonders of His moral government, extending over all His creatures, and over all worlds, and throughout all ages, afford inexhaustible subjects wherewith to exercise the intellect of man? Is not every truth, too, with which we are already acquainted linked to another and a higher truth? And if so, when shall we reach the end of that awful chain which is in the hand of God? But though for ever we shall thus dive deeper and deeper into the divine mind, never, never can we sound its unfathomable depths. Though we shall ascend for ever from one intellectual height to another in the eternal range of thought, we shall approach, yet never reach, that unseen throne on which is seated the *I Am*, the Comprehender of all truth, the Solver of all mysteries, but who Himself, though known, because revealed to us in His eternal Son and loved as our Father, must ever, as the absolute One, be the mystery incomprehensible!

From the few glimpses which we obtain in Scripture of angelic life, we may infer that the understanding of the works and ways of God forms no small part of its joy. We read of the sons of God crowding round the earth, and we hear those morning stars singing for joy, as they behold the commencement of this new theatre of wonders added to those with which they were already acquainted. I doubt not that these high intelligences watched with intensest interest the progress of the world's formation, and beheld order and beauty growing out of chaotic darkness and confusion, and during the incalculable ages of the past, before man himself appeared upon the scene, gazed with wonder on the successive creations of animal and vegetable life, whose remains we now see buried in their rocky sepulchres. We know, too, the deeper interest which the angelic host have taken in this world since it became the abode of man. They are acquainted with all its inhabitants, and have seen the mystery of God's providence here unfolding itself from age to age. A great multitude of them hovered over the hills of Bethlehem at that great era when "unto us a Child was born, and unto us a Saviour was given, who was Christ the Lord;" and in sympathy with God and man they ascribed "glory to God in the highest," because of the "peace" which was proclaimed to earth, and of the "good-will" which was expressed towards man. We know also how they have taken an active share under Jesus the King, in advancing the affairs of His kingdom, both by punishing the wicked, and ministering to the heirs of salvation. And to put it beyond a doubt that scope is given even here for the exercise of the intellect of the angels, we are distinctly informed that all the marvellous history now proceeding in this world had a direct reference in its original design to their progressive education: "For God created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now *unto principalities and powers* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." There are indeed things even here "which angels desire to look into!"

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And though the redeemed from earth are not yet revealed to us as being engaged in intellectual pursuits, nevertheless two of them have revisited the earth and appeared in the old land of their sojourning in visible form, and bearing the names of Moses and Elias, so familiar to the Church of God, and have spoken in language intelligible to the children of men, and upon a subject of all the most absorbing in its interest to the Church above and below—the decease which Christ was to accomplish at Jerusalem!

But I dare not enlarge on this part of my subject, however inviting it may be. Let me only implore of you to consecrate your intellects to God's service; and glorify Him in "soul and spirit" as well as in "body." Reverence *Truth* in every department, as it is the expression of the mind and will of God, and seek it in humility, and with a deep sense of your responsibility as to *how* you search and *what* you believe. And surely it is an elevating and comforting thing to know, with reference to those who on earth were adorned by God with high intellects, cultivated with care, and sanctified for their Master's service; who thirsted for truth, and relished its acquisition with peculiar delight, and the more so when it led them directly to Him who is Truth itself, and enabled them the better to behold His glory, that their powers are now finding ample field for their exercise, and can orb themselves around without a limit. Not therefore with sadness but with joy we can turn from beholding the dead unmeaning eye of the lifeless body, through which the noble mind once shone with mild intellectual lustre, and contemplate the same mind rising over the everlasting hills, amidst the fresh unsullied brightness of a new-born day, and advancing for ever without a cloud amidst the endless glories of the upper sky.

One other suggestion as to duty in connexion with this part of our subject: take a peculiarly tender, sympathising, and thoughtful care of those who are deprived of the noble gift of intellect, and who in God's providence may be cast on your mercy. Walk by faith towards them. See them not as they are, but as they shall be. Act as you would wish to have done when you meet them in that world of light where we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, and where even he who seems exceeding fierce shall sit at the feet of Jesus, meek as a child, and in his right mind. Thank God, "there shall be no night *there!*"

### III.

#### OUR DEVOTIONAL LIFE.

Our joy in heaven will, above all, be derived from the perfection of our moral being. We shall be "without fault before the throne of God." "He shall present us to Himself without spot, or blemish, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

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Truly and beautifully has Sir Thomas Browne said,—“There is no felicity in what the world adores: that wherein God himself is happy, the holy angels are happy, and in whose defect the devils are unhappy—that dare I call happiness; whatsoever else the world terms happiness, is to me an apparition or neat delusion, wherein there is no more of happiness than the name.” Following out this thought, let us reverently inquire in what chiefly consists the joy of God, or what especially constitutes His glory. Now, He is glorious in that creative mind by which things are made so wisely with reference to the end which each has to serve; and made so beautiful and grand in their sculptured forms and harmonious colours. He surveys all His works, and rejoices in them as “very good.” He is glorious also in that miracle of a wondrous providence by which without a miracle the wants of all the endless worlds of His creatures are supplied; and by which responsible persons also are created and trained to glorify and enjoy Himself for ever. But while perfection beams in every feature of the Divine mind, His glory, His joy, is in His *character*. Not His power, but the character which wields the power; not His wisdom, but that which His character accomplishes by it; not His majestic sovereignty, but that majestic character which stamps His reign as one of right and therefore of might, commanding, irresistible. This is the glory which He made to pass before the eyes of Moses when upon the mount; which shone in the face of Jesus Christ the Holy One of God; and which fills the souls of the rapt seraphim when they cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory!” Thus God is happy and most blessed because He is “glorious in holiness,” or, in one word, because “His name is Love.”

And in what, moreover, does the happiness of the angels consist, but in sharing this life of God? These bright ones, indeed, experience joy in contemplating His works of creation and redemption, and have been glad in acquiring truth throughout many ages; but the atmosphere which they breathe, the light in which they dwell, is love. They are happy not merely in what they hear, or see, or know of the things of God, but chiefly in what they are towards God himself. They know Him, and this is life eternal.

And, finally, it is in the defect of this in which devils are unhappy. For Satan, as he “goes to and fro in the earth, and in walking up and down in it,” may hear those sounds of loveliness which delight our ears, but they are no music to his jarring and discordant spirit; and he may behold those sights of loveliness which delight our eye, but he does so as the prowling lion who perceives no grandeur in the glorious mountains which echo to his savage roar. Nor does the exercise of his subtle intellect afford him joy, because it is not in harmony with truth, nor with the God of truth; but is as a “wandering star, to which is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.” And therefore, though he is a king, he is king of darkness, and carries hell in his own bosom, whether he moves among the beauteous bowers of Eden, or dwells for days upon earth, in the wilderness, in the holy temple, or on the high mountain, with even God manifest in the flesh beside him. He has no holiness, no love, and therefore no peace or joy.

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And thus does our joy depend on our fellowship with God in character. Other things *may* be, this *must* be, if we are to be happy. Other things are required to give our joy fulness; this is essential to give it existence. For the body may be deprived of all pleasurable sensation, and the intellect unable to grapple with the simplest problem, “in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and those that look out at the windows are darkened, and the daughters of music are brought low,”—yet the light of joy may still shine in the soul, so long as the mind can discern that “God is,” and the heart feel that “God is love.” Not, therefore, in the gratification of his sentient tastes; nor in the certainties of pure intellect; nor in science, which “can put forth its hand and feel from star to star;” nor even in the exercise of that genius—so like His own creative power!—whose contrivances change the aspect of the world, and whose glorious flights can speed to airy regions “which no fowl knoweth nor the vulture’s eye hath seen:” not in those outer courts of God’s great temple has the Father willed that His immortal children shall find their true life, but in the holy of holies only of His own immediate presence, and in the possession of the spirit of life and of love which is in His first-born Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And this was the glory and joy which Jesus himself manifested on earth, when “He had no place to lay his head;” and was “despised and rejected of men;” and His “countenance was marred like no man’s;” when He carried His cross; and revealed to us that true life which He died to obtain, and rose from the dead to impart to us by His Spirit. He did not come to teach us to become artists, orators, or men of mere intellectual cultivation, capable of creating a hero-worship. The race who built Nineveh and Thebes, or produced the artists, orators, poets, historians, or the world—conquerors of Greece and Rome, needed no such teaching as this. But He came to reveal to men—who, whatever else they knew, did not know their Maker, but “changed the truth of God into a lie”—that eternal life of love which was with the Father, so that in its possession they might have fellowship with the Father, with the Son, and with one another, and in this way only have His own joy fulfilled in themselves. He taught us to follow Him, “with all lowliness and meekness,” and thus “to walk worthy of God who hath called us to His kingdom and glory!”

I have dwelt, perhaps, at unnecessary length upon this part of my subject, yet I am anxious to quicken in you the conviction of what you cannot doubt, that our moral nature can be satisfied only with God’s likeness. So is it now; so will it be for ever. The sweet peace which the believer enjoys in God here; the elevating delight he experiences from contemplating His character, and saying, “My Father, let Thy name be hallowed! let Thy kingdom come! let Thy will be done!”—his joy in the possession



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of the graces of the Christian life, are not foretastes only, but earnest also, and pledges of the coming fulness, the first-fruits of the approaching harvest. "We shall be like Him!" Oh blessed consummation, before which everything else vanishes in comparison! Our souls cleansed from every stain of guilt, and made white in the blood of the Lamb; and washed, too, from all the pollution of sin with the waters of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shall be "faultless," "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The pure and holy God resting on us as His own work through His Son and Spirit, shall rejoice in that work as *perfect*; and every redeemed soul will be as a mirror in whose transparent depths the Divine glory is seen reflected. Oh comforting and exalting thought! that the weakest and most imperfect, yet true child of God, who possessed any real faith or real love, is thus at last "glorified together with Christ"—their confessions of sin for ever over; their sense of their own emptiness lost in a sense of Christ's fulness; their ardent longings for unsullied holiness gratified as no faith or foretaste here realised, even feebly, in their hours of most pious fervour! Should it not delight us to think of even one whom we have known and loved really possessing such joy as this; and ought we not to give united thanks to God for their happiness with God, even while we sorrow for their loss to ourselves during our earthly pilgrimage?

### IV.

#### OUR SOCIAL LIFE.

Man is a *social* as well as a sentient, intellectual, and moral being; and as such he will have joy in the presence of God in heaven. We are made for brotherhood. It was in reference to this original craving of the heart for society that God said of man when he came perfect from His hands, "It is not good for him to be alone." The fact of solitariness is, indeed, unknown in God's intelligent and moral universe. With reverence, I remark, that God has existed as Father, Son, and Spirit, three Persons in the unity of the Godhead. We cannot, indeed, conceive of God, whose name is love, existing from eternity without a person like Himself as an object of His love. Certain it is, however, that for the creature to have joy in himself alone, is impossible. Isolation would, in time, produce insanity. The heart will lavish its affection upon the lowest forms of animal creation, or upon ideal beings, rather than feed upon itself. But there can be no solitude to him who knows there is a God, nor who possesses any religion; for religion is love to God. And even where the society of men is shunned, and solitude fled to by the weary, this is often, after all, but an unconscious protest in favour of brotherhood; the bitterness of one who, having sought it from men in vain, feels as if robbed of his brother's affections, which he had a right to possess as a portion of his inheritance.

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But while God has planted in every breast this passion for congenial society, and has supplied to so great an extent its want by the family institution into which we are born in our early years, and by the “troops of friends” who accompany us during our pilgrimage, and by the fellowship of the Christian Church, in proportion as that fellowship is not a mere name, but expresses the intention of Christ in gathering His people into a society, —there are, nevertheless, innumerable drawbacks here to anything like its full gratification. Take away the time consumed in the necessary and often absorbing labour of life, and during the unavoidable separations and partings from those we know and love, how little is left for the cultivation here of the truest friendships. We are, moreover, severed as yet by death from all congenial minds among past generations, and from those who are yet to come. Of the many now alive whose hearts would beat to ours, could we only meet and know them, how few can stand together on the small space allotted to us on the earth’s surface. Then, again, of those whom we know best and love best on earth, and who know and love us best too, oh, what mutual ignorance must necessarily exist of innumerable thoughts and feelings lying deep clown in our inner man, half hidden, half revealed, even to ourselves, but altogether incommunicable and unutterable by word or sign to others! We may at times be conscious that we stand with them on the same lofty summit, and gaze on the same prospect, but the atmosphere is too rare to permit of any heard communication between us. And thus in no case can there be, not the meeting, but that blending of soul with soul by which one being, without losing his individuality, seems completed in the being of another. Add to all this the granite walls that rise up between us during our wanderings in this desert—the differences, not only from intellect, pursuits, rank, education, but also from character, and those sins and infirmities of which all more or less partake, such as pride, vanity, prejudice, envy,—one and all making sad drawbacks from the fulness of joy which we are capable of deriving even now from intelligent and holy society. We are made to realise this fact in reading the history of the holiest society that ever was on earth, that of Jesus Christ and His apostles. Only three years together, often separated during this brief period by dark nights, stormy seas, long journeys, and the sin and ignorance OR their part which made Him exclaim, “Nevertheless I am not alone, for the Father is with me,” intimating that, without this Divine sympathy, He was indeed alone in His joys and in His sorrows amidst His brethren. After His departure, how soon were the apostles scattered, and how seldom did they meet! For years Paul was not acquainted with any of them, and possibly never met them all, while he was quite unknown by face to many of those Christian churches who read his letters, and revered



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his name. The apostle John complains that he could not communicate to his friends the many things he had to say by pen and ink, and longs for personal intercourse. "I trust," he says, "to come unto you and speak face to face, that *our joy might be full*." Ah, there is no tabernacling here with Jesus, nor yet with Moses or Elias! But such a dispensation is no doubt wise. It marks the condition of those who have no continuing city here, but who look for one to come. It also greatly helps to weaken, on the one hand, our tendency to idolise the creature, and to strengthen, on the other, our faith in God, who abideth for ever, and thus to unite us to one another, both now and in the end, more truly than we ourselves as yet understand. But, nevertheless, the joy from Christian intercourse experienced here is among the most precious gifts of God, and its value is enhanced by the prophecy which it contains of the glorious future. Union is the gospel watchword; it is the grand result of redemption; for holy union is holy love, the drawing of heart to heart, because all are drawn by one Spirit, through one Saviour, to one God, a union which is to be perfectly realised in our future social state, when we shall be fellow-citizens with the saints in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Now, consider what ample resources heaven affords for the cultivation of the social affections among those of the highest intellect, taste, and moral worth in God's universe, "But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." Here we have summed up the society in our future home.

We shall there enjoy the society of the *angels*. We know about those holy beings, but we do not know themselves as yet. But how often does it happen to us in regard to our earthly friends, that those who are unknown to us in our early years even by name, become in our latter years indissolubly bound up with our history and our joy? And thus the angels, whom on earth we have never seen, will, nevertheless, when the manhood of our being is reached, become our intimate friends and dear companions for ever. Let us not forget, however, that the angels know each saint on earth more intimately than the saints themselves are known by their nearest friends. "For are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But this fact suggests another analogy between our social relationships with men and angels,—viz., that as earthly friends who have been acquainted with ourselves and our family history during the forgotten days of infancy, are met by us, in after-years, not as strangers, but with feelings of sympathy and intimacy akin to those awakened by old kindred; even so will

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the saint, on reaching heaven, find God's angels to be, not strangers, but old friends who have known all about him from the day of his birth until the hour of his death. It is true that these high and holy ones belong to a different order of beings from ourselves, and this, we might be disposed to think, must prevent the possibility of their sympathising with us. But let us remember, that while in material forms there is no one common abiding type, by which, for example, the vegetable, beast, bird, or fish are formed; yet that it is quite otherwise with intellectual and moral beings, who are all necessarily made like God, and therefore like one another. And, finally, though we might conjecture that beings possessed of such vast stores of knowledge, the accumulated wealth of ages, and of such high and glorious intellects, would necessarily repel our approaches by the awe they would inspire in a child of earth when with all his ignorance he enters heaven, yet let our confidence be restored by remembering the fact, that in them, as in the great Jehovah, all majesty and wisdom become attractive when combined with, and directed by love. The love which enables us to cling to the Almighty and love Him as a Father, will enable us to meet the angels in peace, and to love them as brethren. And thus I am persuaded that a saint on earth, compassed about as he is with his many infirmities, would even now feel more "at home," so to speak, with angels, because of their perfect sympathising love, than with most of his fellow-men, because of their remaining pride and selfishness.

But "just men made perfect" also form apart of the society above. Their number is daily increasing. Day by day unbroken columns are passing through the golden gates of the city, and God's elect are gathering from the four winds of heaven. There are no dead saints; all are alive unto God, and "we live together with them."

But I further remark in reference to all this glorious society, that there shall be *perfect union* among its members. That union will not be one of sameness; for there can be no sameness either in the past history, or in the intellectual capacity of any of its members. How vast must be the difference for ever between the history of Gabriel, the thief on the cross, the apostle Paul, and the child who died on its first birthday! There is, moreover, every reason to believe that each person must retain his own individual features of mind and peculiarities of character, there as well as here. All the stars will shine in brilliancy, and sweep in orbits more or less wide around the great centre, but "each star differeth from another star in glory." Yet this want of sameness is what will produce the deepest harmony, such as one sees in the blending of different colours, or hears in the mingling of different notes. And I repeat it, the bond of this perfectness must be the same in heaven as on earth—love. For it is love which unites exalted rank to lowly place, knowledge to ignorance,

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and strength to weakness; thus bringing things opposite into an harmonious whole. See accordingly how the love which dwelt in "God manifest in the flesh," poured itself into the lowest depths of humanity, and met men far down to lift them high up; so that at the very moment, for instance, when Jesus was intensely conscious of His dignity, "knowing that he came from God and went to God," He even then shewed how inseparable was true love from true grandeur, for we read that "knowing" this, "He rose from supper and girded Himself with a towel, and washed His disciples' feet!" And as Jesus in the might of the same Divine affection bridged over the gulf which separated man from Himself and His Father, drawing the impure to Him the Holy One, that they might become holy; and the ignorant to Him the All-knowing, that they might become truly wise;—so shall the same Divine love include within its vast embrace all in heaven, from God seated on the throne down through the burning ranks of cherubim and seraphim till it reaches the once weeping Magdalene, and the once sore-stricken Lazarus, and the infant who has but the hour before left the bosom of its weeping mother! HOW glorious, again, is the thought that the poorest saint here—the most ignorant, the most despised, the most solitary and unknown—shall not only admire and love, but be himself the object of admiration and of love on the part of the highest spirit there. For the King who is not ashamed to call the poorest "brethren," will, in His adornments of their mind and heart, as well as of outward form, bestowed "according to His riches," make them in all things like Himself, and fit to move in regal grandeur with all saints and angels in the royal palace of his God. "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

After what has been said, it is unnecessary to prove what I have assumed as so evidently true; I mean the future recognition of our Christian friends. It is almost as unreasonable to ask for proofs of this as for the probable recognition of friends in a different part of the country after having been separated from one another during a brief interval of time. What! shall memory be obliterated, and shall we forget our own past histories, and therefore lose the sense of our personal identity, and be ignorant of all we have been and done as sinners, and of all we have received and done as redeemed men? or, knowing all this, shall we be prevented from communicating our histories to others? Shall beloved friends be there whom we have known and loved in Christ here; with whom we have held holy communion; with whom we have laboured and prayed for the advancement of Christ's kingdom; and with whom we have eagerly watched for His second coming,—and shall we be unable throughout eternity, either to discover their existence or associate with them in the New Jerusalem? Are the apostles now ignorant of each other? Did Moses and Elias issue out of a darkness which mutually

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concealed them in heaven, and recognising one another for the first time amidst the light on Tabor's hill, did they then return into darkness again? Oh, what is there in the whole Word of God,—what argument derived from, our experience of the blessings of Christian fellowship,—what in the character of God or His dealings with man,—what in His promises of things to come laid up for those who love Him, that could have suggested such strange, unworthy, false, and dreary thoughts of the union, or rather disunion, of friends in their Father's home! Tell me not that special affection to Christian brethren, from whatever causes it may arise, is inconsistent with unfeigned love to all, and with absorbing love to Jesus. It is not so here, and never can be so from the nature of holy love, and was not so in Christ's own case when He the Perfect One lived amongst us. With supreme love to God, "He loved His church and gave Himself for it;" with love to His church He yet loved the disciples as "His own;" while again within this circle one of these was specially *the* loved one; and beyond it "He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus!" Tell me not that it is enough to know that our friends are in glory. I know this now in regard to some of them, as surely as I know anything beyond the grave; yet my heart yearns to meet them "with the Lord," and I bless Him that He permits me to comfort myself with the hope of doing so. Nor let it be alleged as an insuperable objection to all this anticipated happiness, that knowledge of the saved would imply knowledge of the lost, and that this would balance the pleasure we hope for, by the great pain by which we, it is assumed, must thus be compelled to endure. For even admitting that such knowledge would be possessed at all, which is very doubtful; yet surely, at the worst, this is a strange way of escaping pain from the knowledge that some are lost, by taking refuge in the ignorance of any being saved! I shall not prove this further, but express my joy in heartily believing that we shall resume our intercourse with every Christian friend; that remembering all the past, and reading it for the first time aright, because reading in the full light of revealed truth, we shall know and love as we never knew and loved here; and shall sit down at that glorious intellectual, moral, and social feast, not with ideal persons and strangers, but with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with Peter, Paul, and John, and with every saint of God!

But I have not as yet spoken of one friend there who will be the centre of that bright society—"Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant!" "I will take you to *Myself*," is the blessed promise. "We shall see Him as He is," is the longed-for-vision. "We shall be like Him," is the hoped-for-perfection. To know, to love, to be in all things like Jesus, and to hold communion with Him for ever—what "an exceeding weight of glory!" Jesus will never be separated personally from His people; nor can they

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ever possibly separate their character, their joy, or their safety from His atoning death for them on earth, or from His constant life for them in heaven. It is the Lamb who shall lead them to living fountains of waters; and the Lamb upon the throne who shall still preside over them. The Lamb shall be the everlasting light of the New Jerusalem; and “Worthy is the Lamb!” will be its ceaseless song of praise. Beyond this I cannot go. In vain I endeavour to ascend in thought higher than “God manifest in the flesh,” even to the Triune Jehovah who dwelleth in the unapproachable light of His own unchangeable perfections; and seek to catch a glimpse of that beatific vision which, though begun here in communion with God, is there enjoyed by “the spirits of just men made perfect,” “according to His fulness,” and therefore in a measure which to us passeth all understanding. But if any real spiritual intercourse with Jehovah is now “joy unspeakable;” if the hunger of the soul to possess more, fails often from its intensity to find utterance for its wants in words, what must it be to dwell in His presence in the full enjoyment of Himself for ever! There are saints who have experienced this blessedness upon earth to a degree which was almost too much for them to bear; and there are some who have had glories flashed upon them as if snatched from the light beyond, just as the soul was loosening from the ligaments of the body, and preparing itself for flight from the prison-house to its own home—strange moments when things beyond were seen by the eye closing on the weary world, and overpowering bliss was experienced by the chilling heart. And if men, sinful men, yea, dying men, can behold such visions of joy even while dwelling in tabernacles of clay that are crumbling around them, what is the measure of that bliss which fills the souls of those redeemed ones at this moment in the temple above, in perfectly knowing and enjoying God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! May the Lord give us all grace to love on earth such as we may hope to meet in heaven; and if we cannot as yet enjoy the communion of angels, may we seek for, and enjoy, the communion of saints!

## V.

### OUR ACTIVE LIFE.

It is unnecessary to do more than remind you how labour is essential here to our happiness. Rest from fatigue is indeed enjoyment; but idleness from want of occupation is punishment. Nor is this fact a part of our inheritance as sinners. Fatigue and pain of body from exertion may be so, but not exertion itself. Perfect and unfallen man, as I have already reminded you, was placed in the garden of Eden “to dress and to keep it.” And this is what we would expect as the very appointment for a creature made after the image of Him who is ever working, and who has imbued every portion of the universe with the spirit of activity. For nothing in the world of nature lives for itself alone, but contributes its portion of good to the welfare of the whole. And man, as he becomes more godlike, rejoices more and more in the dispensation by which he is enabled to be

a fellow-worker with his Father, and is glad in being able to give expression by word or deed to what he knows and admires.

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And if all this holds true of man now, what reason have we for doubting that it shall hold true of man for ever? Why should this inherent love of action, and delightful source of enjoyment, so refined and elevated, be annihilated? and what shadow even of probability have we for supposing that the heaven revealed in Scripture is a world the occupations of whose inhabitants must for ever be confined to mere ecstatic contemplation?

This cannot be! Such a heaven has not been prepared for man. Arguing from analogy, the presumption is that those mental and moral habits which have been acquired with so much difficulty, and at so much expense in this present world, will not be cast away as useless in the next, but find there such scope for their exercise as cannot possibly be afforded to them within their present limited sphere of action. But this presumption is immensely strengthened by what we know of the life of the angels, to which I have more than once alluded, as it bears so much upon the several topics discussed by us. These angels “excel in strength;” and they “do His commandments, and hearken to the voice of His word.” As “ministers of His,” they “do His pleasure.” They are represented to us as ever actively employed as messengers of peace or of woe. They have destroyed armies and cities; delivered captives; comforted the disconsolate; and are represented as the future reapers of the earth’s harvest. All this proves, at least, that the sinless perfection and happiness of heaven are not inconsistent with a life of busy labour; and that though God can dispense with the services of either men or angels, yet, as they cannot be happy without rendering such services to Him, He, in accordance with His untiring, ungrudging benevolence, satisfies this desire of their nature as created by Himself. Let it be remembered also, that men have acquired a wider experience than even angels, by reason of that very sin which might be supposed to render them less fit for the exalted services of heaven. For the very storms and vicissitudes of earth have given a form and a strength to those “trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord,” that could not have been acquired amidst the sunny skies and balmy air of the heavenly paradise. The saints of God have learned lessons here of patience, endurance, self-denial, and faith, that could not have been learned there. Like old soldiers, they have been trained by long campaigns and terrible combats with the enemy. On earth and not in heaven are Marthas and Maries with whom we can weep; and prodigals whom we can receive back; and saints in sickness, in prison, or in nakedness, whom we can visit, soothe, and clothe. And therefore is earth a noble school by reason of its very sins and sorrows. It is asked, indeed, in triumph, What employments can there be in heaven for saints? This question I cannot answer. The *how* employed, and *where*, must be as yet mere conjecture. But who will be so bold as to deny, that in the new



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heavens and in the new earth, there may be employment for even those powers—such as inventive genius—which might seem to be necessarily confined to this our temporary scene? If we are through a bodily organisation to be for ever united to matter, why may not science and art be called into exercise then as well as now, in order to make it minister to our wants or desires? And even as regards the noble creations of artistic genius, why should the supposition be deemed as unworthy of the most exalted and spiritual views of heaven, that man may for ever be a fellow-worker with the Divine Artist who fills the universe with His own endless creations of beauty and magnificence? And can it be that our moral habits and Christian graces shall never be called into exercise in works and labours of love among orders of beings of whom as yet we know nothing? Countless worlds may be teeming with immense populations, and who knows but such worlds may be continually added to the great family of God. And if throughout the endless ages of eternity, or in any province of God's boundless empire, there should ever be found some responsible beings who are tempted to depart from God by the machinations of wicked men or evil spirits,—permitted, then, it may be, as well as now, to use all their powers in the service of sin and against the kingdom of God,—and who being thus tempted shall require warning or support to retain them in their allegiance;—or if there be found others who are struggling in an existence, which, however glorious, demands patience, fortitude, and faith in Jehovah; if there are now in other worlds, or ever shall appear any persons who need such ministrations as can be afforded only by those educated in the wonderful school of Christ's Church;—then can I imagine how God's saints from earth may have glorious labours given them throughout eternity, which they alone, of all the creatures of God, will be able to accomplish, when every holy habit acquired here can be put to noble uses there. I can conceive patience needed to overcome difficulties; and faith to trust the living God amidst evolutions of His providence that baffle the understanding; and indomitable courage, untiring zeal, gentle love, heavenly serenity and intense sympathy, yea, even the peculiar gifts and characteristics of each individual;—all having their appropriate and fitting work given them. “Now *abideth* faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” And what immense joy will be experienced in each saint thus finding an outlet for his love, and exercise for his knowledge, and full play for his every faculty, in that “house of many mansions,” with all God's universe around and eternity before him! I borrow the language of the great and good Isaac Taylor, who has written so eloquently and convincingly on this subject:—“There labour shall be without fatigue, ceaseless activity without the necessity of repose, high enterprise without disappointment, and mighty achievements which leave behind no weariness or decay;—where 'they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; shall walk, and not faint.'”



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Let this thought teach us to labour in harmony with the will of God; so that we may never run counter to His wishes or His laws, but, both in the material and spiritual world, ever seek to be “fellow-workers” with Himself.

Let it also comfort us when we see “such a one as Paul the aged” fall asleep after his day of toil: and strengthen us to bow our heads in meekness when we hear of the young man full of zeal and ardour, apparently fully equipped for God’s service, suddenly cut down; or the self-sacrificing missionary, who seems to have spent his strength in vain, perish with no one in the wilderness to give him burial. Oh, think not that the work of the old saint who loved it so well, till the last hour of his existence, is ended for ever; or that the labours of younger brethren so unfinished here, shall never be resumed hereafter, and that all this preparation of years has been a mere abortion, a mockery and delusion! Believe it not! No day of conscientious study for Christ’s sake has been spent in vain; no habit of industry or self-denial acquired for Christ’s sake has been acquired in vain; nor will the burning zeal to do something for Him who died for them be ever lost in darkness or put to shame. Soul, spirit, and body, will yet do their work for which they have been so exquisitely adapted, and so carefully trained. He who has been “faithful over a few things will be made ruler over many things;” and “he who has been faithful in a *very little*, shall have authority over ten cities!”

Finally, this future life in heaven will be expressed in *praise*. What are the ordinary ideas entertained by many excellent Christians of this heavenly work, or the manner in which it is to be performed, would be painful to describe. But perhaps it is not too much to say that the heaven of many is little more than a grand, eternal act of worship by singing psalms of praise. No doubt the chief work of heaven is praise; for praise is but the necessary expression of love, admiration, joy. In what way this praise is to be expressed I know not: whether in the spontaneous exercise of individual souls, “singing as they shine” with hymned voice, and fashioned instrument of golden harp or angelic trump; or only by the rapt gaze of a spirit absorbed in “still communion;”—and whether in heaven as on earth there may be great days of the Lord on which the sons of God, gathered from afar, will come specially before the exalted Redeemer, when their joy, uttered by outbursts of harmony, shall wake the amphitheatre of the skies with impassioned hallelujahs,—who can as yet tell! But it *must* be that each soul in heaven being for ever full of love, will for ever be full of praise. Every new sight of grandeur or of beauty, and every new contrivance of the Creator’s wisdom or power, will but prompt the beholder to praise the wondrous Creator. Every intellectual height reached in the infinite progress of the soul, onward and upward, must awe it into a profounder sense of

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the glory of the great Intelligence. Every active pursuit will swell the tide of gratitude and praise to Him the ceaseless worker, in whom all persons and things “live, move, and have their being;”—while the loving and holy soul, ever consciously dwelling in Him who is everywhere present, must derive from increasing knowledge of, and communion with the infinite and glorious One, a source of exulting, endless praise—praise which will be intensified by the sympathy and song of the great minds and great hearts of the “innumerable company of angels,” and of “just men made perfect!” But if in that voiceful temple any one song of praise will, more than any other, issue from a deeper love, or express a deeper joy, that must be the song of the redeemed! For that is a “new song” never heard before by the angels in the amplitudes of creation, and which the strange race of mankind alone can sing; for there are peculiar notes of joy in that song which they alone can utter; and in their memories alone can echo old notes of sadness that have died away in the far distance. And what shall be their feelings, what their song, as they gaze backwards on the horrible kingdom of darkness, from whose chains and dungeons they have been delivered; and trace all the mysterious steps by which their merciful and wise Saviour led them safely through danger, temptation, and trial, and through the valley of death, until He bid them welcome with exceeding joy! What their feelings, what their song, as they look around and contemplate the new scene and the exalted society into which He has brought them, and meet the responsive gaze of radiant saints and of old familiar friends! What their feelings, and what their song, as they gaze forward, and with “far-stretching views into eternity” see no limit to their “fulness of joy;” knowing that nothing can lessen it, but that everything must increase it through eternal ages;—that the body can never more suffer pain, or be weakened by decay;—that the intellect can never more be dimmed by age, nor marred by ignorance;—that the spirit can never more be darkened by even a passing shadow from the body of sin;—that the will can never for a moment be mastered, nor even biased by temptation;—that the heart can never be chilled by unreturned kindness;—that the blessed society can never be diminished by death, nor divided in spirit, but that, along with saints and angels, all God’s works shall be seen, all His ways known, all His plans and purposes fulfilled, all His commands perfectly obeyed, and Himself perfectly enjoyed for ever and ever! And then, at what might seem to be the very climax of their joy, to behold Jesus! And, seeing Him, to remember the lowly home in Bethlehem; the once humble artisan of Nazareth; and the sufferer, “who was despised and rejected of men,” “the man of sorrows, who was acquainted with grief;” and the tempted one, who for forty days was with the devil in the wilderness;—seeing Him, to remember Gethsemane with its trembling hand

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and cup of agony; the judgment-hall and Calvary with their horrors of blood, of blasphemy, and mystery of woe;—seeing Him, to see all this history of immeasurable love not only recorded in the glory of every saint above, but embodied in the very person of that Saviour, and in that human form which was “wounded and bruised for our iniquities,” and in that human soul that was sorrowful unto death, in order that He might be able to pour into the hearts of lost and ruined men all the fulness of His own blessedness and joy! What shall be the feelings, what the song of the redeemed, as all this bursts on their enraptured gaze! Oh, blind discourses are we of such ineffable glory! Children-dreamers are we about this as yet unrevealed vision! What are all our thoughts but “fallings from us, vanishings” from “creatures walking among worlds not realised!” But let us pray more and more that the “God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may *know* what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;” for though “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,” yet “*God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit!*”

### FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

The subject of future punishment is one the consideration of which gives mental pain. We naturally shrink from it, would prefer to leave it alone, and to think, as we say, of something else.

But the question won't leave us alone, and we must think about it. It forces itself on our notice, and that, too, in our most thoughtful and sober moments. We cannot read the Scriptures without the dark vision passing before our eyes with more or less gloom. Conscience whispers to us about it. It recurs to our thoughts amidst the penitential confessions and earnest prayers of public worship. The theme is constantly discussed in works and periodicals widely read, and not even professedly theological.

There are few, we presume, who will assert that every man, whatever his character may be when he leaves the world, shall after death immediately pass into glory, and be received into fellowship with God and His saints. With such a belief earnestly entertained, suicide would cease to be an evidence of insanity, and murder would become philanthropy.

Most men are prepared rather to believe, apart altogether from any Scripture statements on this momentous subject, that punishment of some kind or other must be awarded to crime at last, and in some degree proportionate to the character of the criminal,—that somewhere or other, by some means or other, not yet discovered or

revealed, reformation if at all possible must necessarily be effected in order that peace and happiness may

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be secured. Man's undying sense of righteousness, and what *ought* to be, is not satisfied by the prosperity which, in spite of every drawback, so frequently attends the most selfish and unprincipled villain to his grave. Like the Psalmist, we all are disposed to exclaim when contemplating such histories, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death, and their strength is firm; neither are they plagued like other men.... Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than their heart can wish.... And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge with the Most High?"

But when we open the Word of God, it is impossible for any honest man to deny, that whether its teaching be true or false, the fact of future punishment is an essential portion of what is taught. By no conceivable perversion of the words of Christ, so often repeated on this subject, and by no interpretation of His parables, can it be denied that it was His intention to give the very impression which the universal Church has received, that there is a "wrath to come," and a state of being which to some is "cursed," and so very dreadful that, with reference to one of His own disciples, who is called "the son of perdition," the Saviour said that it would have "been good for that man had he never been born."

I must presume that this general statement regarding the teaching of Christ himself, not to speak of that of His apostles, requires no proof to any one who has ever read the Gospels. Punishment of some kind awaits the wicked after death. Yet if this much is admitted, we have surely already reached a conclusion which ought to fill with the most solemn awe the mind of every man who has any reverence for the Divine authority of Jesus Christ; or who even believes that He who represented Himself as saying, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels,"—"Depart from me, I know you not, all ye workers of iniquity," and who narrated such a parable as that of the rich man and Lazarus, was one incapable of all exaggeration or evil passion, and one who possessed the only perfect love which was ever manifested in humanity. The apostles, who express in language as strong and unhesitating the certainty and dread nature of future punishment, were men also who, more than any who have ever lived, loved their fellow-men, wept like their Divine Master for their sins, and devoted their lives, with untiring unselfishness, to rescue them from present evil and future woe. Now, if this be so far a true, if not a full, representation of the teaching of Christ and His apostles on this momentous theme, I may be permitted to put two questions of a practical and personal kind to my reader. One is,—Whether the knowledge of the character, apart from the authority, of Jesus and His apostles, who spoke in such language

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of the future history of some men in another world, ought not to make us pause with becoming self-distrust and reverence, if disposed to exclaim against the possibility of so terrible an ending as a thing “unjust,” “vengeful,” and “revolting to benevolence?” Who are we, what have we been, or what have we done for our fellow-men, that we should thus presume to have a more tender regard for their well-being than the Lord Jesus Christ or His apostles had, and to be incapable of entertaining or of uttering such “harsh thoughts” as they did about their future state?

The other question which I would humbly suggest for consideration is this:—What is your real belief in reference to man's future state? Have you any faith in our Lord's teaching? Any firm practical conviction in the fact of future punishment? After you have made every possible deduction from the weight of Scripture testimony, and explained away every metaphor, parable, and dogmatic statement to the lowest possible point short of absolute denial of their truth in any fair sense of their meaning,—may I beg of you to consider what, or how much, remains to be firmly believed as the truth of God? For it does appear to me that there exists a wide-spread callousness and indifference, an ease of mind, with reference to the fate hereafter of ungodly men, which cannot be accounted for except on the supposition that all earnest faith is lost in either the dread possibilities of future sin or of its future punishment. Men seem to have made up their minds that they have nothing to fear in the next world, whatever they believe, whatever they are, or whatever they do in this. We are, verily, not incapable of experiencing fear, but in a vast number of cases we are great cowards, in spite of all our bravery,—cowards when there is nothing actually present to alarm us; and each one of us seeks to his very utmost to keep danger or suffering far away from himself or from those he loves. Accordingly, the possible or near approach of mere bodily pain, or of domestic sorrow, or the anticipated loss of money—not to speak of such horrors as public disgrace from loss of character, imprisonment, transportation as a felon, or execution as a criminal—would induce thoughtfulness, anxiety, wretchedness. Yet, strange to say, the very same persons who would tremble for such calamities as these, treat with indifference a coming punishment, which cannot, even in their own estimation, be less terrible, and which, as sure as Christ's words are true, they may themselves, because of their present character, be liable at any hour to enter upon and endure.

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But many of those readers, who, up to this point, may heartily sympathise with me in my feeble efforts to quicken a more earnest thoughtfulness on this subject, will be disposed to avoid its further consideration. I would not blame them for so feeling. God knoweth I have no wish to “dogmatise” on this subject, but to approach it with real sympathy for the difficulties, the pains, the perplexities, which the noblest, the truest, and the most reverential have experienced when they have attempted really to believe in it. What chiefly induces me to submit a few thoughts upon a theme so solemn, is the “dogmatism” and unworthy views of God which are attributed to all of us who cannot discover sunrise beyond the gloom; and the conviction also that a more thorough belief in the clanger of sin, as well as its inherent vileness, and a wholesome “terror of the Lord,” would tend to “persuade men” to entertain with more earnestness the deliverance promised in the gospel.

The idea which many have formed of punishment is that of a mere arbitrary annexation of a certain amount of suffering in the next world to a certain amount of crime committed in this—so many stripes for so many sins; and, as if obvious injustice were inflicted on men, by threatening them with coming woe for present wickedness, they exclaim, “Surely such sins as these do not deserve such punishment as that!” But if sin itself, by an eternal moral necessity, carries with it its own punishment, even as the shadow accompanies the substance, then the real question in regard to the possible ending of future suffering is merged in the deeper one of the possible ending of future sin. And if so, what evidence have we from any one source to inspire the hope, that the man who enters the next world loving sin, and therefore suffering punishment as its necessary result, will ever cease to sin, and thereby cease to suffer? It must, remember, be admitted as an indisputable fact, that life eternal can only co-exist with a right state of the soul. “*This is life eternal, to know thee and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*” Up to the moment in which the spirit turns with filial confidence and obedience to God, there cannot be a cessation either in the curse that must rest upon enmity and disobedience, or in the pain which must be produced by so terrible a malady. Some time or other, be it near or remote, in one year or in a million, there must be repentance in the sinner, a turning away *from* sin and *to* God, as the only possible means of bridging over the otherwise impassable gulf that separates the bad from the good, or hell from heaven. There is no salvation for man but from sin; there is no restoration for him but to love.

But if this change in the sinner is not accomplished in this world, what evidence have we that it can be accomplished in any place of even limited punishment? In what conceivable way, we ask with deepest awe, is a moral and responsible being, who ends this life and begins another at enmity to God, rejecting Christ, disbelieving the gospel, dead in trespasses and in sins, hateful and hating, selfish and vile,—in what way is he to be made holy after death, and before entering heaven, by a temporary discipline of mere suffering?



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We are here considering the possible future of one only who knows the gospel of the grace of God, and we ask, what advantages will such an one possess elsewhere for the attainment of piety that are denied him here? If all that God has done to gain his heart has so far failed up till the hour of his death, that he is morally unfit by his habits or even desires for the society of God and His people, what appliances can we conceive of more likely to influence the will and gain the affections in a prison-house set apart for the reformation of the impenitent? Can the sinner expect to meet, in this supposed place of punishment and consequent reformation, more loving friends to win him by such solemn counsels and tender ministrations as earth did not afford? Does he anticipate daily returning mercies and sources of enjoyment more rich and varied than those possessed here, in order to bring him back to God? Will he possess a healthier body, a happier home, holier society, a more beauteous world with fairer skies and brighter landscapes, or any of those innumerable blessings which have such a tendency to tame and soften the rudest nature? Shall means of grace be afforded more powerfully calculated to enlighten the mind, convince the understanding, influence the will, or draw the affections of the heart towards God? Shall Sabbaths of more peaceful rest dawn upon the troubled heart, or sacraments of more healing virtue be administered? Can retreats be secured where God's Word may be read and prayer enjoyed with more undisturbed repose? Will the gospel be preached more faithfully, and a people be found more loving and pious to assemble for public or private worship? Can a Saviour be offered more able or willing to save, and the Spirit of God be poured down upon the burning soil in more plenteous or life-giving pentecostal showers? Is this how men picture to themselves the place in which they expect to atone for past sins by limited suffering? Impossible! They are thinking of a world better and more glorious than the present;—not of a hell, but of a heaven!

Even if such a place were prepared for the impenitent and wicked, what conceivable security is there that a new mind and spirit would be the necessary result of those new and enlarged benefactions? We must assume that the power of sinning remains, otherwise man's responsibility would cease, and punishment thereby become mere cruelty. If sin is thus possible, then why may not the sinner indulge there in the same selfishness, disobedience, and rebellion which characterised him here? Why may it not be with him as with many a man who loves sin in the low haunts of profligacy and crime, but loves it not the less when brought into circumstances of greater comfort and among society of greater godliness? But should it be otherwise, and the supposed place of future punishment have none of those advantages,—and we are forced by the necessity of the case to assume their absence, at least for a limited period, and to admit, in some



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form or other, the presence of a dread and mysterious sorrow,—we ask again, on what grounds is it concluded that this anticipated punishment shall itself possess a healing virtue to produce, some time or other, that love to God which, up till the hour of death, has never been produced in the sinner? Men attach, perhaps, some omnipotent power to mere suffering, and imagine that if hatred to sin and love to God are all that is needed, then a short experience of the terrific consequences of a godless past must insure a godly future. Why do they think so? This is not the effect which mere punishment generally produces on human character. Its tendency is not to soften, but to harden the heart,—to fill it not with love, but with enmity. It cannot fail, indeed, to make the sufferer long for deliverance from the pain; but it does not follow that he thereby longs for deliverance from the sin which causes the pain, and for the possession of the good which alone can remove it. It is certainly not the case in this world, that bad men are always disposed to repent and turn to God in proportion as they suffer from their own wilfulness, and become poor from idleness, broken in health from dissipation, alienated from human hearts by their selfishness, or pass, with a constantly increasing anguish, through all the stages of outcasts from the family; dwellers among the profligate; companions in crime; occupiers of prisons; members of convict gangs, till the scaffold with its beam and drop ends the dreadful history. Such punishment as this, constantly dogging the crime which at first created it and ever preserves it, only makes the heart harder, fans the passions into a more volcanic fire, and possesses the soul with a more daring recklessness and wilder desperation. And arguing from this experience, to which men appeal, as if it was truer than the Word of God, what more special virtue will punishment have in the next world than in this? What tendency will there be in that long night of misery to inspire a man with the love of God, whose very character, and whose holy and righteous will, have annexed the suffering to the sin? If the sinner's character is not thereby reformed, and all the while he retains his responsibility,—as he must do on the assumption that reformation is possible,—and if he continues to choose sin with more diabolical hatred to the good, is it imagined that such a process as this, of continued sin accompanied by continued mental suffering, will at any period render him more meet to enjoy the holiness of heaven than when he first departed from the world to enter upon his new and strange probation? Oh, the more we think of it, the darker does the history grow,—the faster does the descent of the evil spirit become, clown that pit which, from its very nature, seems to be bottomless! If means are discoverable there more suited to gain the end of moral regeneration than any which exist here, let them be pointed out. We have searched in vain to find them in the Word of God, or in the mind and history of man.

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Making every allowance for the real difficulties which beset this question, and for the peculiar feelings, partly allowable, and largely the reverse, with which it is entertained, we have no doubt that many have been driven to the extreme of utter disbelief in the existence of any punishment by the bold and presumptuous manner in which they may have heard men consign all the heathen, and all Christendom, with the exception of a very few, to this awful doom. Infants even have not escaped the condemnation of some who, professing to have more orthodox faith than their neighbours, have really little or any faith at all in God, but utter mere words to which—in this case, fortunately for themselves—they attach no meaning. For if they did, what would life be to them, believing that it was possible for their babe, because of Adam's sin, to be cast for all eternity into literal fire? But while we have perfect confidence in the salvation of infants, and of many more, we dare not condemn any. The living God, who alone knows each man, may be dealing in ways beyond our comprehension with the most lonely savage, whose inmost spirit He ever sees, and who is of more awful value in His sight than all the stars of the sky. *How* the living and omniscient Spirit of God has access to the inner spirit of man, I neither know nor could perhaps understand if it were revealed; nor how He can teach that spirit without the gospel or the ordinary means of grace, so as to bring it under law to God. But when I saw a child (Laura Bridgman) who was born deaf, dumb, and blind, marvellously educated by the genius and wisdom of her remarkable instructor, I could not but feel how grand ends might be accomplished in the human soul by means which before this experience I would have pronounced as impossible;—and it suggested also to me how a poor heathen even, like that blind girl, might be really taught by another person, and be receiving light within, though for a time utterly ignorant of either the name, the character, or the purposes of the unseen and unheard teacher, who yet in his own way gradually was training his scholar for fellowship with God and man.[A] We ignorant and sinful men must confine our judgments as regards others to what is right or wrong in their actions, and that solely to guide ourselves in our personal duties towards God and one another. But as to deciding the eternal fate of any man, that, thank God! can be done only by Him to whom all men belong. When disposed to occupy the throne of the judge, and to scrutinise human character with a jealous regard for the righteousness of God, let us at once do so by summoning ourselves to the bar!

[Footnote A: As an illustration of this, see a remarkable account of a North American Indian, narrated by Brainerd in his Diary, date September 21, 1745.]

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This, however, amidst all perplexities we may certainly rely upon with perfect confidence, that whatever is finally decided, and whatever punishment is finally awarded to any, will be in accordance with the perfect will of “God, whose name is love;” so that all the true and just, the good and loving in the universe, will, when they know all the grounds of His judgment, sympathise with their whole soul in His decisions, and see His glory revealed in them. We also know that there will be “a multitude greater than any man can number” in God’s family; that they will be gathered “out of every nation, kindred, and tongue;” and this we may hope for, that the number of the lost may be to those who are saved fewer far than the number of those in penal settlements and prisons are to the inhabitants of a well-ordered and Christian kingdom.

But not only are our thoughts of future punishment naturally darkened into deepest gloom by the assumed multitudes of those who will suffer, but also by the nature of those sufferings which we also assume are to be assigned to them. We literally interpret all those images of unquenchable fire and the undying worm, borrowed from the constant conflagrations and corruptions of the offal and carcases of dead animals in the valley of Hinnom, (or Gaienna,) near Jerusalem, and also the obviously metaphorical language used in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, as if necessarily teaching that worms or fire would be employed to torture for all eternity the immortal bodies of the lost. But what if there is to be no such bodily pain? though possibly there may be some kind of physical suffering immediately produced by sin there as well as here. What if the wicked shall be punished only by permitting them to “eat the fruit of their own way, and to be filled with their own devices?” What if, instead of the wrath of God being poured upon them to the utmost, it will be inflicted in the least *possible* measure, and only in the way of natural consequence? What if the sin which makes the hell hereafter, is, in spite of all its suffering, loved, clung to, even as the sin is which makes the hell now? Nay, what if every gift of God, and every capacity for perverting His gifts, are retained; and if the sinner shall suffer only from that which he himself *chooses* for ever, and for ever determines to possess? I do not say that it must be so; but if it is so, then might a hell of unbridled self-indulgence be preferred then, as it is by many now, to a heaven whose blessedness consisted in perfect holiness, and the possession of the love of God in Christ, for ever and ever. Let, then, the fairest star be selected, like a beauteous island in the vast and shoreless sea of the azure heavens, as the future home of the criminals from the earth; and let them possess in this material paradise whatever they most love, and all that it is *possible* for God to bestow; let them be endowed with undying bodies, and with minds which shall for ever retain

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their intellectual powers; let them no more be “plagued with religion;” let no Saviour ever intrude His claims upon them, no Holy Spirit disturb them, no God reveal Himself supernaturally to them; let no Sabbath ever dawn upon them, no saint ever live among them, no prayer ever be heard within their borders; but let human beings exist there for ever, smitten only by the leprosy of hatred to God, and with utter selfishness as its all-prevailing and eternal purpose; then, as sure as the law of righteousness exists, on which rests the throne of God and the government of the universe, a society so constituted must work out for itself a hell of solitary and bitter suffering, to which no limit can be assigned except the capacity of a finite nature. Alas! the spirit that is without love to its God or to its neighbour is already possessed by a power which must at last create for its own self-torment a worm, that will never die, and a flame that can never more be quenched!

\* \* \* \* \*

And yet, when forced to come to this conclusion, especially after reading the Scriptures, which in our judgment but confirm it, and give it the sanction of Divine authority, who can, even then, with his human heart silence a “timid voice which asks in whispers” many questions suggestive of what would appear to be the brighter hope? “Who can limit” (in some such form might those questionings be put) “the resources of God’s infinite love and wisdom? May there not be found means, though yet to us unknown, and as yet unrevealed, by which the good shall ultimately triumph over the evil,—when every being whom God has originally made capable of love and joy will at last fulfil His glorious purpose,—when every sheep lost to the Shepherd will be found, and brought with rejoicing back to the fold,—when every lost piece of money with the King’s image, defaced, yet not destroyed, will be recovered from the dust and restored to the King’s treasury,—and when every prodigal, weary of his wanderings, convinced at last, through self-inflicted misery, of his folly, and remembering a Father, will return to that bosom which never can reject a child seeking there his rest and refuge,—until, finally, there shall not be throughout creation even one sinner, but a mighty family of immortal beings, who, after their terrible experience of the reign of self, shall freely and joyfully accept of the reign of the blessed and loving God? If it is *possible*, must it not be so? May we not, in our darkness and difficulty, rely upon One who, knowing man’s fallen condition, yet said, Increase, and multiply, and replenish the earth? upon One who declared it to be a legitimate source of joy to every mother that a child was born to the world? upon One whose love to all whom He has made is to our love as the light of the mighty sun to a fire-fly’s spark wandering in darkness?”

“Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood

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"That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete:

"That not a worm is chosen in vain;  
That not a moth with vain desire  
Is shrivell'd in a pent-up fire,  
Or but subserves another's gain.

\* \* \* \* \*

"So runs my dream: but what am I?  
An infant crying in the night:  
An infant crying for the light:  
And with no language but a cry.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I falter where I firmly trod;  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar stairs,  
That slope through darkness up to God,

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope."

With deep sympathy for all who thus feel the weight and pain of the subject, and who hope against hope, we ourselves are compelled to abide in our first faith. We cannot forget that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man, who was perfect love, truth, and life, has neither Himself, nor through His apostles, given us by one word the slightest ground for hoping that any man who leaves this world an enemy to God will ever repent and become a friend of God in the next. The whole teaching of Scripture is one with what prudence and principle would dictate:—Believe in Jesus; *now or never!*

Hear, in conclusion, God's Word:—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.... He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.... He that believeth on the

Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Hebrews ii. 1, 3:—“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.... How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”

## **WHAT AFTER DEATH?**

It would be very difficult, I think, to put a more serious question to ourselves than this, *What is to become of us after death?*

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All of us, I daresay, know from experience what is meant by thoughtlessness or indifference about our state for ever. There are, no doubt, some who, from having had a godly upbringing in their youth, or at least religious instruction, have always thought more or less about what would become of their souls. Perhaps these thoughts made them uneasy, afraid, or anxious; but still they were often in their mind, especially in times of sickness, or when death came near their doors, or any event occurred which obliged them to think of eternity, and of what might happen to themselves if they were to die suddenly, and appear before God. But there are others, again, who seem never at any time to have had a serious thought about their life after death. They have, perhaps, not had the same advantage with those I have been speaking of, but from infancy have lived among worldly-minded people, who gave the impression, by their conversation and general conduct, on week-days and Sundays, that this world was everything, and the next world nothing; that this world alone was real; and that man's chief end was to labour in it, and for it alone, to make money in it, be happy in it, get everything for self out of it, and, as a matter of hard necessity, at last die in it, and go from it—Whither? Ah! who could tell *that*?—who ever thought of *that*? To them it seemed that death ended all that was reality, and began all that was visionary. But whether early education is to blame, certain it is that many people do come to this state. They seem stoneblind to the future. Not one ray of light gets an entrance into their spirits from the great and eternal world, on whose confines they every moment live. They think, fear, hope, rejoice, plan, and purpose; but always about this world,—never about the other! To rise in the morning; to be occupied during the day; to buy and sell, and get gain; to talk on politics or trade; to gossip about people, and all they speak or do; to marry or give in marriage; to have this meeting or that parting; to give a feast or partake of one; to fear sickness, and to keep it off; or to be sick, and to try and get better:—all this sort of life, down to its veriest trifles, they understand and sympathise with, and busy themselves about. But what of God and Christ?—of eternal joy or sorrow?—of how a man should live to God, please Him, enjoy Him, love Him, and walk daily in fellowship with Him? What of such questions as,—What shall become of us in eternity? What shall we do to be saved? How shall we obtain life eternal? How shall we fulfil the end of our being? All this—oh, strange mystery!—has no interest to them. These thoughts, or any like these, never cross their mind, perhaps, from morning till night, or from the first till the last day of the year. They may, perhaps, have heard these words, read them in books, or heard ministers speak them from the pulpit on Sunday, and they know that the words have to do with what they call “religion,”



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but never think they have to do with what awfully concerns themselves! They are words, but not about realities; or if they express realities, yet realities which belong to some world of mist, and cloud, and darkness, far, far away—one not nearly so real as this world of their own, made up of fields and barns, streets and shops, sea and ships, friends and action! But what, let me ask, separates us from that world which we think to be so very far off—so very unreal? The thin coat of an artery! No more! Let the thin pipe burst through which our life-blood is now coursing in the full play of health, and where then will our present world, now so very real, be to us? In a single second it will have vanished for ever from our grasp, like something we clutch at in the visions of the night. And where then will that other world be which to many is now so dim and unreal as not to be worth thinking about? We, the same living persons, will be in it—in the midst of all its realities; and with these we shall have to do, and with these only, for ever and ever.

But many people do not *wish* to think about the unseen future. It is not so much that *no* thoughts about it intrude themselves upon their minds, as that all such thoughts are deliberately banished. It is with the eternal future as with anything which here gives them pain,—they “hate to think about it.” This, of course, arises from the suspicion, or rather the conviction, that it cannot be a good future to them. They have read enough about it from the Bible to make it alarming. At all events, they have no security for its being to them as happy as the present; and so, whether from a fearful looking for of judgment, because of their sins, or from ignorance of the means of salvation, or from unbelief in the good-will of God as ready to save them, the result is, that they voluntarily shut their eyes to, and banish all thought of, eternity. It pains them—it agonises them—to put the question, “What is to become of me when I die?” And the more pain the question gives them, the more they fly to the world, and occupy their minds with its society, its amusements, and even its dissipation and debaucheries, in order to banish care and snatch a fleeting joy. O my brother, if you so act, from my soul I feel for you and pity you! For the sick-bed is coming, and you may be compelled to think there; and if so, you are treasuring up tenfold agony for yourself, by your present off-putting apathy and wilful thoughtlessness. And should you manage, even in the time of sickness, and up to the very hour of death, to shut out the future from your mind; should long and inveterate habit enable you to succeed in the terrible, suicidal experiment, so that you shall die as you have lived—fearing nothing, because believing nothing,—can you avoid entering the other world? Can you prevent a meeting between yourself and your God; or silence an accusing conscience for ever; or hinder Christ from coming to



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judge the world; or fly from the judgment-seat, and by any possibility delay or prevent a minute examination of your life; or stay the sentence which the omniscient and holy Judge shall pronounce upon you? And if you cannot do this,—and if, rather, every power, faculty, and emotion of your heart and soul must one day be roused to the intensest pitch of earnestness about your eternal destiny,—do you not think it wise, my brother, to think about all this now?—*now*, when there is a remedy, rather than *then*, when there is none?

This suggests another reason why possibly you hate to think about the future. Not only are you conscious of want of any preparedness for it, but you do not see how it can be much better with you. You have, in a word, lost confidence in God—have no faith in His good-will to *you*. You think of Him—if you think of Him at all—as one who watches you with a jealous or angry eye; who has no wish that you should be better or happier than you are; or who, if He can save you, will not; or who, if He will, offers to do so only on such hard and impossible terms as to make it practically the same as if there was no salvation for *you*. In one word, you suspect God hates you, or at least is indifferent to you—if, indeed, He knows anything at all about you, which you are not quite sure of! It is very shocking to write such things: but it is much more shocking that any one should think or believe such things; for he who so thinks and believes is as yet profoundly ignorant of God. What is called God, is as unlike Him who is the living and true God as is any hideous idol in a heathen temple. But this ignorance breeds fear—and fear, hate—and hate increases the fear, until the future, in which this God must be met, is put away as a horrible thing, or never thought of at all.

But, my brother, why should you thus think of God, and so fear to think of the future? Read only what the Bible says of Him, and learn what true Christians know of Him, and listen honestly to how your own conscience responds to all you hear about Him, and then consider whether you can conceive of one more glorious in his character, or more worthy of your love. Peruse the history of Jesus Christ, and tell me anything He ever said or did calculated to fill your heart with fear or hate towards Him,—and remember, that he who sees Him sees the Father. Think of all Jesus suffered as our atoning Saviour, and all “to bring us to God.” Think of all God has promised to those who will only trust Him through Jesus,—the pardon of all sin, and the gift of a new heart; with everything which can do them good, or make them happy; and say, How can this make you dislike God? Think of all He has given you since you were born,—friends and relations, health of body, powers of mind, much time, many happy days, innumerable mercies and sources of enjoyment; think how liberally, ungrudgingly, He has opened His hand; think what patience, forbearance,

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kindness, He has shewn, and what the eternal future has in store for all who love Him; and tell me, What has *He* done to make you dislike Him? Reflect on what He *could* have done and could do, if He disliked you as you dislike Him, and say, How can you continue in your enmity? O my brother, "Only believe!" Believe that "God is love." Believe that "in this is manifested the love of God, that He gave His Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Believe that He willeth not that any should perish,—that He has no pleasure in the death of sinners,—that He is ready to forgive,—that this is the record, that "God hath given eternal life." Believe—trust in God for the good, the whole good, the most perfect good, that of a child's heart and sincere love towards Him, which He seeks in you—trust God for this through faith in Christ, and in the mighty power of that Spirit who is love; and depend upon it, when you *know God*, and see how excellent He is, and understand His love to you, and what He is willing to make you, and to give you, and, above all, when you know what *He himself will be to you* for ever, you surely cannot choose but Him! and "*there is no fear in love; because fear hath torment!*"

### MOMENTS IN LIFE.

By moments in life, I mean certain periods which occur more or less frequently in our history,—when the spirit in which we then live, the step we then take, the word we then utter, or what we at that moment think, resolve, accept, reject, do, or do not, may give a complexion to our whole future being both here and hereafter.

Let me notice one or two features which characterise those moments.

They may, for example, be very brief. Napoleon once remarked, that there was a crisis in every battle, when ten minutes generally determined the victory on one side or other. Yet on the transactions of those few minutes the fate of empires may hang, and on the single word of command, rapidly spoken amidst the roar of cannon and the crash of arms, the destinies of the human race be affected. Men in public life, who are compelled every day to decide on matters of importance, appreciate the value of minutes, and estimate the necessity of snatching them as they pass with promptness and decision;—of "taking advantage of the chance," as they say, knowing well that if that moment is allowed to pass, "the chance" it brings is gone for ever; that whatever their hand "finds to do" must be done then or never. The results to them of what they decide at that moment may be incalculable. What is then done may never be undone; yet not another second is added to the time given them for action. Within the germ of that brief moment of life is contained the future tree of many branches and of much fruit.

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What a brief moment, indeed, in our endless life is the whole period even of the longest life on earth! It is compared to a vapour, which appeareth for a short time, and then vanisheth away; to “a watch in the night,”—“a tale that is told.” And if we but consider how nearly a third portion of our threescore years and ten is necessarily spent in sleep; and add to this the years spent during infancy while preparing for labour; during old age, when our labours are well-nigh past; and many more consumed in adorning and supporting or giving rest to the body; and then if, after summing up those years, we deduct what remains of time at the disposal of the oldest man for the formation of active thought and the improvement of his spiritual being, oh! how brief is the whole period of our mortal life, when longest, though its transactions are to us fraught with endless and awful consequences!

Another characteristic of those moments in life is the silence with which they may come and pass away. No “sign” may be given to indicate their importance to us. They do not announce their approach with the sound of a trumpet, nor demand with a voice of thunder our immediate and solemn attention to their interests; but stealthily, quietly, with noiseless tread like spirits from another world, they come to us, put their question, speak the word, and vanish to heaven with our reply. In after years, possibly, with “the long results of time” to guide us upward as by a stream to the tiny threads of this fountain of life and action, we may be able in a greater degree to realise of what tremendous importance they were to us. “Had we only known this at the time!” we exclaim, as we revolve those memories, and think of all we would have said or done;—“had we only known!” But it is not God’s will that we should know how much of the future is involved in the present, or how all we shall be is determined by what we may resolve to be or do at any particular moment. Such a revelation would paralyse all effort, and destroy the mainspring of all right action. Sight would thus be substituted for faith; the fear of evil consequences for the fear of evil; and the love of future benefits for the love of present duty. God will have us rather cultivate habitually a right spirit at each moment, so as to be able to act rightly when the all-important moment comes, whether we then discover its importance or not. Let us not be surprised, then, if God comes to us, not in the strong wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but only in the still small voice which speaks to the heart or to the conscience, demanding the conduct which becomes us as responsible beings and as obedient children.

But let me illustrate these remarks by a few examples of “moments in life,” and such as must come to us all.

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It is a solemn "moment in life" when the glad tidings of the love of God in Christ Jesus are heard and understood. Remember that we are saved by "the truth;" born again "of the Word;" sanctified "by the truth." To receive the truth of God, then, as a living power into the mind and conscience, is of infinite importance to us. Now, while God's truth comes to us "at various times and in diverse manners," there are moments in life when we cannot choose but feel as if it was addressing our inner spirit as it never did before, and earnestly knocking for admission. The circumstances in which this appeal is made may be what are called commonplace; such as when hearing a sermon preached from the pulpit, when reading a book by the fireside, or when conversing for a few minutes with an acquaintance; yet at such times truth expressed in a single sentence, or in a few words, may search our spirits, and gaze on us with a solemn look, saying, "Thou art the man I am in search of!" But, as it sometimes happens, the circumstances in which we are thus arrested by the truth, and are compelled to listen to it for weal or woe, may be peculiarly impressive; as when we are ourselves in sickness or danger, or when addressed by a parent or dear friend on their dying bed, or when in deep family distress, or when standing beside the grave that conceals our best earthly treasure from our sight. At such moments the voice of God's Spirit is awfully solemn as He cries, "Now is the day of salvation;" "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;" "Believe and live."

These moments may be very brief. The crisis of the battle between God and self, right and wrong, truth and falsehood, may be concentrated into a few minutes. But time sufficient is, nevertheless, given wherein to test our *truthfulness*, the soil in which truth grows, the mirror that reflects its beams; time sufficient is given to say Yes or No to that God who claims our faith and love. Truth comes with authority and majesty as an ambassador from the living God, and with clear voice, pure eye, and an arm omnipotent to save, offers to give light, life, and liberty to the captive spirit. But we may evade his bright glance, and close our ears to his voice, and refuse to consider his claims, and deal falsely with his arguments; we may reject his offers, and, shrinking back from his touch and his helping hand, retire into the gloom of self-satisfied pride, preferring the darkness to the light; or we may make merry with Heaven's ambassador, and mock him as they did the prophet of old; or cry out, "Away with him!" as the world cried to the Lord of light and life. And what if the second ambassador never comes again with such pressing earnestness, but passes by the door once so rudely closed against him, and will knock no more? Or, though he may in mercy return again and again, what if the eye gets blinded by the very light which it rejects? and the ear becomes so familiar with the voice, that it attracts

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attention no more than the winds that beat upon the wall; and the heart becomes so hardened as to be unimpressible, until the dread sentence is at last passed,—“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they *hated* knowledge, and *did not choose* the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”

A young man came to Jesus seeking eternal life. “Jesus, looking on him, loved him,” and answered his prayers by teaching him how eternal life could alone be attained. But the young man went away sorrowful, because he had much riches. What a history was contained in that brief moment of his life!

Again, young King Agrippa, along with the young Bernice, hear a sermon from Paul the prisoner. The outward picture presented to the eye on that day had nothing more remarkable or peculiar about it than has been witnessed a thousand times before and since. Those royal personages entered “the place of hearing” with “great pomp,” accompanied by “the chief captains and principal men of the city.” And before them appeared an almost unknown prisoner, upon whom his own nation, including “the chief priests and elders from Jerusalem,” demanded the judgment of death to be passed. That prisoner, “in bodily presence weak and contemptible,” was however “permitted to speak for himself;” and verily he did speak! He spoke of God and Christ; of repentance and the new life; and of his own glorious commission to “open the eyes” of men, “to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith in Jesus.” What a revelation was this from God to man! The voice which spoke from Sinai and through the prophets, the voice of Him who is truth and love, spoke at that moment of life through Paul to those royal hearers, and to the captains and principal men. But Agrippa, with a sneer or with some conviction of the truth, replied, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” Unlike St Paul himself, when the Lord spoke to him on his way to Damascus, Agrippa was disobedient to the heavenly vision. And so the sermon ended; the gay multitude dispersed; the place of hearing was left in silence, and echoed only the midnight winds or the beat of the sea-wave on the neighbouring shore. St Paul retired to his cell; Agrippa, Festus, and Bernice, to their chambers of rest, to sleep and dream by night, as they slept and

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dreamt by day. But they never heard the apostle preach again! It was their first and last sermon; that moment in their life came and passed, but never returned. Like two ships which meet at midnight on a moonlit sea, those two persons, the prisoner and the king, spoke, then each passed into the darkness, and onward on their voyage to their several ports, but never met again! Oh, how awful are such moments when truth reveals herself to the responsible spirit of man! And so, my reader, does it oftentimes happen between thee and God's Spirit. Let me beseech of thee to "redeem the time," to know this "the day of *thy* visitation," and to hear and believe "the word of the Lord."

Another "moment in life" which may be specially noticed, is that in which we are tempted to evil. Temptations are no doubt "common to man." Our whole life in a sense is a temptation, for whatever makes a demand upon our choice as moral beings, involves a trial of character, and tests the "spirit we are of." But nevertheless there do occur periods in our lives when such trials are peculiarly testing; when large bribes are offered to the sin that doth so easily beset us, tempting us to betray conscience, give up principle, lose faith in the right and in God, and to serve the devil, the world, or the flesh. Such moments may be very brief, yet decisive of our future life. They may come suddenly upon us, though possibly many notes of warning have announced their approach. For they are often but the apex of the pyramid to which many previous steps have gradually and almost imperceptibly led; the beginning of a battle, which must at last be fought, and very shortly decided, but yet the ending of many previous skirmishings. Be this as it may, that moment of life does come to us all, when evil like the enemy appears to concentrate against us its whole force, and when we must fight, conquer, or die; when like a thief it resolves to break into our home and take possession; when as a deceiver it promises happiness, and demands immediate acceptance or rejection of the splendid offer,—“All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me!”

What a moment is this in the life of many a young person. How unutterably solemn is the first deliberate act which opposes conscience, rebels against the authority of God and of His law, shuts out the light, and prefers darkness. Future character, and the life and happiness of years, may be determined by it. The step taken in that brief moment, the lie uttered, the dishonesty perpetrated, the drunkenness or debauchery indulged in, the prayers for the first time given up, and the father's home left for the far country. Who can realise the consequences of those first acts, or estimate the many links of evil, and the endless chain itself, that may connect themselves with the one link of sin fashioned in that moment of life! Who can foresee the streams ever increasing in breadth and depth which may flow from this letting in of water! Would God that my readers, young men especially, would but believe in the possibility even of the choice they make at such a time determining their future destiny. The thought of this might at least make them pause and consider.



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There is no exaggeration in this language. To realise the danger, all we need assume is the law of habit; for, according to that law, we know that any act of the will, good or bad, has a tendency to repeat itself with increasing ease and decreasing consciousness, until it becomes a “second nature.” Hence the first resistance of evil is much less difficult than any subsequent attempt; and he who in one moment of life could by a manly effort become a conqueror, and enter on a life of principle and peace, may, by yielding, very soon sink down into a degraded slave, who is held fast by the iron chain of habit, each link of which he has himself forged by his own self-will.

What a moment was that in the life of Herod when he permitted evil desire for Herodias to enter his soul. That desire conceived sin, and sin when finished brought forth death. Acts passed into habits, and habits into a life of abandoned passion. Then came the festive birthday, and the dancing before him of the daughter of his paramour; and then the foul murder, with the spectacle of the bloody head, closed eyes, and sealed lips of the greatest and noblest man of his time; and then followed the hour when Jesus Himself was brought before the murderer, when the Lord spoke not one word of warning, rebuke, or mercy to him, but smote the wretch with the terrible wrath and righteous judgment of silence!

What a moment in life was that, too, when Judas welcomed covetousness into his heart as a most profitable guest. Then one day Covetousness offered him thirty pieces of silver if he would betray his Lord; and Judas agreed to the proposal. A whole eternity of misery was involved in that moment of his life: for the night soon arrived when the bargain was to be kept. A few moments more, and the history will end here to begin elsewhere. Yet there is not a sign on earth or heaven to indicate the importance of that brief hour to Judas! He forms one among the most distinguished company that ever sat at the same table since the earth began; and never did mortal ears listen to such words uttered by human lips, nor did mortal eyes ever contemplate such a scene of peace and love as was witnessed in that upper room in Jerusalem. But the hour has struck, and Judas rises to depart. The deed of darkness must now be done. It is late, and he has made a most important appointment; unless he keeps it, he may lose his money; and what a loss to the poor follower of a man who had nowhere to lay His head! Judas leaves that company; and what was there in things visible to make him suspect even that an awful moment of life—his last—had come? All was calm within that upper room, —all was peace in the world without. The naked heavens shone in the calm brilliancy of an Eastern night. The streets of Jerusalem, along which the traitor passed on his dreadful errand, echoed his footsteps in their silence. Yet Judas, “the son of perdition,” was at that moment on his way “to his own place!”

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And thus it is with many a man in the hour of temptation. The voice of sin speaks not loudly, but whispers to his inner spirit. He pursues his path of evil without alarm being given by sight or sound from heaven or earth. There is nothing in the world without to disturb the thoughts and purposes of the world within his false and unprincipled soul. The moment of his life brings the temptation, and he yields his soul to its power, and the moment passes with as noiseless a step; and soon the last moment comes, and passes away; but he too has noiselessly passed away with it “to his own place!”

The “moment in life” when we are called upon to perform some positive duty, is one which is often very critical and full of solemn consequences to us. The duty may *appear* to be a very trifling one,—such as writing a letter, visiting a friend, warning some brother against evil, aiding another, or sympathising with a sufferer in his sorrow. But whatever the work may be, and in whatever way it is to be performed, whether by word or deed, by silence or by speech, yet there is a time given us for doing it, very brief perhaps, and unaccompanied by any sign to mark its significance,—a time, nevertheless, when whatever has to be done must be done quickly, “now or never.”

Such a moment in life was that in the history of the three apostles who accompanied our Lord, at His own request, in order to watch with Him in His last agony. As a man, He deserved their thoughtful presence, their watchful sympathy, when enduring the dread sorrow which filled His cup, from realising by anticipation all that was before Him. Thrice He came to them from the spot, not far off, where He wrestled in prayer with His terrible agony.

Thrice He found them asleep. “What!” he asked, “could ye not watch with me one hour?” Ah! they knew not what an hour that was!—what it was to Him—what it was and might have been to them! They might have had the joy, the exalted privilege, which for ever would have been as a very heaven of glory in their memory, of sharing, through the power of sympathising love, the burden of their Lord’s anguish. But they yielded to the flesh, and permitted that moment of time to pass; and when they at last roused themselves from their slumber, it was too late. That moment in life had come and gone, and could return no more. “Sleep on, and take your rest; behold, he who betrayeth me is at hand!”

And thus it often happens in the life of us all. An hour is given us when something may be done for our Lord or our brethren, which cannot possibly be done if that hour is permitted to pass away unimproved. Then we may teach an ignorant soul, or rouse a slothful one to action; we may alarm one who is lethargic, worldly, sensual, “without God or Christ in the world,” so as to win him to both; or we may comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak. Circumstances may give us the opportunity, and the “moment in life,” when such works may be



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done. The persons to be helped are perhaps inmates of our dwelling; they are our relations: they are sick or dying; or they have cast themselves upon our aid. But we let the moment pass. The work given us is not done. We have neglected it from sloth, procrastination, thoughtlessness, or selfishness. And we may become awake to our culpable negligence, and rouse ourselves to duty. But, alas! those whom we could have aided are past help. They are dead, or are removed from our influence, or in some way “past remedy.” And so the moment in life given us is gone, and gone for ever, except to meet us and to accuse us before the bar of God. And thus it is with duty in countless forms. What our hands find to do must be done quickly, if done at all, and in the time given us. If not, a night comes, and may come soon and come suddenly, in which either we ourselves cannot work, or in which, though at last willing to do it, it is no longer given us to do.

But there is one moment in life—and I conclude by suggesting it to your thoughts—which must come to every man, and which generally comes with signs sufficiently significant of its importance,—I mean the last moment which closes our life on earth. Come it must. And, as an old writer remarks, “the day we die, though of no importance to the world, is to ourselves of more importance than is all the world.” That moment in life ends time to us, and begins eternity; it ends our day of grace and begins the day of judgment; it separates us from the world in which we have lived since we were born, and introduces us to the unseen, unknown world of things and persons in which we must live for ever during the life of God. What a moment is this! It may come in the quiet of our own chamber, or amidst the confusion and excitement of some dread accident by land or sea; it may be heralded by long sickness or old age, and accompanied by much weakness and bodily suffering. But if that moment, when it comes, is to bring us peace, let our present moments, as they come, find us watchful, conscientious, believing, and prayerful. And should these words of mine be read by chance by one who has begun his last moment without having begun the work for which he was created, preserved, and redeemed, let me beseech of him to improve it by repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ, who will pardon his sins, give him a new heart, and save him as he did the thief on the cross. If every hour of his day of grace has been misimproved, let not this last be added to the number. If he has stood all the day idle, let him in the eleventh hour accept his Master’s work of faith alone in his own soul, and do what he can for the good of others. But let this moment in life pass, then shall the next moment after death bring only fear and anguish; for, be warned and also encouraged by the words of the truthful and loving Jesus, uttered with many tears, over lost souls,—“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least *in this thy day*, the things that belong unto thy peace; but now they are for ever hid from thine eyes!”

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### “LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD.”

These words seem to me to express the idea of true labour, such as God calls us to, and *in* the doing of which there is a great reward. They imply that the living God has a work to do on earth, in men and by men; that in this work He has—if I may so express it—a deep personal interest, because it is one worthy of Himself, and for the advancement of His own glory, and the good and happiness of man.

Now, God wishes us to know this work, and to sympathise with Him in it. He does not conceal from us what He wishes done, or what He himself is doing; nor obliges us to remain for ever blind as to His will and purposes regarding ourselves or others; so that, if we work at all, we must work according to our own wills only, and for our own purposes. Instead of this, He reveals in His Word, by His Son, through His Spirit, and in the conscience, what His will is—what He wishes us to be and do. Nor does He say to us, “Learn my commands, and obey them; but seek not to know why I have so commanded.” Were it impossible, indeed, to know *why* any command was given, the mere fact of its injunction would itself demand instant compliance; “but,” says our Lord, “I have not called you servants, but friends, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth.” The servant or slave does not occupy the place which the friend does. The one hears only what is commanded; but the other, through personal acquaintance with the master, is enabled to sympathise with the righteousness and love in the command. The friend not only knows what, as a servant, he *must* do, but sees how right and beautiful it is that he should be commanded so to do. In like manner, we read that God made known His “ways” to Moses, but only His “acts” to the children of Israel. This revelation, of principle and plan to His servant was indeed a speaking with him “face to face;” and thus does God speak to us now in these latter days by the grace and truth revealed in His Son. And it is only when we thus know God’s work on earth, and when, from a will and character brought into harmony with His, we see how excellent the work is, that we can be, not labourers only, but “*fellow-labourers*” with God;—not workers only, but “*workers together* with Him.”

Consider, for instance, *the work of God in our own souls*. This is, as far as we ourselves are concerned, the most important work in the universe. Upon it depends whether the universe shall be to us a heaven or a hell. “What will a man give in exchange for his soul?” is a question which assumes that to the man himself nothing can be so valuable. But has God any work to do in our souls? Has He ever expressed any wish as to what He would have us believe, become, or enjoy, or revealed for what end or purpose He made our spirits? Is there no wrong state or condition in us with which He is “angry” and “grieved,” and no right state with which He is “delighted,”

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and over which He “rejoices?” Has He laid no command upon us to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling?” and has He given no intimation of His “working in us to will and do?” Or is it to Him the same whether we are wrong or right? Surely we can have no difficulty in replying to such all-important questions! If a man loses faith in the reality and sincerity of God’s wish, that he personally should have his guilty soul freely pardoned, and his unholy soul sanctified, and his whole being renewed after God’s own image,—that he himself should be a good, a great, a happy man, by knowing and loving his God; and if a man brings himself to such a state of practical atheism as to doubt whether God knows or cares anything about him;—then it is impossible for such a man to be “a fellow-labourer,” a “worker together” with God in his own soul; for he does not know and has never heard of any work of God required *there*. But if he believes that God is indeed his “Father in heaven;”—that He has goodwill to him, and therefore desires his good by desiring him to *be* good;—that, for the accomplishment of this end, all has been done which is recorded in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation;—that God has been working in him, through agencies innumerable, since his childhood, by parents and friends, by tender mercies and bitter chastisements, by Sabbath ordinances and pulpit ministrations, by the constant witness of conscience and the Word of God, in order that he should know and love God his Father,—then, seeing this, will he see also how he may be a “fellow-labourer with God.” *And have not you, my reader, been conscious of this work?* You cannot get quit of the conviction that there is One higher than yourself with whom you have to do,—One who is ever with you, seeking to deliver you from evil, from your own evil self,—One whose voice is never silent, and who is righteously judging your daily life. And have you never been conscious, too, of fighting against what you certainly knew was not self, but a holy, winning, mysterious power or Person, who opposed self, and for that very reason was resisted by self? And therefore your sin has not been the ignorance of good, but opposing the good,—not the absence, but the resisting of a good work in you. It is on this very principle men will be condemned, for “*This is the condemnation, that light hath come into the world, and men prefer darkness to light, because their deeds are evil.*” And if this has been your sin, so has it been your misery. In exact proportion as you thus “hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord,” you become wretched and unsatisfied. No wonder! for with whom does the man work when he works in opposition to the will of God? In refusing to serve God, he serves Satan, and becomes a “worker together” with “the spirit who now worketh in the children of disobedience!”

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Well, then, what are you to do? I reply: "Yield yourselves to God;" "be subject to the Father of your spirit, and live." "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." Instead of being workers against, seek to be "workers *together*" with God in your own souls; to have His "work of faith and love," and everything beautiful and holy, perfected in you. Believe in Jesus Christ as the living Person who alone can and will save you, by pardoning your sins, and giving you His Spirit to make you like Himself. Begin your work by assuming that God *is* working in you to will and do; and *because* you have Him, through His omnipotent Spirit, working in you, do not be as one who beats the air in aimless and profitless warfare, nor strive against nor grieve that Spirit, but through Him "work out your own salvation." In thus pleading with you, I feel that I myself am but working with God; for I can say with the apostle, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We then, as *workers together with Him*, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

Put this question in another way: Suppose you had met Jesus Christ when He was on earth; that you had listened to one of His appeals when He preached the gospel from city to city, and felt His eye looking at you as He spoke in His own name, and in the name of His Father, saying, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—"The Son of man hath come to seek that which is lost," and the like; that you had witnessed the delight it gave Him to do good, and to find any one willing to receive His overflowing love, and the sorrow He endured when men would not believe in Him or trust Him, but preferred remaining without the blessing; and that you had accompanied Him during His ministry on earth, and studied His character from all you saw and heard,—could the impression made upon you in such circumstances be thus expressed, "I believe that Thou carest not for me; that my well-doing or ill-doing are equally matters of indifference to Thee; and that there is no faith or love that Thou desirest to see accomplished in my soul?" Would you have *dared* to speak in anything like this strain of blasphemy to the holy Saviour had you met Him? Or would you not have been overwhelmed by the conviction, that whether you yielded to His wishes or not, these wishes were clear and unquestionable—that from His character as a man having fellowship with God, His work as the Saviour of sinners, His revealed will as Lord, nothing could be more certain than that He wished you *personally* to be holy and happy through faith in His name; and accordingly, that if you accepted His call, and His offer of power to be so, you were but working *with* Him; and that if you neglected both, you were certainly working *against* Him?

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But with this personal Saviour you have to do just as really and truly now as any of His disciples who had followed Him when on earth; and so I beseech you to be fellow-labourers with Him in His own holy and living work within your own soul. Let your prayer then be: "Thy will be done! Let Thy holy and loving will, my Father, be done in me! I believe in Thy forgiveness, and am at peace with Thee, according to that will, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And as this is also Thy will, even my sanctification, and Thy revealed purpose, that I should be made conformable to the image of Thy Son, so let Thy grace, which is sufficient for the chief of sinners, daily bring this salvation into me, by teaching me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; that so learning Christ, taking up His cross daily, following Him and being disciplined by Him, I may be taught to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of my mind; and, as Thine own workmanship, be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Amen!"

Let us consider for a little longer God's work in us, by His providential dealings towards us. A moment's reflection will suffice to remind you that God, in His providence, is constantly working with you. He is, for instance, a wonderful Giver. "He gives us all things richly to enjoy." "He openeth His hand liberally." His mercies are more than can be numbered; though as a father He also chastises His children. "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away." Now, in whatever way God deals with us, whether He gives or takes, there is a purpose which He wishes accomplished. He has a work to do in us by every joy and every sorrow. There is a voice for us in the rod of darkness, and in the ray of sunshine; and it is our duty, our strength, our peace, to hear that voice, and to know that work of providence so as to be fellow-labourers with God in it. Perhaps you are disposed to excuse yourselves for want of sober inquiry into God's dealings with you, by saying, that it is very hard to know, and often impossible to discover, what object or purpose He has in view when sending to us this gift or that grief. In some cases it may be so; but it is much to know and to remember what God's purpose is *not*, and what He can never wish to have accomplished, either by what He gives to us or takes from us. Never can it be the purpose of God, in any case, to advance the work of Satan in our souls, or to retard within us the coming of His own glorious kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Never can He send us a gift to make us proud, vain, indolent, covetous, earthly-minded, sensual, devilish, or in any degree to alienate us from Himself as our chief good. For whatever purpose He fashioned our body with such exquisite care, providing so rich a supply for all its senses, it was not, assuredly,

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that we should make that body the instrument of degrading and ruining the immortal soul, and of sinking our whole being down to a level with the beasts that perish! He never gave beauty of form to make us vain or sensuous; nor poured wine into our cup that we should become drunkards; nor spread food on our table merely to pamper our self-indulgence and feed our passions. He never gave us dominion over the earth that we should be Satan's slaves. He never awoke from silence the glorious harmonies of music for our ear, nor revealed to our eye the beauties of nature and of art, nor fired our soul with the magnificent creations of poetry, that we might be so enraptured by these as to forget and despise Himself. He never gifted us with a high intellect, refined taste, or brilliant wit, to nourish ambition, worship genius, and to become profane, irreverent, and devil-like, by turning those godlike powers against their Maker and Sustainer. We cannot think, that if money has been poured at our feet, He thereby intended to infect us with the curse of selfishness, or to tempt us to become cruel or covetous men, who would let the beggar stand at our gate, and ourselves remain so poor as to have no inheritance in the kingdom of God; or to make us such "fools" as to survey our broad acres and teeming barns with self-love and worldliness, exclaiming, "Soul, take thine ease; thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry;" or to tempt us to refuse the cross, and to depart sorrowful from Christ, because we had great possessions; or to choke the seed of the Word as with thorns, so that it should bring forth no fruit to perfection! Can it be possible that He has spared our family, and enriched us with so many friends, in order that, being "so happy" with them, we should never wish to know God as our Father, Christ as our Brother, or have any desire to become members of the family of God? Has He given us so much pleasant, useful, or necessary labour in the world, that we should forget the one thing needful, and leave undone *the* work for which we were created? Has He given us the Church, the ministry, the Sabbath, the sacrament, that we should make these ends instead of means—instruments for concealing, rather than revealing our God and Saviour? And if the Lord has taken away, and visited us with sharp sorrows and sore bereavements, was this "strange work" done by Him who does not "willingly afflict" His children, in order that we should have the pain without the "profit," "faint under" or "despise" the chastisement, or become more set upon the world and the creature, more shut up in heart against our Father, more dead to eternal things, or fall into despair, and curse God and die?



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Without prolonging such inquiries, enough has been said, I hope, to enable you to apprehend what I mean by our being fellow-workers with God in all His works of providence that concern ourselves. We believe that these things, whether of joy or sorrow, do not come by chance, nor through the agency of dead mechanical laws, but that a living Person is dealing with us wisely, lovingly, righteously,—that, in truth, “*the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away*,” and that, accordingly, there must be a design or purpose to serve in what He gives or withholds,—that this never can be an evil purpose, but must, in every case, be good, and that we may derive good and a blessing from it. Let us, then, be fellow-workers with Him in seeking, through faith and love, to have this purpose realised, and to have the end designed by God fulfilled in us or by us, so that every joy and sorrow may bring us nearer the glorious God, and make us know Him better, and love Him more, and thus possess “life more abundantly,” even “life eternal!”

But not only is there a work to be done *in* us, but also *by* us, in the doing of which we are to be “labourers together with God.”

This kind of labouring with others is illustrated by Saint Paul when he says, what I have already quoted, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We then, as *workers together with Him*, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” He is here, you perceive, addressing those who were enemies to God, and beseeching such to be “reconciled.” But in what spirit does he plead with them? In labouring to bring them into reconciliation with their Father, and to save their souls, he does not feel himself alone and solitary in his work and labour of love; as one prompted by his own goodwill to lost sinners, and his own wishes to redeem them from evil, yet in doubt or in ignorance as to what God's wishes or feelings were in regard to them. He does not proclaim the gospel to one or to many sinners with such thoughts as these: “It is no doubt my duty to preach to them, and to plead with them, and from my heart I pity them, love them, and could die to save them; but whether God pities them or not, or truly wishes to save them, I do not know, for I am totally ignorant of His will or purpose.” Surely such were not the apostle's convictions! Did he not rather engage in this work of seeking to save souls with intense earnestness, because he knew that however great his love, it was but a reflection, however dim, of the infinite love of God to them, and his desire to save them but a feeble expression of the desire of God? Was he not persuaded, that in “beseeching” them to be reconciled, he could speak “as though God did beseech” them by him, as one “in Christ's stead;” and that “in beseeching” them “not to receive the grace of God in vain,” he was but “a worker together with God?”

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In this same spirit may we, and must we seek to do good to others. We dare not look upon our brother as one belonging exclusively to ourselves, or one dear to ourselves only, but as one belonging to God his Creator, and dear to God his Father. We must ever keep before us the fact, that there is a work which God wishes to have accomplished in his soul, as well as in our own; and that our brother is given to us in order that we should be workers *together* with God in helping on that good work. And if so, this will very clearly teach us at least what we ought *not* to do to our brother. We should never, by word or by example, by silence or by speech, strengthen in his spirit the work of evil: for that is not God's work. For when we flatter his vanity, feed his pride, shake his convictions of the truth, or when, in any way whatever, we lay stumbling blocks in his path, or tempt him to evil, we are surely not workers together with God. In our conduct to our brother, let us ask ourselves, Is this how Christ would have acted to any one with whom He came in contact when on earth? Is this helping on His work now? But, on the other hand, when our brother's soul is dear to us,—when, at all hazards, we seek first, and above all, his *good*,—when our love is such that we are willing to have its existence suspected, and ourselves despised and rejected by him, even as our loving Lord was by His “own whom He loved,” rather than that we should selfishly save ourselves, and lose our brother; then indeed we are labourers together with God, and possess the spirit of Jesus! Oh, little does the world understand the deep working of this kind of love, which, however imperfect it may be, yet burns in the heart of Christians only, because they only partake of that love which is possessed in perfection by Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us!

Let us, then, remember that we are not to concern ourselves about another's good as if we were alone in our labours, our wishes, and our sympathies; as if we really cared more than God does about the well-being of this relation or of that friend. Let our love flow out with all its force, and express itself with holiest longings and tenderest sympathies; yet infinitely above all this love is the love of our God and their God! In our truest and holiest working be assured that we are but a worker *together* with Him, the true and holy One, otherwise our labours could not be *right*; for they would not be in harmony with God's will, or such as He could command or bless.

The same principle applies to our more extensive labours for the good of the whole world, and is the very life and soul of home and foreign missions. We can enter the abodes of ignorance and crime at home, and ply with offers of mercy the inhabitants of the foulest den, and plead with every prodigal to return to his Father, because we believe that in all this we are in Christ's stead, and are warranted to beseech



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in God's name, and with the full assurance that we are not working alone, but "together with God." We can visit any spot in heathendom, cheered and borne up by the same assurance amidst every difficulty, discouragement, and danger. Whatever else is doubtful, this, at least, is certain, that in every endeavour to save sinners, we are but expressing our sympathy with Jesus in His love to them, in His longing to see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied in their salvation; and that when experiencing the deepest sorrow because men will not believe, we are only sharing the sufferings of Him who mourned on account of unbelief, and wept over lost Jerusalem because it would not know the things of its peace. All this is as certain as that there is such a living person as the Saviour, unchanged in character, everywhere present, seeing the evil and the good, hating the one and loving the other, whose labour and whose joy is that God's name should be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Oh, how depressing, how deadening, to have any doubts as to this reality of the interest which our God and Saviour takes in the good of human souls! How must the dread thought silence the tongue, wither the heart, and paralyse the hand, that however ardent the wish influencing us to be good ourselves, or to do good to others, God is indifferent to both, and has no real interest in either—as if we had more love, more holiness, and more desire that the kingdom of righteousness should advance, than the loving and holy God! Nay, how is it possible for us to have any true love at all to human friends unless it is first kindled by Him, and is in sympathy with Him, who loved His neighbour as Himself?

Let me here remind you of the only other alternative set before you,—it is the awful one of being a "labourer together" with Satan. Our Lord rejects neutrality; for such is really impossible. He recognises the *no* real friend as a positive enemy. "He that is not with me is against me;" "He who gathereth not scattereth;" "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," but must serve either. Now, Satan has a work on earth. It is this spirit which "worketh in the children of disobedience." Will we, then, work with him in his desire to destroy our own souls? Will we have "fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," and take part with that wicked one in his dread work of opposing the kingdom of light, and advancing the kingdom of darkness in the world? Will we assist him in tempting others to evil,—in entangling souls more and more in the meshes of sin,—in propagating error and opposing truth? And will we, by our words and example, by our coldness or open opposition, help to keep any man back from Christ, or to drag down to hell a neighbour or friend, a brother, sister, or child? A labourer together with Satan! Oh, consider the possibility of this being the record at judgment of our history, that we may start, as from a nightmare, from so hideous an imputation! Instead of anything so inconceivably dreadful being true of us, may we know and love the Father, through the Son, and by His Spirit, and thus realise more and more in all our labours the strength and blessedness of being "labourers together with God!"

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The more we reflect upon this principle which I have been illustrating, the more we shall see that it is the life of all true work, and can be applied to any work in which a Christian can engage. The true artist, for example, ought to occupy the elevated position of being a labourer with God in faithfully, industriously, and conscientiously working in harmony with Nature, which is “the Art of God.” He ought to study, therefore, the sculpture, the paintings, the music, of the Great Artist, and understand the principles on which He produces the beautiful in form, in colour, or in sound. The humblest mason who plies his chisel on the highest pinnacle of a great building, or who fashions the lowliest hut, should have an eye to Him who makes all things very good, and for conscience’ sake, ay, for God’s sake, he should, to the very best of his ability, work in the spirit of the Great Architect, who bestows the same care in building up the mountains, moulding the valleys, fashioning the crystal, making a home to shelter the tiny insect, or a nest where the bird may rear her young. Without loving our work, and doing it to the best of our ability, as in the sight of God, we cannot be fellow-workers with Him who hath made our bodies so wonderfully, and cultivated our souls so carefully; for “ye are God’s building”—“ye are God’s husbandry.”

### REVIVALS.

#### I.

##### THEIR NEED.

“An awakening” expresses better than the stereotyped phrase “revival,” the idea of a wide-spread interest in religious truth. This is the response to the righteous demand, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,” for at such a time men but awake to the reality of truth, which was previously dim and shadowy to them as things seen in dreams; or formerly the awful facts of God’s revelation had been as pictures hung up on the wall, which now suddenly become alive.

Before entering on the discussion of this rather delicate subject, there is one question which we would respectfully press upon the attention of the reader, and that is, Whether he would like a revival of genuine religion? We do not question him regarding his sympathy with any particular form in which the supposed revival might come, far less with any of those peculiarities which are supposed by some to be necessarily characteristic of a revival; but supposing that such an awakening or revival occurred by means of any agency, or any process, that it was accompanied by such outward signs of calm and peace as he himself would select, and that its results were unquestionable;—supposing that society was unusually pervaded by a spirit of truth and holiness, that no countenance could be given to evil by word, look, or sentiment, but only to all that was pure, lovely, and of good report,—would such a heaven upon earth be readily rejoiced in by him? If this question is fairly and honestly put to the heart and

conscience, the manner in which we entertain the thought of the mere possibility of a revival becomes a trial of our own spirit, a test of our sincerity when we pray, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

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The weakest Christian has but one answer to give to such a question. He may be pained by anticipating the contrast which he thinks is not unlikely to be presented between himself and others more holy; or he may fear that what is false and fleeting, but more attractive, may, in a time of excitement, usurp the place of what is real and permanent, though less obtrusive; but he cannot but desire with his whole heart that he himself and all men may become more and more awake to the realities of truth, and be revived as by the breath of a new spring, so as to grow more in grace, and bring forth more fruit to the glory of God.

For, given that a revival is possible,—that a wide-spread interest in the will of God towards men, with a corresponding power vouchsafed to know it and do it, may be suddenly produced and permanently sustained in the minds of men,—we ask, Is not this *the* one grand blessing from God which we require? To the question, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” which we may conceive our loving Lord putting to His blind, deaf, lame, even dead brethren of mankind, does not the response come from individuals and congregations, from solitary mourners, and from unhappy hearts, from the weary, the hopeless, the despairing, the labourers at home and abroad—“*Life, Lord! We need life in our souls, life in our duties, life in our minds, life in our families, life in our teaching and hearing, in our working and praying, life in all and for all!*”

All our clergy constantly need a revival of genuine life,—life which no parishioner might be able to define, but which, if there, every one would soon perceive. It would be felt in every home like the breath of spring, experienced beside every sick-bed like a touch of healing, and be heard in every sermon like a voice from heaven. Oh, what a heavenly gift to himself and others would this be, and what a time of refreshing from the Lord! And how many would share the blessing, now hindered, perhaps, by his own unbelief and satisfaction with indifference. For though “dead” ministers may in some rare cases have succeeded in saving souls, we never heard of living ones who had in every case failed. God has ordained that a living ministry—the preaching of those who utter what they themselves *know* from personal experience to be true—shall be His most powerful instrumentality for converting the world. We believe, accordingly, that every minister, whose own soul became alive, would soon find that his life was *contagious*, and that his living spirit would tell upon other spirits in a way never before realised by him. That indescribable impression made by a genuine Christian character, which never can be successfully imitated, would exercise a marvellous influence upon all with whom he came in contact; and if he had one sorrow for life, it would be the remembrance of the dark and horrible time when he was a mere formalist, dead to the eternal interests of his own soul and the souls of others.

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Again, What *parish* does not stand in need of such a quickening? Few ministers are encouraged and stimulated to aim at and attain higher measures of good, from the abounding evidences of Christian life among their parishioners. Many more are tempted, by all they see around them, to wax cold in love, and to lower their standard of personal and ministerial life,—to become quite satisfied with the every-day, stereotyped formalism of things around them, or to submit to it as if it were a doom. The very smile of incredulity with which the account of alleged revivals is received,—the wonder which good men express, if told of many being awakened by the mere preaching of the Word in some congregation or district,—only indicates how all hope has perished of our people over becoming what the preacher *in words* urges them to become, or of their ever being delivered from the torpor, the indifference, the death, which *in words* he tells them are the preludes of coming death eternal. Is not our hope well-nigh lost regarding many a parish; and what but the quickening and reviving power of God's Spirit can restore it?

And is there no revival needed in *our most living congregations*? We may, indeed, have cause to thank God for many signs of genuine life within them, and for such good works as indicate a living spirit in the body. But in the most encouraging cases we have more cause to deplore the vast extent of the ground where the seed sown has been carried away, withered, or choked with thorns, rather than to rejoice in the small patches which may be bringing forth fruit. Let any minister, as he surveys his congregation, and as he visits them from house to house, ask himself the question, How many of these really care about Christ, and ever pray to Him, or try to serve Him? and making every allowance for our ignorance of other men's condition, for the life that may be hidden from the eye, yet will there not be innumerable evidences, *forcing* upon him the conviction, that if the doctrines he preaches are true, death reigns to a very awful extent even among members of the Church? We do not wish to exaggerate, or make out a case against pastors or their flocks, but we leave it to every candid man who will dare to look the truth in the face, to deny the existence among us of a, mighty want—the want of a revival of spiritual religion among both.

Once more, let us look at our *missions*, and consider whether there is any need of a revival in this department of Church life. We confess that a mingled feeling of shame and sorrow swells our hearts as we think of the contributions, whether of men or of money, furnished by all Christendom for the conversion of heathendom. It is not that Protestantism is behind Romanism even in the number of its missionaries, while in *quality*, and even permanent and holy results, we never will compare these two sections of the Christian Church. But how can we hope

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to possess such missions as shall be worthy of the Protestant Church, without a revival of spiritual religion throughout the parishes, families, theological halls, and congregations of Europe and America? Is it too much to expect, for example, that Christian *parents*, who would now rejoice if their sons received “an excellent civil appointment in India,” or “a commission without purchase,” or “a partnership in a first-rate house,” shall also rejoice in the prospect of one of their children becoming a missionary of the Cross? Is it too much to expect that those *licensed to preach the gospel* shall love the work for the work’s sake, and that some years at least of health and strength may be given to the foreign field? What is needed more than a revival among our *preachers*, before we can look with hope for a revival in our missions?

And, finally, is not a revival much required to banish the estrangement, coldness, envy, which exist between *the clergy of different Churches*? There are delightful exceptions, where genuine Christian goodwill and love exist. But, alas! we sadly miss the want of that manly, truthful maintenance of what appears to us to warrant our own church organisation, with that just appreciation of the sense, principle, and judgment of those who have no sympathy with our views. Surely every great branch of the Church has at this time of day proved to every honest and fair man, that enough can be said in its favour to justify a man in belonging to it without his belying his Christian profession, or being either a fool or a hypocrite. Yet, what an inward *chuckling* is often manifested at each other’s blunders, failures, or even sins,—what a straining for the masteries between the rival sects,—what an utter absence, in innumerable cases, of the slightest sign or symptom of that Christian love and forbearance which is the very proof of being children of God—nay, how little of the good breeding and kindness which are universal among gentlemen! And all this evil, and more than we have described, is often glossed over with such an evangelical phraseology, that what is of the earth earthy is made to appear as if it were heavenly; and the coarsest product of the coarsest and most vulgar vanity, self-seeking, and pride is so painted and misrepresented as to look like love of principle or love of truth. What will put an end to the proud antagonism, the Popery, the Church idolatry of Protestantism? Can it ever be that we shall carry one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ, and so love *the Church* and its Head as to love ourselves and our sections of the Church less,—that we shall so love our brethren of every name, that their sins shall be our grief, and their well being our blessing,—that we shall be willing to decrease, if Christ only increases, by whatever means He may in His sovereign wisdom select? In one word, can it be that Christian ministers and people of every church shall, in any town or district,

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come to love one another with a pure heart fervently, because loving the Lord? Who would not long for such a blessed consummation! "But, behold, if the Lord could make windows in heaven, might this thing be!" So we exclaim in our unbelief. But, unless we have lost all faith in the power of God's Spirit, why should we not believe that God *can* open the windows of heaven, and pour forth such showers of His grace that ministers shall believe what they know, and act as they teach, and be what they profess, and that thus the parched places shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Then, indeed, would be fulfilled the gracious promise made to a renewed Church:—"For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

## II.

### OBJECTIONS TO REVIVALS.

It cannot be denied that very strong prejudices are entertained by many of our most intelligent, sober-minded, and sincere Christians against revivals. It is both unjust and untruthful to allege that their real objection is against all vital godliness and genuine Christianity. Such persons as those we allude to love both, and desire the advance of truth as truly and sincerely as any "revivalist" in the land, and much more so than many who bear the name. But from their education, their temperament, their views of truth, and from what they have seen or heard regarding the "revival movements," they have been led to question the reality of sudden conversions, the evidence of the instrumentalities and means ordinarily employed to effect them, and the correctness of the teaching imparted, either to awaken or build up; while other things which appeared always to accompany "a revival," as if essential to it,—such as the extravagant and exaggerated coarse addresses of some, the impudence, conceit, and spiritual pride of others, the thrusting aside, as if of no value, all that was quiet, sober, and truthful, and the bringing forward all that was noisy, demonstrative, talkative, and excited,—has had such an effect on their minds that the very name of "a revival meeting" produces a feeling of repulsion and aversion as against a falsehood.

Now, we do not profess by any means to defend whatever has presented itself to public notice in any village or district as "a revival." A good name, whether assumed by men, meetings, or movements, does not necessarily make either of them good or worthy of their name.[A]



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[Footnote A: It is very unfair to represent those clergy as opposed to revivals who may not have attended “revival meetings.” These meetings were often summoned and managed by self-appointed committees of laymen, whose names were unknown to the clergy, and no guarantee whatever was afforded as to who would address them, or how they would be conducted. Clergymen, therefore, were unwilling either to attend as mere spectators, or to appear on the platform, where they might be placed in the unpleasant position of either opposing or acquiescing in what was said or done. They, therefore, confined their labours to their own flock, thankfully acknowledging the good which may have been done by others in the way which seemed best to *them*; and also themselves finding, when sought, a portion of the blessing for their people.]

On the other hand, whatever form revivals may take, or have taken, in any country or district, whatever mistakes have been made, or whatever evils have accompanied them or been occasioned by them, yet we cannot admit that any objections can be valid which would hinder us from hoping for such wide-spread and rapid extension of the gospel as we have never yet seen, nor from believing that a very real and genuine revival has to a remarkable extent taken place, and is yet going on, throughout our country and the world.

But let us briefly state the ordinary objections against revivals:—

1. “We have no great faith in *sudden* conversions,” is a form of expression in which we hear revivals objected to, when the subject happens to be the topic of conversation in ordinary society.

Alas! how many have little faith in the necessity of *any* conversion! A want of hearty conviction regarding human sinfulness and guilt, and a tendency rather to flatter man’s character, worship his genius, and almost deify his powers, lies too much at the root of many of the views and feelings of our day about religion; and hence there is a corresponding want of faith in the necessity of that “new life” which some time or other every one must possess, or in the “supernatural” means required either for the removal of man’s guilt and his restoration to the Divine favour, or for the renewal of man’s nature and his restoration to the Divine image. There are, in short very inadequate convictions—if these are brought to a Scripture test—either as to the state *out* of which or *into* which every man must be brought before he can be saved. But, nevertheless, there are moral necessities grounded on the character of God as it is, and the character of man as it is and ought to be, which remain the same in every age and clime. Some of these necessities are expressed by such declarations as—“Ye must be born again.” “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.”

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Yet while conversion is absolutely necessary for every man, we by no means assert that its inner history must, in each step, be necessarily the same, though the results must be essentially the same in every case. The Spirit of God, who works when and how He pleases, may, in some cases, so work in the soul from its earliest years, that the time when the seed of a new life entered it, and the process by which it has gradually increased there, until it now brings forth fruit, are both unknown. Not unknown is *the fact* that life is there, for it is recognised and evidenced by its fruit, but *when* it began may be unknown; and the rate or successive stages of its increase may be equally unknown, or at least unmarked.

This is true in some cases—or, let it be admitted, in many cases, chiefly among those favoured ones who have been reared from childhood within the paradise of a truly Christian home,—still, why should we deny the reality of many conversions on the mere ground of their suddenness?

We shall not appeal to authentic historical facts to refute the objection, but simply remind our readers of such sudden conversions as those of Paul the apostle, the jailer at Philippi, or the thousands on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem. Would we be warranted in rejecting those, because a few days or hours only marked a transition from death to life, from darkness to light, from their serving Satan to serving God, from being enemies to their being friends of Jesus?

But apart from this evidence, what, we would ask, is there in the nature of conversion inconsistent with its alleged suddenness? There may indeed be a *preparedness* for it that may occupy much time, as dawn ushers in the sunrise, or as months of travail precede the “child born into the world;” and there maybe *results* whose character may require time to determine. Nevertheless, why should not conversion itself, apart from its antecedents or consequents, be sudden? Let us consider briefly what conversion is.

It is not, for example, the attainment of *good habits* nor even the doing of good works, though it leads to and must end in this, if genuine. These are the *results* of conversion. Nor, again, does it imply anything like a full or accurate *knowledge* of the Christian scheme, far less of its “evidences;” for how little could have been thus known by the converted jailer of Philippi, who was one day a heathen, and the next day a baptized Christian—or by the converted thief on the cross—or by the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost!

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But in conversions there must be *thorough earnestness* about the salvation of the soul, or of our relationship to God. And why should not this feeling be suddenly kindled? Men can be easily roused to *sudden* earnestness, in order to save their bodies, when they realise present danger; and why not to save their souls? *If*, indeed, the soul can never be in such danger, or if a man can never be ignorant or forgetful of the fact, or if in no circumstances or by any means he can be roused to a sense of his danger, then may such sudden earnestness be impossible; but if his danger is real, and deliverance near, surely all this is possible, and even probable, and of infinite importance, seeing that the day of grace ends with life, and life may end in any moment. If this night a man's soul may be required to give its account, surely on this day conversion is required to make that account one of joy, and not of sorrow.

Conversion implies also *faith in what God has revealed to us*. And why should we not *at once* believe God? Do we think it necessary to hesitate for months and years ere we believe the word of an honourable, truthful man, in matters of fact about which he cannot possibly be mistaken? And shall we think it strange to believe God's Word the moment we hear it? Now, that Word tells us many things which, if true, cannot be believed without producing immediate results. It tells us that we are lost sinners "condemned *already*;" that God, in love, has had pity on us, and sent His Son to save us; that He died on the cross for sinners, so that "whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish;" that He lives to quicken and sanctify through His Spirit all who will receive Him; that there is "no other name given under heaven whereby a man can be saved;" and that "he who believeth not shall be damned." Now, is it really impossible for a man at once to believe all this, or even thus far to understand his danger, and believe the gospel as the only deliverance? Does it seem strange that men should have at once believed Christ, or any of His apostles, when *they* preached? Or, does it not seem more strange that some were "fools, and slow of heart to believe?" And why should it seem incredible that a sincere and earnest man should now believe the moment he hears the same gospel, and say, "I have been a great sinner in hitherto treating this message with so much neglect! By my disbelief I have made God a liar; I shall do so no more: Thy Word is truth. Lord, I believe; help mine unbelief!"

Conversion implies a "yielding ourselves to God," because thus believing in His love manifested through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Such a state of mind might be thus expressed: "Lord, I shall fight against Thee no more! I believe in Thee, and yield myself to Thee for time and eternity, to have the good pleasure of Thy righteous will done in me and by me; to be pardoned, sanctified, and governed wholly by Thyself, and in Thine own way. I am Thine—save me!" Surely this attitude of soul may be assumed *at once* towards God the very moment the gospel of His goodwill to us, and of His desire to possess our hearts, is heard.

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Conversion implies some degree at least of *peace* with God. Many seem to think it almost presumptuous to look for peace or to expect joy in God. "It betokens," they say, "a want of humility." Love and humility are one. Both are a going out of ourselves, and finding our good, strength, peace—*all* in God. It is surely a poor compliment to pay a friend, if we rebuke those who dare to be happy in his presence or to find peace in his society. What hard thoughts have men of God when they do not see how He must ever rejoice in the good and peace of His children! Oh, shame upon us that we do not "rejoice in the Lord *always*," and possess the "love which casteth out fear, for fear hath torment." Why, then, should it seem impossible for a man to have peace, the moment he can say with the apostle John, "We have known and *believed* the love that God hath to us?" Cannot that love be seen in its own light when revealed? And if so, why should the possession of *immediate* peace, in a degree corresponding to faith in God, seem to be so wonderful? Would not its absence be more so? The very *hope*, methinks, of pardon, when first entertained by the condemned criminal—or of deliverance and return to home, when first realised by the shipwrecked sailor—or of life and health, when first deemed probable even, by the hitherto despairing invalid—or of meeting his long-injured, but still patient and loving father, by the miserable prodigal—may well kindle sudden joy and peace. Much, no doubt, may have been done before any hope could dawn to the captive, to the shipwrecked, to the invalid, or the prodigal; yet the hope itself may *suddenly* flash on each, as the message enters the cell to assure the criminal of his safety, or the signal is seen on the distant horizon that promises succour to the mariner, or the smile plays on the countenance of the physician, telling that the dread crisis is over and that progress towards recovery has begun, or the remembrance of a father's love is rekindled in the heart of the wanderer. And thus a man who has been roused to see his moral guilt, as well as moral depravity—to see his dread and terrible danger—may well find unutterable peace *the very moment* he believes that there is for him deliverance from the evil, and forgiveness with God, "that He may be feared"—or even when the *maybe* dawns upon him that he, the hitherto dead, careless, presumptuous sinner, has not been so shut out of his Father's heart and home, but that there is yet grace omnipotent to save *him*, to take away his sins, renew his whole being, and make him and *keep* him a child of God. When the prodigal in the far country was planning only his return, he resolved to say to his father, "Make me one of thy hired servants!" To be for a time a very slave in his father's house, seemed in prospect as a very paradise when compared with his present wretchedness; but to be received at once as a son—that he would not

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be so presumptuous as to dream of. Ah! he had forgot his father's character in the far country. Unbelief had done its work, and "cut off his hope." But however dark and dim his views were, he nevertheless returned, was met afar off, and was at last received in his father's arms. There he poured forth the confession which relieved his choking heart, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son!" True. But did he add, "Make me a hired servant?" No, he could not, for he had already been received *as a son*.

Our Lord tells us how some hearers may receive the Word immediately with joy, and yet give up when it is the occasion of their being brought into outward perils or difficulties. Paul complained that Demas had forsaken him, and John of many who, he says, "went out from us." We must not think it strange, moreover, if the *visible* Church should ever and anon disclose to us how much evil as well as good it contains. Our Lord never contemplated a Church on earth as possible—owing to the sinful offences which must needs come—which should be otherwise than a mixture of good and bad. There was one in twelve of His own pure apostolic Church a traitor. Among the members of the pentecostal Church, two were struck down dead for falsehood of the blackest kind. Among the earliest professed converts in Samaria was Simon Magus, in the bonds of iniquity. And so it will ever be. The field will contain tares as well as wheat, and both must grow together till the harvest; the net must gather into it bad fish as well as good, until the great day of final separation comes at the end of the world. But, nevertheless, the field may *now* contain a glorious crop of wheat, and the net, after a night of toil, be sometimes full of good fish, so as to excite the wonder and praise of the "fishers of men." Those converts who fall away have probably misunderstood the true idea of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. They looked for safety from punishment apart from salvation from sin; upon Jesus as a deliverer from guilt and hell only, and not also a deliverer from sin, by giving that life which is heaven; they looked for that life hereafter, and not now; or they imagined faith as an *act* done once for all—a coming to Christ once only for what was required, instead of as a *state* which receives at once pardon and acceptance through the merits of Christ, and *abides* in Christ for ever as the only source of life.

We have dwelt upon this point longer than we had at first intended; for the doubt so often expressed, of the possibility of one who is lost finding *immediate* peace when he finds his God—and so has found himself—betrays great unbelief or great ignorance of God. Pride is at its root;—a desire to find something wherewith to commend ourselves to God—some evidence of a good character first—some work done as a hired servant, in order to entitle us with any hope to call God father and be at peace with Him; instead of our *beginning*

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all work by *first* being at peace—by our being reconciled at once to God through faith in His love to us, revealed in the atonement of Jesus Christ. We may just add, what every true man knows, and rejoices to know, that the hour which begins his peace with God necessarily begins also war with all sin in his own heart. His friendship with God implies enmity to all in himself which is opposed to God.

2. “But the whole tendency of revivals, and of this theory of sudden conversions by means of any man’s preaching, is to disparage God’s appointments of the Church and the family for accomplishing genuine conversion.”

If by this is meant that God ordinarily blesses for the saving of souls what are termed “the means of grace,” or “*the truth* as it is in Jesus,” whether inculcated by the parent, the teacher, or the minister, and presented to the mind, and impressed upon it patiently and laboriously during a course of years,—then we also believe this, and cordially admit it. Nay, we would have all “friends of revivals” keenly alive to the danger of so expressing themselves as to seem even to disparage such earnest painstaking, and we would have them to avoid seeking to attain by a summary process what thousands strive to attain, and actually do attain, only by a prayerful diligence, which begins with sowing the seed in childhood, and never ceases until there is the blade and the full ear ending in the golden harvest. We feel assured that the faithful minister who has seen many souls born to God under his teaching, will acknowledge that these results were connected not so much, or probably not at all, with any sudden change, from some striking sermon he had preached, but from a series of impressions made by pious parents in their home-training, or by himself in his congregational class, or by the whole tone and tenor of his public ministrations, &c. How often has it thus happened that others have laboured, and that he has but entered into their labours! The conversion of his hearers has been the culminating point of a thousand appliances, and, in the vast majority of cases, it has been reached by degrees. The glorious summit has been attained, not by a leap from the valley, but after many preparatory steps. The light of life has not flashed out of darkness, but has dawned by imperceptible degrees, until the glory of God was seen in the face of Christ Jesus. If the new life itself has been suddenly experienced, yet let us not overlook the preparatory work of the shaking of the dry bones, then of the bone coming to its bone, and, finally, the flesh and skin covering the skeleton, and so preparing a home in which the living spirit could dwell and act. We cannot use language strong enough to express our conviction of the blessing which, as an ordinary rule, is sure to follow from the Lord on the faithful and prayerful labour of a pious parent, Sabbath-school teacher, or pastor. Let nothing be said in favour of wide-spread



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and sudden revivals to discourage these hopes! A true revival, we believe, shall ever, in God's own time, attend such labours. This is emphatically true regarding the work of the ministry. We believe that the ministry is of God as much as the Bible is—one of the most precious gifts obtained for the Church by the risen Saviour; and that now, as ever, the preaching of the Word by ministers duly prepared and regularly called and ordained by the Christian Church, is the grand means for converting sinners; that this power never grows old or loses its adaptation to the wants of man amidst the constant changes of society, any more than a lens does in transmitting the rays of the sun from age to age.

Yet, with all these admissions, and with profound veneration for the ordinary calm and methodical means of grace, we can nevertheless believe in wide-spread sudden “conversions,” and that too through other instrumentalities, and in circumstances which leave no doubt of their being caused by what has been termed an extraordinary outpouring of God's Spirit. For let us beware of dogmatising irreverently as to when and how that living Spirit shall operate on the souls of men, who worketh according to His own counsel of unerring and inscrutable wisdom. “Who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been his counsellor, that he should instruct *him*?” As a Person, He acts as “He wills,” and in every case with perfect wisdom and perfect love. And it is in keeping with this truth, or rather a necessary consequence from it, that God's Spirit should teach and educate individuals and churches differently, or at least in accordance with their respective and specific wants. If His outward dispensations towards the same person constantly vary, yet all work towards one end, the soul's good,—even as the combinations of the elements vary day by day, yet all help on the earth's fruitfulness,—we might expect that His dealings with the *inner* life of persons should also vary, while one glorious scheme of education for heaven is carried on in all and by all. And if so, why do we think it strange that an individual should have his times of comparative spiritual darkness and light, strength and weakness? or that churches should also experience different kinds of treatment, so to speak, from the same wise Spirit, yet all suited to advance more and more in the end, both in us and by us, that kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?

Then, again, as to the instrumentalities which God's Spirit employs, these may be often exceptional to His general rule. For it is surely a great mercy when the regular ministry, or any other ordinance of His, becomes inefficient through sinful indifference or unbelief, that He should raise up in such an emergency, and that too from the most unexpected quarters, those who will do the work which others ought to have done. The grand end of saving lost souls, and bringing many sons and daughters unto God, cannot be sacrificed to any organisation ordained for that purpose when it fails either to seek it or accomplish it. Thus



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“God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one *good custom* should corrupt the world.”

If, therefore, we find, as a matter of fact, that some one who follows not us—*why* he does not follow with us we may not be able to understand—is yet confessing Christ's name, and so doing Christ's work that devils are cast out by him, we dare not say, “Forbid him.” Our Lord does not command us to forbid him, any more than He commands him to follow us. He says only, “Forbid him not. He who is not against us is for us.” We all need humbly to act on such a principle. But should we in our pride and ignorance condemn a sincere and faithful labourer *for* Christ, our Lord will not confirm our judgment. On the other hand, he who does not “follow” the ministers of Christ's Church, whom he finds already engaged in the Master's work, must answer to the Lord for incurring so solemn and serious a responsibility.

But we must pass rapidly and more briefly to the consideration of one other objection to revivals.

3. “We object entirely to revivals because of the great excitement which attends them.”

To this we reply—

We admit the possibility of great excitement connected with religious truth, in spite of the total absence of religious character. There is no more interesting or remarkable chapter in history than that which records the *manias* that have spread like epidemics at different periods (especially during the middle ages) over Europe. They are cases of *hysteria* upon a great scale; and that these should take a religious form as well as any other is no way impossible. It has happened a hundred times before, and will happen often again. We have seen cases of “revival” which were purely physical, with little religious knowledge and no religious character, in those who were most under the influence of the preacher, but with much ignorance and great nervous susceptibility. Preachers as ignorant as these people have been deceived by such appearances, which, not being able to account for by any natural cause, they at once attribute to supernatural agency. But, putting aside those illustrations of very common physical phenomena, we admit—

That excitement is by no means to be desired. Its *tendency* is to produce reaction, and, when the fire passes, to leave nothing but ashes behind. We may receive the Word with joy, and yet it may soon wither; and also give our bodies to be burned, and yet be nothing. *Mere* excitement is next door to grossness and licentiousness. Both have the same sensuous elements in them. Had we our choice, we would prefer a revival without any excitement.

It is, therefore, not only possible, but it has frequently happened, that hundreds have been powerfully moved by a revival, have professed faith in Christ, found peace with

God, and been assured by enthusiasts and fanatics that they were now actually “saved,” who soon gave token that they never had been saved from either gross ignorance or gross sin, but destroyed rather by want of sense in themselves, and in those who, from ignorance or vanity, excited their feelings, and worked on their mere animal sensibilities.

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But we have not our choice in such matters. We cannot change the laws of the human mind, and as long as these remain, it may not in every case be possible to prevent some degree of excitement by what so powerfully appeals to every feeling and affection in the soul of man. Given only that the facts of Christianity are true regarding man's condition without a Saviour, and all that has been done for him, and must be done in him, before salvation is possible, with the tremendous consequences throughout eternity attached to his faith and repentance in time,—and excitement is very natural, and not altogether unbecoming, in him who sees and believes, and, as it generally happens where excitement exists, who *hears*, these truths for the first time in his life. Would not calm self-possession, in such circumstances, if more *reasonable*, be more wonderful than excitement among those, especially without culture? It is quite true also that excitement will much less frequently occur among strongminded educated people, who are accustomed to keep their emotions under control; while many, with a, comparatively speaking, weak emotional nature, but with sound head and sound sense, and wakeful conscience, seldom, in any case whatever, betray much feeling. Violent excitements, as a rule, are found only among northern nations, among the ignorant masses, or those who have more feeling than judgment.

But why may not a wide-spread excitement *about* religious truths, though in some persons a mere physical condition of the nervous system, be the very means, under God, of arresting their mind or the minds of others, and disposing them to consider and receive the truth itself? What is it which we have most to complain of as an obstacle to the gospel? Not infidelity, nor active opposition, nor ignorance, but *indifference*,—cold, heartless indifference in those who may go to church, stand up at prayer, hear or sleep, read or dream, agree with everything the minister says, yet verily believe nothing, and are therefore neither roused by fear nor gladdened by hope, but live on, day by day, buying and selling, eating and drinking, respectable, it may be, and respected, as good farmers, decent tradesmen, honest shopkeepers, but to spiritual things in their living reality and momentous importance—*indifferent!* Could any one but read the thoughts, hear the conversation, or watch the effects on the great mass of the hearers, one day or one hour, after hearing the most impressive and earnest sermon, in which the minister before God sought to save their souls, what a fearful vision of the mystery of indifference would be revealed!

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Whatever, then, breaks this up is a blessing. No excitement can be so dangerous, so deadly, as this indifference. Better a thousand times the wild hurricane than the calm miasma. Better the stream which rushes impetuously over its banks, carrying with it devastation for a time, than the dead and foetid marsh. The one may be turned into a new channel, and made available as a power for advancing the interests of man, but the other is “evil, and only evil continually.” Whatever, therefore, we repeat it, tends in providence to destroy indifference, and induces people to *listen* with earnestness and attention to the truth,—be it the excitement of a storm or earthquake, of a great religious revival, or of domestic bereavement and sorrow,—whatever it be, yet is it a blessing if it prepares the soul to receive the seed of the gospel, by inducing men even to *think* seriously, as the first condition for their ultimately believing seriously.

But this excitement which alarms so many sober-minded people was not, after all, an element which vitiated the religious “movements” in the early ages of Christianity. There were rational Sadducees, learned scribes, and formal Pharisees, who were much displeased at the excitement of the multitude when Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. But when our Lord was asked to rebuke them, He replied that the very stones would cry out if these were silent. Was there no excitement on the day of Pentecost when thousands were crying out, “What shall we do to be saved?” The preaching of the gospel was everywhere accompanied by such awakenings as arrested the attention of cities and nations. Would God it were so now!

But, in once more meeting this objection, we cannot help noticing the character of the persons who most generally urge it. How often does one hear from the lips of the intensely worldly-minded fears expressed at the danger of religious excitement! And if the symptoms of such a terrible state of mind manifest themselves in son or daughter, even in the form of thoughtfulness in regard to their duty to God, or of fear about their state, or doubts with reference to the manner in which they have been accustomed to spend their time and talents, how often does the very mother who bore them become herself thoughtful and concerned about her child! “She so much dislikes religious excitement. She likes cheerful Christians,—religious people now-a-days are so sad and gloomy,—she is really anxious about her poor daughter,” &c. And all this from persons who live in a constant whirl of excitement, to whose daily life excitement is essential, not as a means of temporary relief from severe thought and action, but as the very end of existence. And whence is their excitement derived? From the most contemptible and silly frivolities, from balls, parties, visits, and gossip without end—excitements utterly selfish, which materialise the soul, debase its tastes, enervate its powers, rendering it incapable

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of all earnest labours or self-denial, and which incapacitate it from apprehending the purity, the majesty, and the surpassing wonder of spiritual realities. These are the persons who, forsooth! are so much alarmed lest their dear children should become excited about the things which arrest the attention and engage the thoughts of the mighty angels, yea, of Jesus Christ himself. Believe it, that whatever excitement may possibly accompany the commencement of the Christian life in one who has never been trained to think seriously or act conscientiously, the only persons in the world who are habitually free from all excitement, or violent emotions of any kind, are true Christians, because they have the “love which casteth out fear,” and enjoy “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.”

We must here conclude these brief and very imperfect remarks upon a great subject. We end, as we began, by expressing our profound conviction that *the* want of all our wants is this, and this only, a *Revival of Spiritual Religion*; or, in other words, genuine, simple, truthful, honest love to Jesus Christ, to His people, to His cause, and to the whole world! This, and this alone, will fulfil the longing of many a weary, thirsty soul for better things than at present seem probable or possible.

“Who will shew us any good?” is the despairing cry of many a thoughtful man, as he passes in review before his anxious eye the dark side of things, such as careless living students of divinity, who are to be the future teachers of this great nation; ministers and congregations apparently dead as stones; churches becoming idols, claiming the reverence and love of their members, and jealous of any other idol usurping their throne; scoffing infidelity among the ignorant; philosophic scepticism among the intelligent; indifference among thousands; while abroad heathen nations, with countless millions, are opened up to the Protestant Church, which can only send dribblets of two or three missionaries here and there, many of whom go in tears to live in comfort as well-paid gentlemen, while thousands of common soldiers pour out their life’s blood for their country. “Who will shew us any good?” Our hope, O Lord, is in Thee! “Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us!” Pour Thy Spirit upon the thirsty ground! Our strength is gone; arise, O Lord, and revive Thy work among us all. Come Thou and help us, for Thy great name’s sake. The cause of righteousness is Thine own. Do Thou hear and help us, then shall death be changed to life, and truth shall banish error, and disunion be lost in love, and out of this valley of dry bones, and from all sects and parties, a great army will arise, strong and united through the power of the Spirit who will dwell in each and all, and be mighty to pull down all the strongholds of Satan, and to advance the kingdom of our blessed Lord at home and abroad, to the joy of men and angels!

## THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION.

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A Christian congregation professes to be a congregation of Christians, and to represent the same kind of body which, in the apostolic epistles, is termed a “church”—“saints and faithful brethren”—“faithful in Christ Jesus”—“holy brethren.”

It is not, therefore, a number of people meeting only to hear a sermon, or even to unite in public worship, but without any visible coherence, social life, or united action, but a *body*, an *organised* whole; the Lord’s Supper being the grand symbol of the unity of its members with one another, and with the whole society of the Christian Church on earth and in heaven.[A]

[Footnote A: The social character of the Lord’s Supper, and its being a constant witness to the oneness of the whole body of Christ and the *communion* of saints, has been often so perverted as to have become in the minds of many the grand test and evidence of sectarian division, while “hearing a sermon” is the utmost latitude which is given to the believer who wishes to testify his love to all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. “I would hear him preach, but I would not *join* with him,” (*i.e.*, I would not remember Christ with him,) is the strange view of many a professing Christian, in Scotland at least.]

Now, the congregation, as an organised Christian society, has a twofold work to perform. The first is *within* itself, and includes whatever is done by the members of the congregation for their mutual good; the second is *beyond* itself, and includes the good done by the whole body to the world “*without*.”

It is thus with the living body of the Church as with the dead machinery of a steam-engine, which *first* feeds itself with coals and water, and *then* turns the wheels of the whole factory.

The inner and outer work of the congregation as a body may be briefly indicated in a few sentences, though volumes might be profitably filled with its details.

1. The inner work is accomplished within the soul of each member through the preaching and reading of the Word of God, public prayer, and partaking of the sacrament. By these means chiefly comes that “kingdom of God which is within us,” and is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,” Every other work will be done efficiently by the whole body just as this inner work begins and progresses among its individual members. But the fellowship and mutual aid of the members of the Church in “considering one another, and provoking to love and good works,” and in contributing their share of God’s gifts and grace bestowed upon themselves for the comfort and edification of their brethren, also belongs to the inner work of the Church. This will express itself and be strengthened by meetings for social prayer and Christian intercourse, and by those works and labours of love for which the congregation itself has the first claim. These labours of love include the religious instruction of its young members the baptized children; the visitation of sick; its support of the poor and destitute brethren. In these and other forms of well-being and well-doing which will

suggest themselves, abundant scope will, in most cases, be afforded for exercising the energies, and calling forth the love of the members of the congregation within the limits of their own society.



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2. The work *external* to itself to be performed by the congregation, as a body, consists generally in its “doing good unto all as God giveth it an opportunity.” The home mission within the district or city in which it is placed will engage its first efforts; and after that, or along with that, the aiding by its contributions and prayers to evangelise the world.

But the point which I would specially insist upon in this paper is, the vast importance of developing, combining, and directing the gifts of *all the members* of the congregation for accomplishing both its inner and outer work.

If we read the apostolic epistles, (see I Cor. xii. 14-27,) the impression which, as I have already said, they give us of a Christian congregation is that of a body so organised as that each and every member is made useful to the whole body, and the particular gift which God bestows upon the weakest and most insignificant (for “*He* hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased *Him*”) is so appreciated and applied, that “the head” or “the eye”—the most intelligent or most discerning—cannot say to that weak member, “I have no need of *thee*”.

It may be alleged that the congregations of the primitive Church are not intended to be models in their peculiar organisation for modern times. But is not the primitive Church system of union and mutual co-operation essential to the very idea of a Christian *society*? And what authority is there for its assembling together to hear sermons, to pray, or to partake of the sacraments, which is not equally binding for its performing of all the other duties and enjoying all the other privileges described by the apostles as pertaining to church-members?

Now, in most cases, everything is left to the minister or his official assistants. The calculation is never soberly made as to his bodily or mental powers to do all which is expected of him. There is an immense faith in both. It is assumed that he, and not the congregation, is the body; that he alone, therefore, possesses the eye, the tongue, the ear, and the hand;—and some ministers seem so pleased with their elevated position as to be unwilling that any should share it with them. But when the minister is alive to the responsibility of his position, and when he is so fortunate as to have in his congregation men and women who share his convictions, and are willing to share the labour which these entail, even then there is still the tendency on the part of the great bulk of the members to have their work done by proxy. They have no objection that visiting, teaching, almsgiving, and the like, should be done by “the committee,”—while the committee, perhaps, are inclined, in their turn, to leave it to Mr A., or Miss B., who are active members of it. It is true we must labour, in the meantime, with whatever instrumentality God furnishes, and make the most of it, but we must not cease to aim at realising

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the noble end of making *each* member, according to his gifts and abilities, manifest the spirit of Him whose saying it was,—“It is more blessed to give than to receive!” No doubt, much wisdom is required upon the part of office-bearers to whom the government of the congregation is intrusted, to discern gifts, and to apply them. But the “one thing” chiefly needed is “*love in the Spirit!*” It is for this we should chiefly labour; for, let love to Jesus be once kindled by the Spirit of God through faith in His love to us, and love, which unites us to Him, will unite us to one another.

But admitting all we have said to be true regarding the congregations of the primitive Church, and acknowledging, moreover, that it would be highly desirable could such Christian congregations reappear in our day, it may be reasonably questioned whether this is possible in the present state of society, or whether any attempt to realise it is not a pious imagination, which would lead to extravagances and fanatical disorders such as have often characterised minor sects, who, in seeking to rise up as perfect churches, have sunk down into perfect nuisances? It may be said, “Only look at the elements you have to work upon! Deal with the actual flesh-and-blood men and women who necessarily form the bulk of our congregations, and not with ideal persons. Look at this farmer or shopkeeper—that servant or master; enter the houses of those hearers or parishioners in town or country, from the labourer to the proprietor;—is there the intelligence, the heart, the principle, the common sense—any one element which could unite those members into a body for any high or noble end? *They* provoke each other to love and good works, or help to convert the world! Would it were so! but it is *impracticable.*”

Such thoughts we have ourselves experienced with feelings of despair. But there are others that make us hope that Christian congregations throughout our land may yet rise out of their ashes, living bodies imbued with life and love from their living and loving Head.

Are not all the difficulties, for example, connected with the proper organisation of the congregation those only that pertain to the existence of a living Christianity among its members? Given, that church-members individually were what they profess to be—“believers”—“disciples”—“brethren”—would they not, as a necessary result of this character, act collectively, as we suppose a Christian congregation ought to act? And, therefore, when we assume that it is vain to think of congregations becoming, as a whole, and in spite of many exceptions, living bodies of Christians—men united for mutual good and for the good of the world—do we not thereby assume that it is vain to expect professing Christians to become “constrained by the love of Christ not to live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again?” Must we confess it to be utterly hopeless to look for such manifestations now of the power of the Spirit as will produce, in our cities and parishes, such congregations, ay, and far better ones, as once existed in Jerusalem, Ephesus, or Philippi?

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There is another thought which encourages us, and makes us hope that these same “elements we have to work upon,” and which appear to make our congregations incapable of accomplishing the high and holy destinies in the world to which we think they are called. It is this: that just as there are in nature hidden forces—in a quiet and apparently harmless cask of gunpowder, or electric battery, for instance—which lie concealed until the right spark calls forth their latent power into action, so there are, in many more individuals than we suspect, hidden forces of some kind or other capable of doing greater things than we could ever have anticipated, and which require only the right spark of spiritual life and energy to excite them also into vigorous action. It is thus that heroic bravery and sublime self-sacrifice have been manifested in the hour of sudden and appalling danger, or during seasons of long and dreadful suffering, by those who were never until then suspected of possessing so great a spirit, and who, but for such an occasion occurring for its manifestation, might have been doomed for ever to remain helplessly among the most commonplace incapables. Had a Grace Darling or a Florence Nightingale been known only as a sitter or pewholder in a congregation, they might have been deemed unfit for any work requiring courage, self-sacrifice, or perseverance. But these noble qualities were all the while in them. In like manner, have we never seen among our working classes a man excited by some religious enthusiast or fanatical Mormonite, who all at once seemed inspired with new powers, braved the sneers of companions, consented to be dipped in the next river, turned his small stock of supposed knowledge into immediate use, exhorted, warned, proselytised among his neighbours, spoke in the lanes and streets unabashed, and gathered his knot of disciples from among the crowd of his old comrades, thus giving token of a force having been lying hid in one who seemed capable only of work on week-days and of sleep on Sundays. There is not a Hindu fakir, who swings from a hook in the muscles of his back, or measures with his body a long pilgrimage to Juggernaut; not a Popish devotee, who braves the opinion of society with naked feet, comical garment, and self-imposed “bodily exercise,” but demonstrates what a man can and will do, if the mainspring of his being is touched. There is not a sailor or soldier who does not, at sea or in battle, shew a greatness which he seems incapable of when seen in ordinary circumstances. It is thus, we repeat it, that most undoubtedly there are, in every congregation, men and women who have in them great powers of some kind, which have been given them by God, and which, though lying dormant, are capable of being brought out, in a greater or less degree, by fitting causes. Nay, every man is enriched with some talent or gift—if we would only discover it and bring it into action—which, if educated and properly directed, is capable of enriching

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others to a far greater extent than he himself is the least aware of. But what power will develop this force? What power, we reply, in the universe is so fitted to do so, and to bring out of a man all that is in him, and to direct all the force of his being to worthy and ennobling objects, as the power of a living Christianity? If the love of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, understood, believed, felt, does not kindle all the love in a man's heart, and fire it with all the enthusiasm, and inspire it with all the bravery of self-sacrifice, and nerve it with all the indomitable perseverance of which it is capable, then we know nothing else which can do this, or anything like this. Christianity has not become effete! It is still the "power of God and the wisdom of God." It is still mighty in pulling down strongholds. It can still convert "the elements we have to work upon" into instruments of righteousness, and "make the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;" and "the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are." But we must have real, living, and undying faith in Christ's life and power to do this, and be earnest in personal and social prayer; and then only will we be able to judge as to the capabilities of "the elements we have to work upon."

There is no department of congregational work in which the personal ministration of the individual members is more required than in its *Home Mission*. The sphere of this mission must necessarily be a district in which the members of the congregation can labour. We may assume that there is no district even in this Christian land in which are not to be found a number who require to be instructed in the gospel, and brought into the fellowship of the Christian Church, as well as a number who require to be ministered to in private owing to the infirmities of their bodies, the bereavements in their households, or other necessity of supplying their temporal or spiritual wants. In large cities not only does each district inhabited by the poorer classes abound in what has been termed a "home heathenism;" but this population is so fluctuating from month to month, that a more extended and vigorous agency is required to make use of the brief opportunity given us for doing it any good.

Now, one thing we hold as settled by the whole design of Christianity, and amply confirmed by daily experience and observation of human nature, and that is, that to seek and save the lost, a *living* agency is absolutely necessary. Religious tracts alone won't do. Far be it from us to write in an apparently slighting manner of what we so greatly value as good tracts, when we can find them. But, on the other hand, let us beware of exaggerating the power of such an agency, or demanding impossibilities from it. A great number in our large cities and

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manufacturing districts who require to be reclaimed from ignorance and vice cannot read at all. Those who can do so are yet so imperfectly instructed in the art as to be utterly unable to comprehend a continuous narrative of facts, far less any exposition of doctrine or duty; while those best able are not always willing to read anything of a religious character. The most efficient method, in our opinion, of making use of tracts in all such cases, is to read them, when possible, to others, and, if necessary, explain them, and *then* distribute them. But what is a dead tract to a living person?—what is any description of Christianity on paper, as compared to the living epistle, which all men can read?

*We want Christian men and women; not their books or their money only, but themselves.* The poor and needy ones who, in this great turmoil of life, have found no helper among their fellows; the wicked and outcast, whose hand is against every man's, because they have found, by dire experience of the world's selfishness, how every man's hand is against them; the prodigal and broken-hearted children of the human family, who have the bitterest thoughts of God and man, if they have any thoughts at all beyond their own busy contrivances how to live and to indulge their craving passions, —all these, by the mesmerism of the heart, and by means of that great witness, conscience, which God, in mercy, leaves as a light from heaven in the most abject dwelling on earth, can, to some extent, read the living epistle of a renewed soul, written in the divine characters of the Holy Spirit. They can see and feel, as they never did anything else in this world, the love which calmly shines in that eye, telling of inward light and peace possessed, and of a place of rest found and enjoyed by the weary heart! They can understand and appreciate the unselfishness—to them a thing hitherto hardly dreamt of—which prompted this visit from a home of comfort or refinement, to an unknown abode of squalor or disease, and which expresses itself in those kind words and looks that accompany the visit. They can perceive the reality of the piety, which also reads to them, in touching tones, the glory of Him who came to seek and save the lost; and their souls cannot refuse some amen, however faint, echoed by their very misery, and from their yearnings for a good they have never known, to that earnest prayer of faith uttered, in the bonds of a common brotherhood, to one who is addressed as a common Father, through a common Lord. If ever society is to be regenerated, it is by the agency of living brothers and sisters in the Lord; and every plan, however apparently wise, for recovering mankind from their degradation, and which does not make the *personal* ministrations of Christian men and women an essential part of it, its very *life*, is doomed, we think, to perish.

It is thus that our Father has ever dealt with His lost children. He has in every age of the world spoken to men by living men; and “God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto our fathers by the prophets, has in these latter days spoken to us by his Son!”

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But are there any willing to labour? Yes; many are labouring, and thousands in this land are prepared in spirit to join them; for every Christian has a longing to do something for God's kingdom on earth, and to employ usefully time and talents which he feels are running to waste. Why, then, with so much to do through a living agency, and with a great army of living agents yet unemployed, is there so little done? We reply again, from want of congregational organisation. Our congregations want order, method, arrangement. There is not yet a sufficiently clear apprehension of what their calling is in the world, or of the work given them to do; nor is there found that wise and authoritative congregational or church direction and government, which could at least suggest, if not assign, fitting work for each member, and a fitting member for each work. Hence little, comparatively, is accomplished. The most willing church-member gazes over a great city, and asks in despair, "What am I to do here?" And what would the bravest soldiers accomplish in the day of battle, if they asked the same question in vain? What would a thousand of our best workmen do in a large factory, if they entered it with willing hands, yet having no place or work assigned to them? And thus it is with many really self-denying Christians; because a practicable and definite field of labour is not pointed out, the necessary result is idleness—unwilling idleness; or self-organised and self-governed "associations," "committees," "societies," spring up to accomplish what the Christian society itself was designed to, and could accomplish in a much more efficient and orderly manner; or, as it more frequently happens, those energies and ardent feelings, and love of excitement even, which could have found sufficient scope for healthy exercise in such practical labours of faith and love as we have alluded to, are soon engrossed by merely speculative questions about "the church," or about "religion," and the stream which, had it been directed into a right channel, and to a right point, would have been made a power for immense good, soon rushes over the land a wide-spread, muddy, devastating flood, oozes out into stagnant marshes, full of miasma and fever, or evaporates into thin air!

### THE CURE FOR SCHISM.

"Schisms" are not peculiar to the Church of the present day, nor are they "the result of Protestantism," as some allege, unless Protestantism is understood to represent that doctrine which is termed "the right of private judgment," but which might be described rather as the absolute necessity for each man to believe the truth for himself, and not to be satisfied that another man should see and believe it for him. This "doctrine," which is essential to the reception of any truth whatever, must necessarily open the way to error; just as the possession of reason, which is essential to a man's thinking at all, must, in every case, involve the risk of his thinking wrong.



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But we know something of a Church founded by an apostle, presided over for a time by an apostle, which was full of schisms. This was the Church of Corinth. (See First Epistle to the Corinthians, first three chapters.)

These schisms were marked by differences of mind and judgment; and by “envying, strife, and divisions.” Its “Protestantism” may, no doubt, have occasioned this.

But along with these divisions, and partly their cause, partly their effect, there was not only a warm attachment to particular ministers, but positive antagonism to others professing the same faith, and doing the same work. From the sameness of human nature in every age, we can quite understand how each party would defend their sectarianism. “We are of Apollos,” some might have thus said. “We do not admire Peter. He is too much of a Jew for us; besides, he denied his Lord, and dissembled along with Barnabas at Antioch. We prefer our own minister even to Paul. He is a much more eloquent man; of a much more commanding figure and appearance; and how profound he is in his knowledge of the Scriptures!” “We are of Paul,” others might have cried; “for he was chosen specially by Christ; and he has been honoured by Him more than all; and does not the Church of Corinth, moreover, owe its very existence to his preaching and labours? It is a shame to belong to any other!” “We cling to Peter,” a third party might have said; “he lived with Christ when He was on earth, saw His miracles, heard His words, was treated after the resurrection with special love, and received from Him a special commission to feed His sheep. Apollos is no *apostle*; and as for Paul, he persecuted the Church, and confesses himself that he is not meet to be called an apostle. Apollos is good, Paul better, but Peter is best!” “We belong to neither,” others could have boasted: “your divisions are so many, your differences so great, that we have retired from all your meetings in weariness; and each of us are of Christ only, and call no man master but Him; you should all join us, the *Christians*!”—thus making use of the very name of Christ to characterise a sect. Such were some of the schisms; and to the schismatics St Paul said, “Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I of Apollos; are ye not carnal?”

The apostle desired to heal those schisms, and to bring the members of the Church into one mind. How did he endeavour to effect this?

Had he been a Papist, he might have said—“Why thus divided? Because you are not building on the one true foundation, which is Peter! Do you not understand the meaning of the name, *Cephas*, or the Rock, given to him, and intended to teach all Christians that the temple of the Church was to be built upon *this* rock, and this only; against which the gates of hell cannot prevail? Therefore,



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you who say, 'I am of Cephas,' are right; all others are schismatics." Never, apparently, had a man a better opportunity of revealing to the world this great secret of unity than St. Paul had, if such was his faith, especially when he compares the Church to a building, and speaks of a foundation-stone. "As a wise master-builder," he says, "I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon.... For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is"—Cephas, or the rock? No! but "*Jesus Christ*." Not one word of Cephas as the centre of unity. Strange silence for a "Roman Catholic!"

Had Paul been a "High Churchman," viewing with deep awe the mystery of sacramental grace, we can understand how he would have spoken to the schismatic Corinthians of the vast importance of their submitting to absolute apostolic authority, and of "the awful powers with which God's ministers had been vested, of regenerating souls by the waters of baptism;" and how "such a clergy should command unqualified obedience." If these, or anything like these, were Paul's sentiments, and such as we are every day familiar with, it is not easy, to say the least of it, to account for his language to the Corinthians. What does *he* say of the exalted privilege of being able to baptize? "I thank God I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius:" strange words from a "High Churchman!" or a "High" Baptist! "I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, *I know not* whether I baptized any other:" strange forgetfulness on such a supposed centre point of Church unity! "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel:" strange idea of the relative importance of preaching and baptizing for a "High Churchman" to hold! And as to the "commanding authority" of the apostles, merely because they were apostles, apart from, the commanding authority of the eternal truth which they "commended" to the conscience and judgment of their hearers, Paul asks, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" Methinks we hear some exclaim: "Oh, these men were the greatest, the most remarkable, the"—We will not, however, take up space by repeating the laudations with which some would exalt their authority, with the view of magnifying the mere official authority of the clergy. But what says the apostle himself? He says they were only "ministers by whom ye believed." It was not the minister who did good, but the truth which he ministered, and which he had received from another. It was not the man who sowed the seed, or the basket which held it, that gave the crop; but the living seed itself. Hence he adds: "So then neither is he that planteth *anything*, nor he that watereth!" What? Neither presbyter nor bishop, neither Paul nor Apollos, *anything*? Strange words, again we say, from a "High Churchman," whether Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or any other denomination; *for "High Churchmen" are common to all Churches*. Yet not strange from St Paul, who knew how true his words were, and that not man, but God, who gave the increase, was "everything."

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What, then, was the apostle's method of curing schism, and of making men truly one who had been "divided?"

He directed every eye, and every heart, and every spirit, to one object—JESUS CHRIST, the personal Saviour, the centre and source of unity; in fellowship with whom all men would find their fellowship with each other.

"We preach Christ crucified." "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." These are his declarations. And his conclusion from this great and blessed principle is just what we might expect: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." "Let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Professing Christians would do well to weigh the apostle's cure of schism. Our divisions of heart and alienation of spirit are unworthy of educated men, and of the citizens of a free state, while they are in spirit utterly subversive of the whole principles of Protestantism. What! not able to hear the gospel preached from the lips of a minister of another church, nor to remember Jesus with him or his people? Not willing even to be on kind, or perhaps on speaking terms with a brother minister? Such things not only have been, but *are*; and while, thank God, they are repudiated and detested by men of all Churches, they are common, we fear, among too many. No wonder Roman Catholics point at our frequent boasting of Protestant "oneness in all essentials," and ask with triumph, how it happens, then, that we are such enemies on mere non-essentials? How it is that we pretend to be one when attacking Papists, and then turn our backs on each other when left alone? No wonder the High Churchman of England asks the Presbyterians in Scotland to forgive *him* if he never enters our Presbyterian churches, hears our clergy, partakes of our sacraments, when so very many among ourselves practically excommunicate each other. No wonder the infidel lecturer describes to crowds of intelligent mechanics, in vivid and powerful language, the spectacle presented by many among our Christian clergy and people, and asks, with a smile of derision, If *this* is a religion of love which they see around them—if these men believe the gospel—and if Christians have really more kindness and courtesy than "publicans and sinners?" Worse than all, no wonder our churches languish, and men are asking with pain, why the ministry is not producing more true spiritual fruit, which is love to God and man? The Churches are, no doubt, *doing* much. We have meetings, associations, and organisations, with no end of committees, resolutions, and motions; we raise large sums of money; we have large congregations;—yet all this, and much more, we can do from pride, vanity, love

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of party, love of power, the spirit of proselytism, and the like. We may possess many gifts, understand mysteries and all knowledge; we may bestow our goods to feed the poor, in zeal for Church or party we may be willing to give our bodies to be burned; but before God it profiteth us nothing, unless we have the “love that suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,”

Surely our schisms may be healed if there be a Saviour thus to heal them!

One word in conclusion. Neither the letter nor the spirit of the apostle's teaching condemn a warm and firm attachment to “our own Church,” but antagonism only to other Churches. A soldier may love, and ought to love his own regiment with peculiar affection, more especially if he has been born in it, and brought up from childhood, as it were, in its ranks. And it should be his honest pride to see that it is one of the best drilled, most orderly, most efficient, and bravest in the whole army. But that is no reason why he should go about with a drum to recruit from, weaken, or break up other regiments; or why he should deny that there *are* other regiments which equally belong to the grand army, and may be even more efficient than his own, though they do not wear the exact pattern of uniform, or may charge on horseback while his marches on foot, or possess cannon while his own have but small arms. Why should he be jealous of their achievements? Why should he be disposed to fight against them instead of against the common enemy? And, worse than all, why assert and boast that this one regiment of his is *the* army, while all others are mere unauthorised volunteers, or enemies in disguise? It is full time for sensible men to give up this vain boasting, proud antagonism, and irritating ambitious proselytism.

Instead, therefore, of any man attempting, what is impossible during a lifetime, to understand the distinctive principles of each of the many sections of the Christian Church, so as to “join” that one which seems most “pure” and “scriptural,” he is much better, as a rule, to remain, if it is at all possible for him, in the Church of his fathers, in which he was baptized and reared, and to do all in his power, by his example, his prayers, and his steady, manly, firm attachment, to make “his own Church” more efficient, and to permit others, without interference, to do the same. Thus may a man be a good Presbyterian in Scotland, and also a good Episcopalian in England, or possibly a Nonconformist in both, unless he believes in the Divine origin and authority of some one ecclesiastical system, and the mundane origin of all others. With perfect consistency and sincerity he may dearly love his Church, but yet love Christians more, because he loves Christ best of all.

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These sentiments may be considered by many good Christians as sinfully "latitudinarian;" but to all who think so we would suggest the following simple experiment. When they have perused with care and reflection those portions of the Epistles of St Paul, and those incidents in his missionary journeys, which reveal most clearly what we might term his "church views," let them conceive of this same holy apostle suddenly awaking from his grave and visiting the different churches in our country, and then honestly say, from what they know of his character and teaching, whether they think it improbable or impossible that he would countenance all our churches in so far as they sincerely desired to do God's will and advance His kingdom. Would he not as of old say, "Grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!"

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy *good*."

### THE UNION OF MAN WITH MAN.

The mutual dependence of material things is perceived on a moment's reflection. Not one atom in creation, for example, exists by itself or for itself alone, but, directly or indirectly, influences and is influenced by every other atom. The movements of the tiniest wave which rises slowly over the dry pebble on the beach, marking the progress of the advancing tide in the inland bay, is determined by the majestic movements of the great ocean, with all its tides which sweep and circulate from pole to pole. The rain-drop which falls into the heart of a wild-flower, and rests there with its pure and sparkling diamond-lustre, owes its birth to the giant mountains of the old earth, to the great sea, to the all-encompassing atmosphere, to the mighty sun; and is thus, by a chain of forces, united in its existence, its figure, its motion, and its rest, to the most distant planet, which, beyond the ken of the telescope, whirls along its path on the mysterious outskirts of space. Thus, too, the needle of the electric telegraph trembles beneath the influence of hidden powers which pervade the earth, which flash in the thunder-storm, awaken the hurricane, or burst in those bright and brilliant coruscations that shoot across the midnight of our northern sky. And so

"The whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

But the unity which exists among intelligent and responsible *persons*, their mutual dependence and relationship, is just as real as that which obtains among material *things*, and is far more wonderful, more solemn and important in its nature, causes, and consequences.

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The human race is an organic whole. The individual man is more intimately united to every other man, and to all past and coming generations, than the leaf which flutters on the twig of a great tree is connected with the tree itself, and with every other leaf that swells its foliage, or with the seed which was ages ago planted in the soil, and from which the noble plant has issued. That organic unity of the Church, springing chiefly out of a common life, derived from Christ and maintained by His indwelling Spirit, and which the apostle Paul so fully illustrates by the union of the members of the human frame, holds equally true of the whole family of man.

And what is true in this respect of the human race, is as true of all spiritual intelligences in the universe of God. "We are all members one of another." We form a part of a mighty whole that finds its unity in God. Subtle links from within and from without in God's infinite network, bind us for good or evil, for weal or woe, to spirits of light and of darkness; to principalities and powers in other spheres and systems of being, from the lowest outcast in the unseen world of criminals, up to Gabriel before the throne of God; while over all, comprehending all, sustaining and harmonising all, is the great I AM—Father, Son, and Spirit.

Consider, for example, how, according to the arrangements of the Divine government, man is linked to man from the mere necessities of his physical and social being.

In this aspect of our life it is evident that its whole history is one of mutual dependence, and one in which we are compelled to receive and to give, to partake and to share. We enter upon life as weak, unconscious infants, depending every moment on other eyes to watch for us, and other hands to minister to us, while we kindle in their hearts the most powerful emotions, and unconsciously react upon them for joy or sorrow. But we are not less dependent on our fellow-creatures for our continuance in life from the cradle to the grave. There is not a thread of clothing which covers our body, not a luxury which is placed on our table, not an article which supplies the means of labour, not one thing which is required by us as civilised beings, but involves the labours and the sacrifices of others in our behalf; while by the same law we cannot choose but contribute to their well-being. The cotton which the artisan weaves or wears has been cultivated by brothers beneath a tropical sun, and possibly beneath a tyrant's lash. The tea he drinks has been gathered for him by brothers on the unknown hill-sides of distant China. The oil which lights his lamp has been fetched for him out of the depths of the Arctic seas by his sailor brothers; and the coal that feeds his fire has been dug out by swarthy brethren who have been picking and heaving for him amidst the darkness and dangers of the mine. If the poorest mother writes a letter to her son in some distant spot in India and puts it into the window-slit of a village

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post-office, without a word being spoken, how much is done for her before that letter reaches its destination! The hands of unknown brethren will receive it, and transmit it; rapid trains will hurry it over leagues of railways; splendid steamships will sail with it, and hundreds of busy hands will pass it from port to port, from land to land. It is watched day and night, through calm and hurricane, and precious lives are risked to keep it in security, until in silence and in safety, after months of travel, it is delivered from the mother's hand into the hand of her child.

And thus it is that, whether we choose it or not, we are placed by God as "members one of another," so that we cannot, if we would, separate ourselves from our brother. For good or evil, prosperity or adversity, we are bound up with him in the bundle of this all-pervading and mysterious life. If one member suffers or rejoices, all are compelled in some degree to share his burden of joy or sorrow. Let disease, for example, break out in one district or kingdom, and, like a fire, it will rush onward, passing away from the original spot of outbreak, and involving families and cities far away in its desolating ruin. Let war arise in one portion of the globe, it smites another. The passion or the pride of some rude chief of a barbarous tribe in Africa or New Zealand, or the covetousness and selfish policy of some party in America, tell upon a poor widow in her lonely garret in the darkest corner of a great city; and she may thus be deprived of her labour through the state of commerce, as really as if the hand of the foreigner directly took her only handful of meal out of the barrel, or extinguished the cruise of oil, leaving her in poverty and darkness to watch over her dying child.

Now all this system of dependence, as we have said, is beyond our will. We do not choose it, but are compelled to accept of it. It is a fact or power, like birth or death, with which we have to do in spite of us. No questions are asked by the great King as to whether we will have it so or not; yet of what infinite importance to us for good or evil is this great law of God's government. We are thus made to feel that a will higher than ours reigns, and that by that supreme will we are so united to one another, that no man can live for himself or die for himself alone; that we are our brother's keeper, and he ours; that we cannot be indifferent to his social well-being without suffering in our own; that our selfishness, which would injure him, must return in some form to punish ourselves; and that such is the ordained constitution of humanity, that though love and a consistent selfishness start from different points, they necessarily lead to the same point, and make it our interest, as it is our duty, to love our neighbour as ourselves.



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But here we may just notice, that some of those evils which afflict one portion of the human family are nevertheless the occasion of good, when they remind us of our common humanity. Such painful events, for example, as the famine in the Highlands of Scotland, which called forth the sympathies of kindreds and tongues, unknown by name, to the sufferers, and was relieved by the inhabitants of China, and Hindostan; or the like famine in Ireland, which the Mohammedan sultan was among the first to help to alleviate; or the Syrian massacres, or Indian famine, that united Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, in the bonds of pity;—these wounds of humanity are surely not without their good; when they afford an opportunity to the Samaritan of shewing mercy to the Jew, and cause the things which separate and the differences that alienate man from man, to be for a time forgotten in the presence of their common brotherhood. And thus, too, the shutting of the Southern ports of America, which entails temporary distress upon many in our manufacturing districts, reminds us how the sufferings of others must be shared by ourselves, calls forth the benevolent sympathies of the rich to alleviate the wants of the needy, and bridges over with love and gratitude the gulf which too often separates classes; while, on the other hand, it may form the indirect means of developing the growth of cotton, and the consequent industry of thousands in Africa and India, who will thus be brought into closer and more fraternal relationships with civilised nations.

But there is another link, and one more spiritual, which binds man to man for good or evil, and that is *moral character*. This influence is partly beyond and partly within the region of our will. That which is beyond the will is the fact of the necessary influence of character; while within the will is the character, good or bad, which we may choose to possess. Now, it cannot be questioned that character tells for good or evil beyond its possessor. That which a man *is*—that sum total made up of the items of his beliefs, purposes, affections, tastes, and habits, manifested in all he does and does *not*—is contagious in its tendency, and is ever *photographing* itself on other spirits. He himself may be as unconscious of this emanation of good or evil from his spirit, as he is of the contagion of disease from his body, or—if that were equally possible—of the contagion of good health. But the fact, nevertheless, is certain. If the light is in him, it must shine; if darkness reigns, it must shade. If he glows with love, its warmth will radiate; if he is frozen with selfishness, the cold will chill the atmosphere around him; and if he is corrupt and vile, he will poison it. Nor is it possible for any one to occupy a neutral or indifferent position. In some form or other he *must* affect others. Were he to banish himself to a distant island, or even enter the gates of death, he still exercises a positive influence, for he is a *loss* to his brothers; the loss of that most blessed gift of God, even that of a living man to living men—of a being who ought to have loved and to have been beloved. “No man liveth to himself, or dieth to himself;”—he must in some form, for their good or evil, their gladness or sadness, influence others.



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The influence of individual character extends from one generation to another. The world is moulded by it. Does not history turn on the influence exercised by the first and second Adam?

No one questions the reality of the influence of a bad character upon others. The existence of evil persons here or elsewhere, and their power to infect other persons through the foul malaria of the evil in which they live, may be unaccountably mysterious when seen in the light of God's infinite love; but they are, nevertheless, the most certain facts within the field of our own observation and experience.

This malign influence is of every degree—from the undesigned yet real injury which is done to others by the merely slothful or indifferent man, who never, as he says, “intended to injure any one,” and “never thought” he was doing so, but who, nevertheless, injures many a cause, and freezes and discourages many a heart, by his selfishness in *not* thinking and *not* doing;—up to the injury which is done by the cool, designing villain, who, in his plots and plans to sacrifice others to himself, has reached the utmost limit which distinguishes the bad man from the demon.

The evil influence exercised by wicked parents on their families; by wicked companions upon their fellows; by wicked books upon their readers; by wicked persecutors and tyrants upon the world—needs neither proof nor illustration. Yet let us remember, for our strength and comfort, that because we are not things but persons, it is impossible to compel any man, from whatever influence, to prefer the darkness to light, or to choose the evil instead of the good. Hence the power which was designed to lead us into evil may be converted by ourselves into a power for good, while it strengthens our moral principles, demands a firmer faith in God, and prompts more earnest desires and efforts to overcome the evil by the good. It is thus too, in the wonderful providence of God, that while evil remains evil, it has nevertheless been the indirect means of calling forth the noblest efforts on the part of man, and on God's part the most glorious revelations of His character in conquering it, and such as, without evil in the universe, could not, as far as we can see, have been possible.

But no less real is the influence upon others of a *holy* character. “The evil men do lives after them;” but we do not believe that “the good is oft interred with their bones.” No, it is as immortal as the Divine Being in whom it originates. The good must ever live, and “walk up and down the earth,” like a living spirit guided by the living God, to convey blessings to the children of men, and is more powerful, diffusive, and eternal than the power of evil. It lives in humanity, in some form or other, like the subtle substance of material things, which though ever changing never perishes, but adds to the stability, the beauty, and the grandeur of the universe. The influence of the holy character passes even beyond the stars, giving joy to our angel brothers, and to our elder brother Jesus Christ, who, in seeing reflected in His people His own love to His God and our God, to His neighbour and ours, beholds the grand result of the travail of His soul, and is “satisfied.”

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The grand practical lesson, therefore, which is impressed upon us by this fact of the union of man with man, is for each of us to be right, and to do light. Each man is responsible for himself, and for himself only, for what he himself *is* and *does*. The secret, then, is a very simple one, by which we can at once receive all the good that can possibly be derived from whatever influences are brought to bear upon ourselves, and do all the good which can possibly be conferred by whatever influence we can exercise upon others; and it is this—to *be* good ourselves! This is the one centre point of light in the soul, its one germ of immortal life, which must be possessed in order that all light and life may come to us, and emanate from us. Let us only possess the right state of spirit to God and man, and we have the divine chemistry which will convert all we receive and all we give into what will surely bless ourselves and others.

And if it is asked how this secret can be ours, we have but one reply, and it is the old one—Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, live, and love! Jesus Christ is the living Head of the human family. “The Head of every man is Christ.” As the eternal Son, He dwelt among us, and revealed to us the Father and Himself, the elder brother. “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” He has ascended up on high, and ever liveth for us as Mediator, “to bring many sons and daughters unto God.” He has sent His Holy Spirit to be with us, and to abide in us for ever. That Spirit reveals to all who will receive His teaching, the glory of God our Father in Christ Jesus the Son, our Brother.

Just in proportion as men know God as their Father in Christ, and become true sons to Him, will they become united to each other as true brethren; and thus the real and highest unity of man with man will be realised as the Church of Christ possesses the earth, and her prayer is answered, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven!”

## PROGRESS OF MISSIONS.

The beginning of the nineteenth century marks an epoch of revival in the Protestant Church. It would be going beyond the limits prescribed by our subject to consider the causes of that remarkable reaction into indifference of life, or of positive error in doctrine, which followed more or less rapidly the stirring period of the Reformation. Such tides, indeed, in the affairs of men,—now rushing with irresistible waves to the utmost limit of the land; then receding and leaving behind but a few pools to mark where the waters once had been; and again, after a longer or a shorter interval, advancing with a deep flood over the old ground,—are among the most striking phenomena in history.

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The last century witnessed the Protestant Church at its lowest ebb. We thankfully acknowledge that God did not leave Himself without holy men as living witnesses in every branch of that Church. And we record, with deepest gratitude, how, more than in any other country, He preserved in our own country both individual and congregational life, with orthodox standards of faith. Still, taken as a whole, the Protestant Church was in a dead state throughout the world; while, during the same period, infidelity was never more rampant, and never more allied with philosophy, politics, science, and literature. It was the age of the acute Hume and learned Gibbon; of the ribald Paine, and of the master of Europe, Voltaire; with a host of *litterati* who were beginning to make merry, in the hope that God's prophets were at last to be destroyed from the earth. Rationalism triumphed in all the Continental Churches. Puritanism in England became deeply tainted with Unitarianism. The descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers had, to a large extent, embraced the same creed in America. The Established Churches in England and Scotland, though preserving their Confessions, and having very many living men in the ministry, suffered, nevertheless, from that wintry cold which had frozen the waves of the great Reformation sea, and which was adding chill to chill. The French Revolution marked the darkest hour of this time; yet it was the hour which preceded the dawn. It was the culminating point of the infidelity of kings, priests, and people; the visible expression and embodiment of the mind of France, long tutored by falsehood and impiety; the letting loose of Satan on earth, that all might see and wonder at the Beast! That Revolution inscribed lessons in letters of blood for the Church and for the nations of the world to learn. Christians accordingly clung nearer to their Saviour amidst the dreadful storm which shook and destroyed every other resting-place, and were drawn to the throne of mercy and grace, thereby becoming stronger in faith and more zealous in life. The indifferent were roused to earnest thought by the solemn events which were taking place around them. Speculative infidels even, became alarmed at the practical results of their theories. Mere worldly politicians trembled at the spectacle of unprincipled millions wielding power that affected the destinies of Europe, and recognised the necessity of religion to save the State at least, if not to save the soul. Men of property, from the owner of a few acres to the merchant prince, and from no higher motive than the love of their possessions, acknowledged that religion was the best guarantee for their preservation. In countless ways did this upheaving of society operate in the same direction with those deeper forces which were beginning to stir the Churches of Britain, and to quicken them into new life.

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The history of Europe during the first part of the present century, is a history written in blood. It is one of war in all its desolating horrors, and also in all its glorious achievements and victories in the cause of European liberty and national independence. Never was war so universal. It raged in every part of the earth. For years, the Peninsula was a great battlefield. Belgium and the plains of Germany were saturated with blood. Allied hosts conquered France. Armies crossed the Alps and ravaged Italy, and were buried beneath the snows of Russia. The contest was waged from the Baltic to the Bosphorus. The old battle-fields of Greece, Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor, Persia, and the Crimea, were again disturbed. War swept the peninsula of India to the confines of Cashmere. It penetrated beyond the walls of China, and visited the islands of the Eastern Archipelago; touched the coasts of Arabia, and swept round Africa, from the Cape to Algiers. It marched through the length and breadth of the great Western Continent, from the St Lawrence to the Mississippi, and from Central to Southern America. Every kingdom experienced its horrors *but our own*; every capital was entered by the enemy *but our own*! During all this terrible period, our Sabbath services were never broken by the cry of battle. The dreadful hurricane raged without, but never for a single hour disturbed the peace of our beloved island-home. No revolution from within destroyed our institutions, and no power from without prevented us from improving them. The builders of our spiritual temples did not require to hold the sword. Our victories, with their days of national thanksgiving, and our anxieties, with their days of national fasting, tended to deepen a sense of religion in every heart. Men of God, in rapid succession, rose in all the Churches. A pious laity began to take the lead in advancing the cause of evangelism. In Parliament there was one man, who, by the purity of his private life, the noble consistency, uncompromising honesty, and unwearied philanthropy of his public career, along with his faithful published testimony for the truth as it is in Christ, did more, directly and indirectly, than any other of his day for the revival of true religion, especially among the influential classes of our land: that man was William Wilberforce.

But without dwelling upon the fact of the great revival which has occurred in the Protestant Church during the present century, let us notice one of its more prominent results. We mean the increased activity manifested by all its branches in advancing the Redeemer's kingdom.

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At the commencement of this century, the whole Protestant missionary staff throughout the world amounted to ten societies only. Of these, however, two only had really entered the mission-field with any degree of vigour—viz., the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; and, above all, the Society of the Moravian Brethren. The Wesleyan, Baptist, London, and Church Missionary Societies, though nominally in existence, had hardly commenced their operations. There were, besides the above, two small societies on the Continent; two in Scotland; and not one in all America! How stands the case now? The Protestant Church, instead of ten, has fifty-one societies; the great majority of which have each more labourers, and a greater income, than all the societies together of the Protestant Church previous to 1800!

If the last sixty years be divided into three equal periods, nine societies belong to the first, fifteen to the second, and twenty-four to the third.

The following facts, collected from statistics of the great missionary societies up to 1861, will afford—as far as mere dry figures can do—a general idea of the present strength of the mission army of the Protestant Church, with some of its results:—

There are now 22 missionary societies in Great Britain, 14 in North America, and 15 on the Continent of Europe; in all, 51. These employ, in round numbers, 12,000 agents, including ordained missionaries, (probably 2000,) teachers, catechists, &c.; occupy 1200 stations; have 335,000 communicants from heathendom; 252,000 scholars; 460 students training for the ministry; and are supported by an income of £860,000 per annum.

The greatest results have been attained by England. Connected with her great societies, there are nearly 7000 agents, 630 stations, 210,000 communicants, 208,000 scholars, with an annual income of £510,000.[A]

[Footnote A: One or two facts in connexion with missionary effort may interest our readers:—

Mr Mueller of Bristol supports, in connexion with his famous Orphanage, 22 foreign and 80 home missionaries.

The Moravian Missionary Society has sent, since 1732, 2000 missionaries, of whom 643 have died in mission service; 9 on mission journeys; 13 on the voyage out or home; 22 by shipwreck; and 12 were murdered.

Gossner of Berlin alone originated and conducted a mission which has sent out 141 missionaries. Pastor Harms of Hermannsburg has also, by his own efforts, built a mission ship, and has sent out 150 missionaries, of whom 100 are colonists, and proposes to send 24 every two years.

Ten years ago there was little or no fruit among the *Kohls* of India. There are now 30,000 receiving Christ.

In India there are 500 missionaries; in Tinnevely, above 70,000 Christians.

The American Board alone has sent out in fifty years 900 missionaries (500 being native) and 400 teachers; 55,000 have been received into church—membership, and 175,000 children passed through their schools.

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America contributes L180,000 to foreign missions, and 2000 agents.

The Presbyterian Churches of the world have come late into the field, but they contribute about 900 agents, and 230 ordained missionaries, with an income of about L110,000.

One of the oldest Protestant missionary societies in existence (though now confined to home operations) is the Society in connexion with the Church of Scotland “for Promoting Christian Knowledge.” It supported Brainerd and the Elliots more than a century ago.]

But in order to enable our readers still more clearly to realise the advance which the Church has made during the last half century, let us consider the progress of one of those societies, and take as an illustration the Church Missionary Society. It was founded a few months before 1800. Its income in 1802 was L356. It now amounts to L104,273. In 1804, it had one station abroad, two ordained European missionaries, but no native assistants. It has now 148 stations, 258 ordained clergymen, (many of whom have studied in the English Universities,) a large staff of native clergy, with 2034 other agents, most of whom are natives. In 1810, it had 35 male and 13 female scholars in its schools; it has now 31,000 scholars. In 1816, the good Mr Bickersteth had the privilege of receiving its first converts, amounting to six only, into the communion of the Church. Its communicants now number about 21,000.

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Let us, however, examine the missionary labours of the Protestant Church during this century from another point of view. Take the map of the world, look over its continents and islands, and contrast their condition, as to the means of grace, in 1800 and 1862.

In 1800; the only missions east of the Cape of Good Hope were in India. These were confined to the Baptist Mission, protected in the Danish settlement of Serampore; and the missions in Tanjore, in Southern India. The former was begun by Carey and Thomas, (in 1793,) who were joined by a few brethren in 1799. The first convert they made was in 1800. The latter mission had existed since 1705, and numbered about nine labourers at the commencement of the century.[A]

[Footnote A: The first Protestant missionary who visited India was Ziegenbalg, who was sent out by the Halle-Danish Missionary Society in 1705, to Tranquebar. He was joined by Plutschow in 1719. The mission was then adopted by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Grundler followed in 1720, and Schultze in 1727. The mission, in 1736, had four stations, one being in Madras; 24 native assistants; and 3517 baptized members! The great Schwartz laboured in, and extended the mission from 1749 till 1798. According to Dr Carey, 40,000 had been converted to Christianity during



the last century through this mission. Dr Claudius Buchanan reckons the number as high as 80,000!]

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Of the East India Company's chaplains, Claudius Buchanan alone had the courage to advocate in India the missionary cause; and his sermon preached upon the subject in 1800, in Calcutta, was then generally deemed a bold and daring step. Hindustan was closed by the East India Company against the missionaries of the Christian Church. China, too, seemed hermetically sealed against the gospel. The Jesuit mission had failed. Christianity was proscribed by an imperial edict. Protestant missions had not commenced. The language of the nation, like its walls, seemed to forbid all access to the missionary. In Africa there were but few missionaries, and these had lately arrived at the Cape.[A] In the black midnight which brooded over that miserable land, the cry of tortured slaves alone was heard. New Zealand, Australia, and the scattered islands of the Southern Seas had not yet been visited by one herald of the gospel. A solitary beacon gleaming on the ocean from the missionary ship *Duff* had indeed been seen, but not yet welcomed by the savages of Tahiti. The mission was abandoned in 1809, and not a convert left behind! No Protestant missionary had preached to those Indian tribes beyond the Colonies, who wandered over the interminable plains which stretch from Behring's Straits to Cape Horn. Mohammedan States were all shut up against the gospel; and to forsake the Crescent for the Cross, was to die. In this thick darkness which covered heathendom, the only light to be seen—except in India—was in the far north, shed by the self-denying Moravians,—a light which streamed like a beautiful aurora over the wintry snow and ice-bound coasts of Greenland. To this gloomy picture we must add the indifference of the Protestant Church to God's ancient people. No society then existed for their conversion; and of them it might indeed be said, "This is Israel, whom no man seeketh after!"

[Footnote A: The first missionary to South Africa was George Schmidt, sent by the Moravian Brethren in 1736. He laboured alone with some success till 1743, when he was compelled by the Dutch East India Company to return to Europe. The mission was resumed in 1792, when three additional missionaries sailed for the Cape. A few others joined them in 1798. At the beginning of the century, the converts amounted to 304. The illustrious Dr Vanderkemp, along with three other missionaries, were sent to South Africa by the London Missionary Society in 1799. The only attempts made to Christianise Western Africa previous to 1800 were by the Moravians in Guinea, in 1737; but all the missionaries, eleven in number, dying, the attempt was abandoned; and by the Scottish Missionary Society, in 1797, who sent thither six missionaries. One (Greig) was murdered, another (Brunton) returned, and went to Tartary; the rest, we believe, went to oilier spheres of labour. The Church Missionary Society entered upon this field in 1801.]

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How changed is the aspect of the world now! There is hardly a spot upon earth (if we except those enslaved by Popery) where the Protestant missionary may not preach the gospel without the fear of persecution. The door of the world has been thrown open, and the world's Lord and Master commands and invites His servants to enter, and, in His name, to take possession of the nations. Since 1812, India, chiefly through the exertions of Mr Wilberforce,[A] has been made accessible to the missionaries of every Church. Christian schools and chapels have been multiplied; colleges have been instituted; thousands have been converted to Christ; and tens of thousands instructed in Christianity. The cruelties of heathenism have been immensely lessened; infanticide prohibited; Sutteeism abolished; all Government support withdrawn from idolatry; and the Hindu law of inheritance has been altered to protect the native converts; while a new era seems to be heralded by the fact that a native Christian rajah has himself established a mission among his people.

[Footnote A: In 1812, we find from Mr Wilberforce's *Life* (vol. iv., p. 10) how he was "busily engaged in reading, thinking, consulting, and persuading," on the renewal of the East India Company's charter. He was fully alive to the importance of the crisis with reference to the interests of Christianity. He thus writes to his friend Mr Butterworth:—"I have been long looking forward to the period of the renewal of the East India Company's charter as to a great era, when I hoped that it would please God to enable the friends of Christianity to be the instruments of wiping away what I have long thought, next to the slave-trade, the foulest blot on the moral character of our countrymen—the suffering our fellow-subjects (nay, they even stand toward us in the closer relation of our tenants) in the East Indies to remain, without any effort on our part to enlighten and inform them, under the grossest, the darkest, and most depraving system of idolatrous superstition that almost ever existed on earth." The deepest anxiety was felt by all Christians for the issue of the debate. "I heard afterwards," he writes, "that many good men were praying for us all night." These prayers and efforts were crowned with success; and Mr Wilberforce, when communicating the joyful news to his wife, writes—"Blessed be God! we carried our question triumphantly, about three, or later, this morning!"]

All the islands in the Eastern Archipelago are now accessible to the missionary; most of them have been visited. Ceylon has flourishing congregations and schools; Madagascar has had her martyrs, and has still her indomitable confessors.

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China, with its teeming millions, has also been opened to the gospel. The way had been marvellously prepared by Dr Morrison, who as early as 1807 had commenced the study of the language which he lived to master. Accordingly, when the conquests of Britain had obtained admission for, and secured protection to the missionaries as well as to the merchants of all nations, the previous indefatigable labours of Morrison had provided, for the immediate use of the Church of Christ, a dictionary of the language, and a translation of the Word of God. The Christian religion is tolerated by law since 1844, and may be professed freely by the natives. The gospel is now advancing in that thickly-peopled land of patience and industry, and native preachers are already proclaiming to their countrymen the tidings of salvation.

Africa has witnessed changes still more wonderful. The abolition of the British slave-trade in 1807, and of slavery in the British dominions in 1834, has removed immense barriers in the way of the gospel. The whole coasts of Africa are being girdled with the light of truth. It has penetrated throughout the south, where the French[A] and German Protestant Churches labour side by side with those of Britain to civilise the degraded Bushman, the low Hottentot, and warlike Kaffir. The chapel in Sierra Leone, built from the planks of condemned slavers, and containing 1000 worshippers, is a type of the blessings brought through Christianity to injured Africa.

[Footnote A: The missions of the French Protestant Church are situated inland from Port Natal, and along the river Caledon from its junction with the Orange River. It has gathered upwards of 2000 Bechuanas into regular church-fellowship.]

Abyssinia has also been visited with every prospect of success.

And how glorious has been the triumph of the gospel throughout the whole Pacific! In 1837, Williams was able to address royalty in these noble words—"It must impart joy to every benevolent mind to know, that by the efforts of British Christians upwards of *three hundred thousand* of deplorably ignorant and savage barbarians, inhabiting the beautiful islands of the Pacific, have been delivered from a dark, debasing, and sanguinary idolatry, and are now enjoying the civilising influence, the domestic happiness, and the spiritual blessings which Christianity imparts. In the island of Raratonga, which I *discovered* in 1823, there are upwards of 3000 children under Christian instruction daily; not a vestige of idolatry remains;[A] their language has been reduced to a system, and the Scriptures, with other books, have been translated. But this is only one of nearly a hundred islands to which similar blessings have been conveyed." Tens of thousands of souls more have been added to this number since these words were written! In no part of heathendom has the gospel produced, in so short a time, such wonderful fruit as in Polynesia.

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The labours and sacrifices of the converted natives are more striking than in any other missions. Many islands have been converted solely by means of a native agency, and are superintended by native preachers only. Let us take the Sandwich Islands as illustrating what has been accomplished *for* the natives, and *by* them. The American Mission was commenced in 1824. These islands have been converted long ago to Christianity, so that not a vestige of idolatry remains, and not only do they support their own clergy and schools, but have their own Bible and Foreign Missionary Society. They raise for these objects about £4000 per annum, and support six missionaries to the heathen islands around them. The communicants in the islands amount to upwards of 25,000, and the children who attend the common schools to a still greater number.

[Footnote A: The first idol which, a catechist from Raratonga, who visited London in 1848, ever beheld, was in the Museum of the London Missionary Society.]

If we turn our eye to the great Western Continent, we see the gospel preached to its wandering Indian tribes; while the condition of Mexico and of California affords every prospect of the rapid extension of truth through kingdoms long benighted.

Mohammedan countries have also been opened to the missionary. Through the influence of Lord Aberdeen and Sir Stratford Canning, the Sultan was induced in 1844 to give religious toleration to his subjects; so that now, for the first time, a Mussulman may change his faith without incurring punishment. Several societies labour in Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, and Constantinople. The Euphrates is being dried up. The Mohammedan power is tottering, and ready to fall! When it dies and is buried, who will wear mourning at its funeral?

And how strange is the meeting between the distant East and West, the distant past and near present, visible in the fact, that it is missionaries from America who now unveil to the dwellers in the land of the Chaldees, and to the wanderers among the mountains which shadow the birth-place of the human race, that blessed faith and hope which dwelt in Abram, as he journeyed at the dawn of history from that old land, and which has returned thither again in Christian men imbued with Abram's faith, after having accompanied civilisation around the globe? God's blessing has signally attended the American mission among the Nestorians. The revival of religion in their schools and churches has been great and glorious.

May we not exclaim, What hath God wrought! Yet how can any statistics carry to our hearts a sense of what has been done for immortal souls by the gospel during this eventful period? What homes have been made happy by it; what families united in the bonds of love; what sick-beds soothed; what dying beds cheered; what minds illumined, and what hearts filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory!

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In close connexion with mission work, we may state the progress made during the present century in leavening the world with the Word of God. Previous to the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804, there was not one society in existence whose sole object was the distribution of the Bible in all lands. There are now upwards of 50 principal, and 9000 auxiliary Bible societies. In 1804, the Bible was accessible to only 200 millions of men. Now it exists in tongues spoken by 600 millions. The London Bible Society alone sends forth annually upwards of 1,787,000 copies. During the last sixty years it has issued 39,315,226 Bibles, in 163 different languages, and in 143 translations never before printed. Its receipts for 1862 amount to L168,443.[A]

[Footnote A: The American Bible Society circulates upwards of 600,000 copies of the Word of God annually, at home and abroad. Besides assisting in publishing translations issued by other societies, it has been at the sole expense of publishing the Armeno-Turkish, and Modern Syriac New Testament; the entire Bible for the Burmese, and also for the Sandwich Islands; the Ojibbeway New Testament; the Gospels, or some portion of the Bible, into the languages of the Sioux, Mohawks, Seneca, and Cherokee Indians.]

It surely cannot fail to fill the heart of every Christian with deepest thankfulness, to contemplate these glorious achievements. The Church, like the angel seen in prophetic vision, has been flying with the everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. It has given the Bible to the inhabitants of the old lands of Egypt, Ethiopia, Arabia, Palestine, Asia Minor, and Persia; to the indomitable Circassian; to the mountaineers of Affghanistan; to tribes of India speaking thirty-two different languages or dialects; to the inhabitants of Burmah, Assam, and Siam; to the islanders of Madagascar and Ceylon; to the Malays and Javanese of the Eastern seas; to the millions of China, and the wandering Kalmuck beyond her great wall; to the brave New Zealander; to the teeming inhabitants of the island groups which are scattered over the Southern Pacific; to the African races, from the Cape to Sierra Leone; to the Esquimaux and Greenlander, within the Arctic circle; and to the Indian tribes of North America. All are now furnished with a translation of that wonderful volume, which, with the light of the universal living Spirit of God, at once reveals to man, in every age and clime, his lost and miserable condition, and tells him of a remedy that is adapted to meet every want of his being—to redeem him, by a moral power it alone can afford, from all sin and misery, and to bring him into the glorious fellowship of the holiness, the blessedness, and joy of Jesus Christ, and all the family of God in earth and heaven! [A]

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[Footnote A: The following facts regarding tract societies may be here stated:—The Religious Tract Society of London was formed in 1799. During the first year of its operations, ending in May 1800, it had issued 200,000 tracts. What is its present working power? Its annual income from sales and benevolent contributions (£12,500) is £95,000. Its annual distribution of tracts, including handbills, from the London Depository is—in English, 20,870,074, and in foreign languages, 537,729, making an annual total of 21,407,803. It publishes tracts in 117 different languages. Taking into account the number of affiliated societies, the total probable *annual* distribution of tracts, British and foreign, in connexion with the London Tract Society, amounts to 28,500,000. Several religious bodies in the United States maintain Tract or “Publication” Societies. But the “American Tract Society” (founded 1825) is the largest and most influential in the United States, and has a catholic constitution similar to our own Tract Society. It is supported by more than 700 auxiliary societies—those in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York being large and efficient. We may add that its circulation is not confined to the United States, but extends to Mexico, Central and South America, and to those districts in the East and Asia Minor where the American missionaries are labouring. It has issued upwards of 200,000,000 of publications since its commencement.]

And now let us ask, What shall be the history of the Church during the rest of this century? Without attempting with a vain or profane hand to uncover what God has concealed, it is surely a comfort to be able to take our stand on the immovable rock of His promises to Christ, and to rejoice in the assurance, that, sooner or later, His name must be glorious in all the earth!

But when? Is it too much to assert, that before the end of the present century, the gospel shall have been preached to all nations, the Bible translated into all tongues, and the last visible idol on earth cast down amidst the triumphant songs of the Church of Christ? We might expect this blessing judging only from the past, and the constantly-increasing ratio with which society advances. Yet, as revolutions in the physical world anticipate in a single night the slow progress of ordinary causes, so, for aught we know, may God, by some evolution of His providence, make one year do the work of many.

But while we do anticipate the most glorious results ever attained by the human race during this century, we anticipate, also, from the signs of the time, a desperate conflict of opposing *systems*, both of truth and error. It is not a little remarkable, that never before was there such a life and strength in every system as at this moment. Protestantism, Popery, Infidelity, and even Judaism,[A] were never so alive; *and never were alive together* before. Does this not look like a coming struggle?[B] But what may *appear* suddenly and unexpectedly, may nevertheless be the necessary results of long preparation; like the water or the gas, which suddenly enter a thousand city houses to refresh and illuminate them, but which are the results of years of labour in digging trenches, laying pipes, and erecting reservoirs, during all which time no streams of water or of gas were ever present to the senses.



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[Footnote A: It is only within twenty-five years that *preaching* has become common in all their synagogues, while, during the same period, ten periodicals have been started by the Jews, in different parts of the world, in defence of Judaism, in some form or other.]

[Footnote B: In a conversation which we had with Neander in 1848, (immediately before the continental revolutions,) he said, "I believe we are entering a period of unprecedented warfare, which will issue in the increased glory and purity of the Church. The light and darkness will every year be more and more separated; the one becoming more bright the other more densely dark."]

But we know from the testimony of God's Word, strengthened by the experience of past ages, how certain victory is in the end, however long and apparently doubtful the campaign may be between His kingdom and every form of evil. The day has been when "the Church" was "in the wilderness," and when within that Church four men only held fast their confidence in God, believed His word, and exhorted that Church to take possession of the land of promise, saying, "Rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not." And how was that missionary sermon received? "All the congregation bade stone them with stones!" And had they done so, the world's only true lights were extinguished and lost in universal unbelief and heathenism. It was in such desperate circumstances as these that the Lord himself came to the rescue of the world, and it was then these marvellous words of promise were littered, "As truly as I live my glory will fill the earth!" The day has been, too, when "the Church" met in an upper room with shut doors, for fear of the Jews; but it was even then that its Lord said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Never more can the glory of God appear to the eyes of the weakest faith to be so dim, or the cause of Christ to be so hopeless, as it hath been in those days of old! The glory of God *is* filling the earth, and the gospel is being preached to all nations. Mere rays of light, which we see breaking over the mountain tops in heathen lands, are beautiful in themselves; but far more beautiful to the eye of faith are the first beams of that sun which is yet to stream into every valley now lying in darkness, and steep in its glory all the habitations of men. Those notes of joy and thanksgiving, too, are beautiful which ascend from many a heart in "Kedar's wilderness afar;" but they are still more beautiful to the ear of faith as echoes from the Rock of ages, and the prophetic song uttered by "great voices in heaven," saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever!"

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### THE MYSTERY OF SORROW.

The patriarch Job experienced the darkness and mystery of sorrow when he thus spoke:—"Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net. Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment. He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths. He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone; and mine hope hath he removed like a tree." "Even to-day is my complaint bitter; my stroke is heavier than my groaning. O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

The sweet singer of Israel sung in darkness when he said:—"My heart is sore pained within me; and the terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth."

The prophet Jeremiah cried out of the depths of mysterious sorrow when he poured forth these lamentations:—"I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day." "He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy." "And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."

And did not our blessed Lord himself experience, as a man, the mystery of sorrow when he cried in Gethsemane, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and when, during that "hour and power of darkness" on the cross, He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

If, then, our Father visits us with any sorrow which is to us dark and mysterious, let us "not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, as if some strange thing happened to us." Let us rather gratefully remember, that ever since our Lord has ascended up on high, and given us His Spirit to teach us and to abide with us for ever, and for our profit has recorded in His holy Word not only His acts, but also His ways

towards the children of men, we are enabled to see much, light piercing our greatest darkness and sorrow, and so to know God as to strengthen our faith in His wisdom and love.

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I do not know any narrative in the whole Word of God which at once reveals so much of this darkness and light—of the mystery of sorrow for a time, and the solution of the mystery afterwards—as that of the sickness, death, and resurrection of Lazarus.

That family in Bethany, we know, consisted of Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. They were poor, and unknown to the great and busy world; but their riches and rank in the sight of the ministering angels were great indeed, for Jesus “loved them.” This was the charter of the grandest inheritance. But though loved by Jesus, that love did not hinder them from being visited by a sudden affliction, and plunged for a while into deepest gloom. We are able in spirit to cross their lowly threshold, and to understand all that took place in that humble home: for human hearts and human sorrows are the same in every age. Lazarus, the head of the house, is laid on a bed of sickness. We need no details to enable all who have watched the progress of disease in the beloved member of a family—and who has been exempted from this anxiety?—to realise how the symptoms of illness, treated at first perhaps lightly, would become more serious, then alarming, until foreboding thoughts of death pained every tender affection; and we can understand how advice would be asked from kind neighbours, and every possible remedy applied. But in vain! The sufferer gets worse, and the signs of approaching dissolution rapidly succeed in delirium, prostration of strength, or altered features, until the chill of hopelessness creeps over the hearts of the sisters, and hot tears fill their watching eyes, and prayers tremble upon their pale lips, as in silence they wait for the dread hour of death to their dear one! We see it all!

But ere this last moment was reached by Martha and Mary, they are full of hope that it may be averted, for they have a secret source of relief in a Physician of body and soul. So long as they have Jesus with them, they cannot despair. He is not, however, in Bethany, but at Bethabara beyond the Jordan, a day’s journey off. Yet they can send for Him; and they accordingly do so, with this simple message, “Lazarus, whom thou lovest, is sick.” It is enough. There is not a word of their love, or of the love of Lazarus to Him. The appeal is to His own heart. No request is proffered. Everything is left to Himself.

Did they not, however, feel assured that Jesus would manifest His love to them in the way which seemed to *them* the best way,—nay, the one way only by which they could receive comfort, and be relieved from their anxiety and sorrow,—and that was by delivering Lazarus from sickness and death? For they could not but recall at that moment the many instances in which Jesus had displayed His power and love during the three years He had lived amidst the sorrowing and suffering in Judea; how unwearied His goodness had ever been; how “multitudes” had come to Him, and “He healed them all;”

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how health had flowed from His hands and His lips, and from His very garments; how He had showered down His blessings upon Gentile as well as Jew, upon those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and were accounted as “dogs;” how He had healed by merely speaking a word at a distance, and even anticipated prayer, by restoring a dead son to his widowed mother, who had never asked or expected such a blessing. And now! will He refuse to help His own beloved friend? Shall strangers, heathen, publicans and sinners, be promptly heard and answered, and Lazarus whom He loved forgotten? Impossible! The healing word must be spoken, or Jesus himself will come and manifest Himself as mighty to save!

Who can doubt but that such were the anticipations of Martha and Mary, when they sent in their distress the message to their Lord and Friend—“Lazarus, whom thou lovest, is sick?”

The messenger has departed. With what anxiety must they have measured out the time within which it was possible for Jesus to receive the intelligence. They who have sent far away for a physician in a critical case, when every minute was precious, can sympathise with their anxiety. Time passes: has the Saviour yet received the tidings of their grief? Probably not, for there is no improvement in Lazarus. The healing word has not been spoken. Time passes: now He must have heard! Yet Lazarus is no better. Time passes: and the messenger has returned, but without Jesus! Yet surely not without some message of consolation? some hope held out of relief? He brings neither! Jesus had said, indeed, that this sickness was not unto death, or rather, was “unto death only for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” But what means this? Does it mean that Lazarus was to die? Has Jesus, then, actually refused to aid them? Though He did not promise to come, or had not spoken the word of healing, He must surely do either! It cannot be, no it *cannot* be, that He will desert them, or leave them alone in this trial! “Jesus, tarry not!” might have been their wailing cry: “Lazarus whom thou lovedst is sinking fast, and soon all will be over with him. Friends, neighbours, look along the road, watch the brow of that distant hill, look along that valley, and see if there are any signs of His coming?”

Alas! 'tis all in vain Lazarus is dead! And beside that silent body the two sisters are breaking their hearts. Life and death, faith and unbelief, are struggling terribly for the mastery, and strange thoughts of Christ flit across their minds like storm-clouds athwart the sun. One brother is gone, the other has not come. The one dearly loved them; the other!—they had believed in Jesus as the Messiah: they had loved Him with reverent and deep affection, they had worshipped—and now!—God of Abraham, forsake us not utterly! Our fathers trusted Thee, and were not put to shame! Oh, deliver our feet from falling, and our souls from going down to the pit! Lord, help our unbelief!

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In some such form as this the storm of doubt and anguish must have torn the minds of those mourners. But the storm is not yet over; the deepest darkness has not yet come. Their brother is dead. Death with his marks, which once seen can never be mistaken, stamps every lineament of that well-known countenance. It is death's colour on the cheek; death's cold stiffness in the limbs; and no hand but his could so close those eyes and make rigid those lips. There is no swoon here! Swathe him then in the garments of the grave; make ready for the funeral; let him be buried for ever out of sight; follow him to the ancestral tomb, and let the other household dead be remembered, and the other sad processions from the home of the living to the home of the lost and gone be recalled, and think that as they never returned, so never can he. Lay the body gently down beside those who have been long sleeping there; look at it; remember the past since childhood; weep and say farewell; return, Martha and Mary, with wrung hearts to your home, and see the empty room and listen for a voice that is no more, and experience a second death in the emptiness, the silence of this changed abode, and let the heaviest burden of all be borne, the deepest sorrow of all be endured—*the doubt of a Saviour's love!*

Yes, that terrible agony of doubt was there. Other friends came to sympathise with them, and to be present with them at the funeral; but this Friend was absent, and did not send even one comforting message! Of what avail is His coming now? for Lazarus has been dead four days, and corruption is already doing its foul work on his body. Here is "darkness that might be felt!"

Would that we could feel how real all this mysterious sorrow must have been to those sisters—*our* sisters, with our hearts, affections, and sympathies—that so we may be the more prepared to receive the blessed teaching which this narrative is designed to afford, and have our faith strengthened by seeing how the darkness and perplexity which belong so often to God's providential dealings towards us, may be caused by the deepest workings of that very love which we do not for a time see, and therefore may in our blindness and weakness for a time doubt.

But we must now look at the other portion of this history, which interprets the one we have been considering, and reveals the mind and ways of Jesus, now, as then, to His sorrowing friends.

We read that "*when* Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick," "he abode two days still in the same place where he then was." But His thoughts and His heart were all the while in Bethany. He saw all that was taking place there. He was cognisant of every groan and tear; yet He did nothing to prevent the progress of the disease, or to lessen the intensity of the sorrow. At the very moment when the sisters watch their brother's last breath, Jesus "said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead,"

Let us inquire, then, whether we can discover any reasons which could have induced our Lord thus to prolong His stay at Bethabara, and to absent Himself from Bethany.

What means this deep calm and quiet at such a time beside the troubled waters of the Jordan?



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Now, we must ever remember that the grand end of all our Lord did, was that “God might be glorified thereby,”—that the character of the Father might be revealed in the fullest possible manner in and by Jesus the Son. But in order that this, in the circumstances in which He was then placed, might be accomplished, He had many things to consider; many complex interests pertaining to the kingdom of God to weigh and to reconcile, so as to bring out of them all glory to God in the highest, with good-will to man.

(a.) Jesus had in the first place to consider the *good* of His beloved *friends in Bethany*. They were thinking probably of their own *comfort only*, and of that too as coming but in one way, by the deliverance of Lazarus from sickness or death. But there is something of more importance to immortal beings than mere comfort. Love to souls is a very different sentiment, and manifested in a very different manner, than love to mere animals. To get quit of grief; to have tears dried up and smiles restored; to be delivered from all anxiety, and relieved from the heavy burden of sorrow, never mind *how*,—this is surely not the highest end which one who, wisely and truly loved, would seek for his brother in adversity? The highest, the best, the enduring and eternal interests of the sufferer must *first* be considered. His comfort, doubtless, cannot be overlooked, but then it must be such comfort as God can sympathise with and rejoice in; a comfort, therefore, which is in harmony with true spiritual life, and which will strengthen that life unto life eternal. Every other comfort is a delusion, a cheating of the soul, a laughter that must end at last in the experience of a deeper sorrow than before. He who bids us seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, cannot discipline us or aid us to seek any lower good first, because He loves our true and highest good most. Jesus had therefore to consider how He could bring true *good*, and therefore true comfort in the end, out of this sickness and death, to Martha, Mary, and also to Lazarus. To restore the brother to his sisters—was this best for *them*, taking into account every circumstance of their history within and without? To restore Lazarus to life—to a world of sin and temptation, again to die—was this the best for *him*? These were solemn questions, which Divine love and wisdom alone could answer.

(b.) But Jesus had to consider the good of *His disciples*. For years these simple-minded men had followed Him, and had been educating by Him to become the teachers of the world. HOW then shall this event be best turned to account for the strengthening of their faith, for the enlarging of their spiritual vision of God’s glory, as revealed by His Son? But Jesus remembered them also: “I am glad,” He said, “for *your* sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe.”

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(c.) Beyond the inner circle of His friends in Bethany and His more immediate followers, there was the multitude of poor, ignorant, fanatical, and *unbelieving Jews*—the wandering sheep, many of whom, had to be gathered into the fold of this the Good Shepherd. Jesus had their interests also at heart, as is evident from His prayer subsequently at the tomb of Lazarus: “*Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*”

(d.) Nor must we, in contemplating the many objects of love which occupied the thoughts of the Saviour, forget how *intimately connected the raising of Lazarus was with His own death*. That last great miracle of Divine power and love—almost, if not His last on earth—was to mark the beginning of His own deepest humiliation and sorrow. The hatred of the Jews was at this time so intense, that Thomas was amazed that He should hazard a journey to a place so near Jerusalem as was Bethany. “The Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?” And so dangerous did this journey seem, that while bravely resolving to accompany Him, Thomas said, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” But this hatred was to be intensified by the display of Christ’s glory at the tomb of Lazarus; for we read that “from *that* day forth they took counsel to put Him to death.” The opening of the tomb to bring Lazarus forth was thus the opening of His own to descend thither as “crucified, dead, and buried.” The gratitude of Mary for having her brother restored was soon to be unconsciously expressed by her anointing his mighty Restorer for His own burial. No wonder that Jesus paused ere He took this last step which intervened between Himself and the death which should end His work and mission upon earth.

(e.) And, as including all these considerations and many more, *His own glory* as the Divine Son of God was involved in what was to take place at Bethany. And this, again, involved the destinies of the human race, and the good and comfort of the Church throughout coming ages. Whatever became of Martha or Mary or Lazarus,—though the sisters should weep out their little day of life, and though their brother’s sleep should be unbroken till the resurrection morning,—what was all this to the revealing of Jesus as the Saviour of men, and as the “resurrection and the life” of human bodies and of human souls? Inconceivably less in proportion than are the interests of one person to those of the whole universe! And thus you see that while those humble mourners, in the weakness of the flesh, and in their earthly short-sightedness, were thinking only of themselves, Jesus the Saviour of mankind had to think of many persons and of many things, so that every interest might be attended to, and the good of the whole kingdom of God be remembered, while not a hair on the head of Martha, Mary, or Lazarus was forgotten. Oh, blessed Saviour and glorious King! who can thus govern worlds and mould the ages of human history, while His ear is open to the prayers, and His thoughts occupied with the concerns, of the humblest mourners, as if they alone existed in the mighty universe of God!

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Before shewing the blessed teaching which sufferers may gather from this twofold picture of mysterious sorrow and of thoughtful love, let us study for a moment the circumstances attending the meeting of Jesus with Martha and Mary. Many of these are deeply interesting and full of instruction; but I confine myself to one point only, the evidence which I cannot but think they afford of the shaken faith of the sisters for a time in the love of Jesus.

Martha was the first to meet Him outside of the town, where in quiet, and undisturbed by the noisy mourners from Jerusalem, and by their sympathising friends, Jesus desired, with His considerate kindness, to probe and heal those sorely wounded hearts. And what was her salutation? "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" What means this? Is it an expression of confidence only in His power? Is it a confession of faith? Or does it not rather evidence unbelief? Does it not imply a sorrowing complaint, uttered, indeed, with reverence, and in such gentle language as was compatible with sincere faith, but still a complaint from a wondering and disappointed because wrung spirit, expressed in language which suggested the additional question asked only in the heart, "*And why wert Thou not here?*" Jesus reasoned with her. She believes, yet still doubts and questions why He had not come; she trusts Him, yet sees no light with reference to His dealings towards themselves. One thing she will do, however, amidst the darkness—she will cling to Christ as her only hope and refuge! Mary remains in the house. Why? Was it that she had not heard of the arrival of Jesus, or of Martha having gone to meet Him? Or is her heart so torn by distracting thoughts, that for a moment she knows not what to do? She dare not say to Him all she feels. Her keen and sensitive heart is agonised by entertaining for a moment even the bare suspicion of unkindness on His part. She fights against the horrid thought, which, like a demon, torments her, yet she cannot yet quite banish it, and meet Him with the full, unreserved, gushing love which something tells her is His due. But however this may have been, a message from Himself rouses her: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee; and as soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto him." But how did she meet Him! Ah! Martha and she have surely been together pondering over the mystery of His absence, and they have inwardly come to the same conclusion; and so she too fell at the Master's feet, with the same wailing cry from her full heart, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" As she uttered these words, "Jesus wept!" There are expressions and single words in Scripture which reveal a whole heaven of glory—like the opening in the telescope, which, though but as a pin-point of light, reveals the glory of sun, moon, and stars. What a revelation of love is this—"Jesus wept!" But what mean these tears? They are

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visibly significant of much sorrow. The cup of the “Man of sorrows” was always full; what caused it thus to run over? Only twice in His life do we read of the Saviour’s weeping,—now, when at Bethany, and in a few days afterwards, when entering Jerusalem during the week of His crucifixion. Did Jesus now weep from mere human sympathy with sisters mourning for a dead brother? or did He weep because He mourned their own lost faith in His love to them? We are well aware of the tenacity with which most people cling to the former method of accounting for the Saviour’s tears, and what pain it seems to give when the latter view is pressed upon them, as if they were thereby robbed of some special source of comfort in affliction, and left without any other declaration in the Word of God—at all events, without any other incident in the life of Jesus—fitted to inspire confidence in His sympathy. It is not difficult to account for this feeling on our part. For it is much easier to understand tears shed for mere human suffering, than tears shed for human sin. The one kind of sorrow is common, the other is rare. The one is almost instinctive, and necessarily springs from that benevolence which belongs to us as men, but the other can only spring from that love of souls which belongs to us as “partakers of the sufferings of Christ,” and from possessing, therefore, a realising sense of the infinite importance of a right or wrong state of being towards God, and from beholding the darkness of evil casting its dread shadows over a dear one’s spirit. Hence an atheist can mourn over our loss of friends by death, while the man of God alone can mourn over our loss of God himself by unbelief. Then, again, every person welcomes the sympathy of another in his sorrows; while he might at the same time have no sympathy with the grief experienced by another for his sins. The one might be gladly welcomed as most loving, but the other be proudly rejected as most offensive.

Why therefore should true Christians cling with such fondness to the idea of Christ weeping with Martha and Mary, because they lost their brother, and not rather see a far deeper love and a source of far deeper comfort in his tears, because they had, for a moment even, lost their faith? Surely those who know Christ do not depend solely on such a proof as this of the reality of His humanity, and of His sympathy with the affliction of His brethren; nor can that kind of sympathy be the highest which can be afforded by all men whose hearts are not utterly steeled by selfish indifference. Besides, however real Christ’s sympathy was with sorrow of every kind, why did He express it on this occasion more than on any other? Nay, why did He weep at the very moment when He purposed, by a miracle of power, to restore the dead brother to his sisters, and in a few minutes to turn their sorrow into joy? Why weep with those whose tears were shed in ignorance only of the coming event which was so soon to dry them? But the Saviour’s

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tears came from a different and a profounder source! They welled out of a heart whose deep and tender love was not trusted in, but doubted even by those whom He loved most deeply and tenderly, and at the very moment too when He was about to pour forth upon them the richest treasure of His love, and to do exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think. Remember only how He of all men loved; how as a man He longed for His brother's sympathy, and how as a holy Saviour He longed for His brother's good. Remember how earnestly He sought for the one grand result, that of hearty confidence in His goodwill, as the only restorative of humanity fallen and in ruins through the curse of unbelief. Remember, too, how lonely He was in the world; how few understood Him in any degree, or responded even feebly to the constant, boundless outpouring of His affection; and how many returned His good with evil, His love with bitterest hate;—remember all this, and conceive if you can what His feelings must have been when returning to this home of His heart, to this green spot amidst the wilderness of hateful distrust, with His whole soul full of such glorious purposes of love and self-sacrifice, and then at such a time to find his best and dearest friends smitten with the universal blight, fallen to the earth and prostrate in the dust under the crushing burden of unbelief! He does not weep, at first, when Martha addresses him; but when Mary, the loving and confiding—she of all on earth—complains; when faith has failed in even her!—oh, it is too much for His heart! “And thou too!”—“Jesus wept!” Ah! that shadow of death in such a soul as this was infinitely sadder to Him than the dead body of her brother, nay, than the contents of all the festering graveyards of the world! For what is death to sin? and what is the power which can restore by a word the dead body to life, in comparison with that which is required to restore an unbelieving soul to God? It was this unbelief, the most terrible spectacle which earth presents to the eye of a holy and loving Saviour, that made Him weep as He beheld it for a moment, like a demon-power taking possession of His own best beloved. And it was this same essential evil, and this alone, which made Him weep once again as He entered Jerusalem, when He cried, “How often would I have gathered you, but ye would not!”

In perfect accordance with this view, we read that when some of the Jews said, as He walked towards the tomb of Lazarus, “Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man had not died?” “Jesus *therefore again* groaning in himself, cometh to the grave.” For again the words expressed lost faith in His power, or in His love to “this man.” In like manner, when Martha, as if to persuade Him not to attempt impossibilities, reminded Him of the long time in which Lazarus had lain in the grave, saying, “Lord, by this time he stinketh,” Jesus sternly rebukes her, “Said I not unto thee,

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*that if thou wouldest believe*, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" And tell me, is there not inexpressible comfort in this love which mourns over sin as the greatest loss and the greatest sorrow? I can get many, as I have said, in the world to understand and to feel with me in all my sufferings from loss of wealth, of health, of friends, or of any earthly blessing. Relations, acquaintances, strangers, even enemies, could be found who would do so. But who will so love me as to carry my crushing burden of sin? Who can fully understand its exceeding sinfulness I Who can fathom the depths into which I have fallen, or enter the body of death which imprisons my spirit. One only, the truest, the best, the most loving of all, my Saviour! And His hatred of my sin, and His sorrow for it, is just the measure of His love to me, and of His desire to deliver me, and to make me a partaker of His own blessed rest and peace, through faith and love in His Father and my Father, in His God and my God!

I shall pass by the remaining facts in this narrative, the raising of Lazarus, and the memorable scene when Jesus sat as a guest with the family of Bethany, again restored to one another, and to Himself in love; and when Mary with unutterable thoughts anointed His feet with ointment, and wiped them with the hair of her head. I would rather occupy the space which remains, in gathering from what has been said a few general lessons of importance chiefly to mourners.

My suffering brother or sister! permit me to address you as if personally present with you, seeing your distress, and sharing it as those cannot choose but do who have themselves experienced the darkness of sorrow. Such darkness and perplexity I have known, and I so remember with deepest gratitude the strength and comfort which were then afforded by the revelation of the ways of Christ, as illustrated by this narrative, that I desire to help others as I have been myself helped.

The one grand lesson which it teaches us is, *never, in our darkest hour, to lose confidence in the love of Christ towards us*, as if He had forgotten to be gracious, and either could not or would not help us. Banish the sinful thought! "Beware lest there should be in any of you *the evil heart* of unbelief." For such unbelief is the greatest calamity which can befall us. It is, verily, "sorrow's crown of sorrow," Let us rather "hold fast our confidence, which hath a great reward."

Like the family in Bethany, you too, I shall suppose, are visited with a sudden and "mysterious" bereavement. Like them you may pray to Christ, and ask a specific blessing; and like them you may think He has not heard your prayer, nor ever will answer it, because He does not do this at the time or in the manner you wished or anticipated. His thoughts and ways with reference to you may thus be utterly dark—darker than blackest night. Yet the servant of the Lord, "though he walks



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in darkness, and has no light,” must “trust in the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.” For the ways of Christ to His suffering friends in Bethany, when absent from them beyond the Jordan, are a revelation of His ways to us now, when He is in glory beyond the tomb. Now, as then, He never forgets us, never overlooks the least circumstance in our history, and never ceases for one moment to have that interest in us which is possible only for such a Brother or Saviour to possess. But now, as then, He has *manifold interests to consider*; ten thousand times ten thousand complex and crossing consequences to weigh. While we, perhaps, have our thoughts wholly occupied with but one desire, our own individual comfort, our own deliverance from this or that trial, the wise and all-loving Jesus has to provide for much more than this. Our own good and growth in grace—the good of those in sickness—the good of children, relations, friends, yea, it may be of generations yet unborn, who may be affected at this crisis in our family history by what Jesus does or does not,—all this must be considered by Him who loves all, and seeks the good of all, and who alone can trace out the marvellous and endless network of influence by which man is bound to man from place to place and from age to age. No one, therefore, but the Lord of all can decide what is best to be done in the circumstances of each case, in order that most good may be done, and that God may be glorified thereby. He alone knows how this link of “sickness unto death” is connected with other links in the mysterious chain of human history. And if so, then surely it becomes us, poor, ignorant, blind, selfish creatures, to bow before His throne with holy reverence; to yield ourselves and all our concerns meekly and lovingly into His hands, in the full assurance of faith that our interests are there in best and safest keeping; to feel that it is our first duty and noblest privilege to trust Him when we cannot trace Him, being persuaded that He does all things well, and *that what we know not now we shall know hereafter*.

Amidst all darkness, perplexity, and apparent confusion, remember the certainties which abide unmoved, and “shine aloft as stars.” It is *certain* that “all things work together for the *good* of those who love God;” that “thou wilt keep him in perfect *peace*, whose soul is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee;” and that “nothing can separate us from the love of Christ,” (His love to us.) It is *certain* that our Christian dead are in His presence; and that no one knows them or loves them as that Saviour does, who made them with His own hands, and redeemed them with His own blood. It is *certain* that if we are believers in Christ, we are still united to those departed ones, in labour, in worship, in love, in hope, and in joy; for, “whether we wake or sleep, we live *together* with Him.” It is *certain*, that if “we are Christ’s,” “all things are ours, whether life or death, things present or things to come!”



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Hold fast, then, O mourner, thy confidence in thy Lord! Have patience, fret not, despair not, and a day shall come to thee like that which came at last to the mourners in Bethany—it may be here, it may not be until we meet Him beyond the bounds of time, yet come it must—when all this earthly history, and all His doings towards us, shall be read in the clear and full light of perfect knowledge; when out of this seeming chaos and confusion the most perfect order will be evolved before our wondering eyes; and when we shall joyfully acknowledge with what majestic grandeur the world has ever been governed by its glorious King! Then, when we hear how He has governed ourselves, and trace the path along which He has led us since childhood, and understand the reasons which induced Him at such a time and in such a way to afflict us;—then, when the ways and thoughts of that mind and heart are laid bare;—and then, too, when we recall our fears, our doubts, our rebellions, our want of confidence in Him, what shall our thoughts and feelings be? When His love and ours, His wisdom and ours, His plans and ours, are thus contrasted, as we sit down at the great supper with our own Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and every one worthy of our love restored to us for ever, beholding the unveiled face of our Lord in glory; oh, then, it might seem almost essential to our peace to be able to weep bitterly, and repent heartily, for our unworthy suspicions and ungenerous treatment of such a Friend and Saviour! But, blessed be His name! we shall then be able to give Him all He asks, *our whole hearts*, and, like Mary, kneel at His feet, and there pour forth the sweet fragrance of our gratitude, love, and joy, as we too hear from His lips such words as these uttered amidst the light and glory of the upper sanctuary: “Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God!”

### THE BEGINNING OF A YEAR.

What will happen during this year to ourselves and to those whom we love? Life or death—health or sickness—joy or sorrow—good or evil? What will the coming twelve months bring to me and mine? What *may* be—what *must* be—what *ought* to be? Such questions, multiplied a hundredfold, or broken up into every variety of anxious inquiry, often fill the heart and mind on the first day of a new year.

Now, is it possible for us to find rest and peace for our spirits as we steadily contemplate the future, with its darkness and light, with all the duties and trials which it contains, and with all that it may and must bring forth? Is there any secret of strength and comfort by which we can with courage and hope encounter all the possibilities of the future? There is. Let us only *trust God*, and we need not fear anything, but welcome everything!

Let us consider this; and, first of all, understand what is meant by trusting God.

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To trust God, remember, is to trust *Himself*—a living, personal God. It is not to trust to any means whatever whereby He makes Himself known; but to look through them, all, or to go by them all, to the living God himself. This is more than trusting to any truth even revealed in the Bible, for it is trusting the Person who spoke the truth, or of whom the truth is spoken.

To trust God is to trust Him as He is revealed in all the fulness of His glorious character. It is to trust Him as true, and therefore as faithful in keeping every promise, and in fulfilling every threat; as wise, and therefore as never erring in any arrangement made for the well-being of His creatures; as righteous, and therefore as doing right to each and all; as holy, and therefore as hating evil, and loving good; as merciful and therefore as pardoning the guilty through a Redeemer;—it is, in one word, to trust Him “whose name is Love!”—love which shines in every attribute, and is the security for every blessing! Trust and obedience are therefore, from their nature, inseparable.

This trust in God is not common. Nothing, indeed, so common in men’s mouths as the phrases, “I trust in God,” “I have all my dependence on God,” “We have none else to look to but Him,” and the like. But, alas! how meaningless often to men’s hearts are those sayings in men’s mouths! They frequently express confidence only in God’s doing what He has never promised to do;—as when a slothful, idle, dissipated man continues in his wickedness, yet “trusts God” will ward off poverty from him, or provide for his family whom he is all the while robbing. Or the words express confidence in what God has positively declared He never will nor can do;—as when an impenitent man, who has no faith in Christ or love to Him, “trusts God will forgive him,” or make him happy, or not punish him, should he die as he is. All this, and such like trust, is “vain confidence,” trusting a lie, and believing a delusion. Others, again, professing to trust God’s word, manifest a total want of trust in His ways, and do not walk in His commandments, nor submit to His corrections, believing neither to be the will of a holy and loving Father. And thus, men who in theory say they trust God, practically have no trust in Him, whatever they may have in themselves, in the world, or in things seen and temporal. But oh the blessedness and the peace of him whose trust is in the Lord!

Read a few declarations from God’s Word upon the crime of want of trust, and the peace enjoyed when possessing it:—

“Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.” “The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know

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thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me....In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Now, this trust in God has been the character of all God's people in every age, and under every dispensation. We who live in these latter days may say of all our spiritual ancestry, "Our fathers trusted thee." They all had faith in the living God, and believed His word to be true, and His ways to be excellent. Abraham did so, when he went forth into the wide world, not knowing whither he went, having but God's word as a staff to lean on; and when he offered up his only son, believing that God was able even to raise him from the dead. Moses did so, when "by faith he forsook Egypt," and preferred "the reproach of Christ," and "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible," Job did so, when deprived of everything but God himself; when he sat in sackcloth and ashes, and bore the glorious testimony in the presence of men and devils, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," David did so during his whole life, and his sacred songs are anthems of joyful trust, which the Church of God can never cease to sing till faith is lost in sight. And Jehoshaphat did so, when in the presence of the great invading army he addressed his small band with the noble words, "Trust in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established." And Daniel did so, when he entered the den of lions, and came out unscathed, "because he believed in the Lord his God." And Paul did so, when he ended his triumphant life, which he "lived by faith in the Son of God," with the shout of victory, saying, "I know whom I have trusted, and I am persuaded He can keep what I have committed to Him until that day." All the children of God have known, loved, and trusted their Father, and have reflected that holy light which shone with unclouded and faultless lustre in the Firstborn of all the brethren; for Jesus ever held fast His confidence in God until His last cry of faith, "*Father*, into Thy hands I commit my spirit!"

Begin the year and spend it in this frame of mind. Know God, trust Him, and go on thy way rejoicing, whatever that way may be. Heaven and earth may pass away, but thou art safe, because right.

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Do you, for example, fear the future because it is unknown? Trust God, and fear not! This ignorance of coming events which are to affect our own happiness for time or for eternity is very remarkable, especially when contrasted with our minute and accurate knowledge of other things; such as the future movements of the moon and stars,—events which, though revealing the history of immense worlds, are yet to us of far less importance than the malady which may enter our home to-morrow, and close for ever the eyelids of a babe! In proportion, indeed, as the things of each day are to affect us, God has so concealed them, that we know not what one day is to bring forth. And this ignorance is surely intended to accomplish at least one blessed end—that of making us fly to God himself, and look up to Himself for guidance, for protection, and for peace. The feeblest child thereby becomes filled with such assurance of faith, that, whatever is before him, he can say, “Nevertheless I am *continually* with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me into glory,” How grand, then, is this thought, that whatever may come to the believer out of the mysterious womb of time, or out of the vast recesses of an unknown and immense eternity, nothing can possibly destroy his soul’s peace; for nothing can separate him from the love of the ever-present, unchangeable, omnipotent God. The stars of heaven may fall, and the heavens depart as a scroll, and every mountain and island be moved out of its place; but the meekest child of God will be kept in perfect peace on the bosom of his Father, and there rest, untouched by the revolutions of coming ages, as the rainbow reposes on the bosom of the sky, unmoved by “the strong wind which rends the mountains, and breaks in pieces the rocks before the Lord.”

Whether, therefore, the year is to bring life or death, poverty or riches, health or sickness to us or to our friends,—all is beyond our knowledge or our will. But, thank God, it is nevertheless within the province of our will to secure to ourselves perfect peace and rest. This sure hope is based on the glorious fact that there is a God—a living God who verily governs the universe; whose kingdom is one of righteousness; whose omnipotence is directed by love; and who, consequently, so administers the affairs of His blessed kingdom, as that all its complex machinery of events move in harmony with the safety and peace of every true child.

Again, Do you fear because of coming duties or trials which you cannot but anticipate? Trust God, and fear not! “Cast thy burden”—however great—“the Lord, and *He* will sustain thee.” Experience tells us that the evils which we once most feared never came, but were purely imaginary, while the things really appointed to us were never anticipated. Let this help us to appreciate God’s goodness and wisdom more in commanding us to “take no anxious thought about the morrow,” because “sufficient for *the day* is the evil thereof.”

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Still you are certain of some duties or trials before you. This sickness, you say, must end in death; or this journey must, if you are in life, be taken to a foreign shore, and last farewells be spoken; or this year you must enter upon this new profession so arduous and so full of risks. And thus each one, with more or less degree of certainty, chalks an imaginary outline of his future course. But supposing all your anticipations to be well-founded, yet, oh! believe that when your day of trial or of duty comes, a Father, if you know Him and trust Him, will come with it. You will have on that dark day a Father's unerring wisdom to guide you, a Father's omnipotent arm to uphold you, a Father's infinite love to soothe you, comfort you, and fully satisfy you. Hear these precious commands and promises:—"fast your confidence, which hath a great reward!" "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which passeth understanding, will keep your mind and heart through Christ Jesus!"

Once more, Do you fear the future, lest you should sin and depart from God as you have done in the past? Trust God, and fear not! For how did you depart from God before? From *want of trust*. You lost confidence in your Father's teaching, and leant on your own understanding, or listened to the voice of strangers; you first lost confidence in your Father's love and goodwill to you, and in His power to satisfy all your wants, and to give whatever was best for you out of His rich and inexhaustible treasures, and then you demanded the portion of your goods, and departed from Him, and ceased to pray to Him or to think of Him at all, but gave your heart, soul, and strength to the creature. But you had no *peace*. You left the cistern of living waters; but the cisterns hewn out by yourselves held no water to assuage your soul's thirst. You found it to be "an evil and a bitter thing" to forsake God. Hear, then, His invitation on the first day of a new year: "Return to the Lord thy God!" Arise, and go to thy Father; "abide" with Him; and never more lose thy confidence in Him as thy strength, thy peace, thy life! Trust His mercy to pardon the past; His grace to help in the present; and His love to fill up thy being at all times. "Fear not: I am with thee: I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness!" Your only strength and safety are in God. Daily seek Him, daily trust Him, and you will daily serve Him.

But perhaps you fear the future lest you should not "redeem the time" as you ought to do to the glory of God? Trust God, and fear not! Lost time is a sad and oppressive thought to the child of God. What might he have done! What might he have been! How might he have improved his talents, and cultivated his spirit, and done good to relations, friends, neighbours, and to the world, had he only redeemed days, hours, minutes, which have

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been spent in sloth or folly! And not one second can be restored. Shall the future be a similar record to the past? You fear to think of it! But be assured that till the last hour of the best spent life, you will need the atoning blood of Jesus for your innumerable shortcomings as a miserable sinner. The very "light of life" which enables you to know and rejoice in Jesus, will enable you also, in proportion as it burns brightly, to know and to mourn over yourselves. But while there is cause for earnest thoughtfulness about coming time, as a talent to be improved for your own good and God's glory, there is no cause for unbelieving fear, for such "fear hath torment." God does not give you a *year* to spend; He gives you but a day; nay, not even that, but only the present moment. He divides the talent of time into minutes, fractions, and says to you, "Employ this one for me." Therefore do not concern yourself with what is not yours; but as each day or hour comes, trust God! He is not a hard master, reaping where He does not sow; but is a Father sowing in you, and by you, in order that you, as well as Himself, might reap so that "both sower and reaper might rejoice together." Trust Him for always pointing out to you the path of duty, so that, as a wayfarer, you will never err. Be assured, that when the moment comes in which you must take any step, He will, by some voice in His Word or providence, say to you, "This is the way, walk ye in it!" Be assured, also, that amidst many things undone, or ill done by you, He will still so help you, if sincere, to labour in His cause here, and to improve your time and talents, as to be able hereafter to say, even to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "In the name of the Lord, then, let us lift up our banners!" Enter upon the labours and duties of the year with joy! Art thou not a fellow labourer with thy brother saints and angels, yea, even with thy God? Doth not that omnipotent Spirit of light and love, who uniteth all in one, and who hath led the Church of Christ from grace to glory, dwell in thee? Wherefore, then, dost thou dishonour God and His word by unbelieving fear?

Finally, the experience of the past may strengthen your faith in God for the future. You have never trusted Him in vain. He has never failed you in time of need. You have always found His *strength* sufficient to uphold you, and His *wisdom* able to arrange for you, and His *love* inexhaustible in supplying your manifold wants. Ah! had you foreseen, years ago, all the past journey, so often dark and perplexing, which you have since pursued; and also all the duties which have successively claimed your energies for their performance; and all the trials, so many, so varied, which you have had to endure; would you not have sunk down in despair before the spectacle? But you did *not* foresee what is now past. God in mercy concealed it from you, as He does what is now future. And therefore you did not then, as you cannot now, despair. The Lord *has* hitherto helped you, and led you through the wilderness, and held you up, and kept you from falling; and so it is that both in your inward and outward state, you *are* this day a monument of His power, mercy, patience, grace!



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And now, in peace of heart, say with Paul, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, *which* is in Christ Jesus our Lord!" Lord, it is enough! Never separated from Thyself for one moment in our existence, here or anywhere, we can never be separated from the chief object of our affections, from Him who is the fulness of our whole being, the never-failing source of our blessedness and joy. Believing in Thee our Father, we enter another year, and advance along our endless journey, not knowing what a day or an hour may bring forth; but knowing this, as all we care to know, that during every day and hour we are "continually with Thee." A long life on earth may be ours, but neither its labours nor its cares, its temptations nor its trials, shall be able to destroy our peace, because unable to separate us from Thy love. Thy love will give life to every duty, deliverance from every temptation, guidance in every perplexity, and comfort in every trial. Death may come, in what form or in what circumstances, how soon or how late, we cannot tell; but we fear no evil, however dark its shadow, for "*Thou* art with us." Eternity must come, and may come to us ere the year ends. But whatever things beyond the grave are hidden from us, Thou Thyself, our Father, art revealed! We know Thee, and this is life eternal!

### ADVICES ON ENTERING A NEW YEAR.

1. Let a short portion of time be spent each day this year in private prayer, in reading God's Word, and, if possible, some devotional book.
2. Let it be the great work of the year to become better acquainted personally with Jesus Christ as the living and ever-present Friend, Brother, and Saviour.
3. Endeavour to concentrate your efforts to do good upon some definite unselfish work in your family or out of it, which may help others, as it certainly must help yourself.
4. In all things try to live more towards God, seeking His approval of your inner and outer life. The less you talk about yourself or your doings before men, the better for yourself and for them.
5. Aim this year at being a peacemaker between professing Christians; to allay disputes, and to heal breaches among friends and relations; and to make men respect and esteem each other more.
6. Do not leave behind you in the old year guilt unpardoned, but believe in Jesus for the remission of sins; nor enter a new year with sin loved and cherished, but accept of and rely upon His Spirit to sanctify you. Begin the year without enmity to any man on earth, "forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, even so do ye."



7. If you are the head of the house, resolve to read a portion of God's Word once a-day at least to the family; and either read or offer up, always with them, a short but hearty prayer.

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8. Endeavour to keep an account of your income and expenditure, that you may be able to live justly and generously. Give what you can to assist poor relatives, and poor Christians, and the Church of Christ. Try this one year to tax yourself ten per cent, on your free income for such purposes.

Learn to do these things, and many more will the Lord teach thee to know and do; and may the God of love and peace be with thee!

### THE CLOSE OF A YEAR.

“Remember all the way the Lord hath led thee” during the past year.

REMEMBER HIS MERCIES.—Calmly review, as far as you can, what God has given you these bygone months.

Have you been blessed with *bodily* health? If so, consider what a gift it is to be spared the tortures some endure: the restless, feverish nights; the long weary days; the unceasing pain; the no-hope of relief in this world.

Have you been blessed with *mental* health? If so, think of the mercy of not having been visited with insanity, or of having been freed from the suffering of even mental depression, so touchingly described by the poet as

“A grief without a sigh, void, dark, and drear,  
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassion'd grief,  
That finds no natural outlet, no relief,  
To word, or sigh, or tear;”

Think of the mercy of having been able to *enjoy* God's beautiful world, and to feel the life in its scenery, its music, and its blue sky, during the summer that has passed, as you walked along the sea-shore, among the woods, across the green fields, up the glen, over the moorlands, or gazed on the glorious landscape from the windy summits of the old hills. Health of body and of mind!—Oh, common, most blessed, yet, alas! how often unnoticed, gifts of God!

Have you received other mercies connected with your *temporal* well-being? Perhaps at the beginning of the year (as at the beginning, maybe, of many a year before) things looked very dark for you and yours. Yet “hitherto” God has helped you. You may never have had more light on your path than what enabled you to take the next step with safety, but that light has never failed you. God has been pleased thus to discipline many of His people. You may, possibly, remember also peculiar deliverances:—from sickness; from money difficulties; from bodily dangers; with unexpected additions to your means of comfort and of usefulness.



Again, call to remembrance your *social* mercies, which have come more indirectly through others. Think of the relations and friends who have been spared to you! Begin with your dearest, and pass on from those to others less closely allied, but still most valued, and number them all, *if you can*. Do any remain whom death threatened to remove during the past year? Have any, have many, been a comfort to you? Have your anxieties regarding the temporal or spiritual well-being of others been lessened? Have beloved ones been given to you during the year—such as a wife, a husband, or a child? If God hath led you in this way during the past year, it ought indeed to be remembered!

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And if any of those Christian friends have fallen asleep in Jesus, then it is a great mercy to know most certainly that they are your friends still, and your *best* friends too; and you should thank God for the happiness which they now enjoy, and which you hope to share with them.

But you have other mercies to remember besides these. Surely much has been done for your spiritual good by your Father in heaven. He has shewn patience, forbearance, and long-suffering towards you; and has been teaching you during these past months by faithful ministers or faithful friends; and has been striving within you to bring you to Himself, and to keep you there. Have you enjoyed no peace in believing, nor gained any victories over self and sin? Have you possessed no more calm and habitual fellowship with God? Have you done no good? Has prayer neither been offered in truth, nor answered in love? Has all been fruitless and dead? Oh, let us beware of the falsehood of denying spiritual mercies bestowed on us by God! "If I should say I know Him *not*, I should be a liar like unto you," said our Lord. The graces of the Spirit, the least of them, are the earnest of eternal good, the assurances of enjoying the whole fulness of God.

BUT YOU HAVE SORROWS TO REMEMBER. Alas! we are in little danger of forgetting these. The sunny days may come and go unheeded, but the dark ones are all registered. We cannot forget that "the Lord taketh away;" but why do we not as vividly remember that the same Lord "*giveth*" and that in both cases we have equal cause, did we only see it, to exclaim, "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" I ask not what these sorrows have been. Enough that they are very real to you, or to those who are bound up with you in the bundle of life. It was a weary time to you in the wilderness, and it is well to remember that portion of the way in which you have been led, which was as a dark valley and shadow of death.

AND WHAT OF SIN? That is what makes it so hard for us to remember the past journey. The backslidings and falls in the way; the careless straggling behind; the lazy resting-places; the slow progress; the careless devotions; the misspent days of the Lord; the opportunities lost of doing good to others, or of receiving good ourselves, through procrastination, sloth, and indifference; the manifestation of our unloving and selfish spirit towards our brother, in envy, bad temper, backbiting, jealousy, or unguarded speech; the little done or given for God's work on earth, in charity to the poor, or to "our own flesh" who required assistance;—the everything, in short, which deters memory from looking steadily at what it would if it could blot out for ever from its records! Yet it is of great importance that this portion of the journey should be remembered; although it is not the way in which God led us, but which we chose for ourselves in our ignorance and self-will. Ponder it well! Recall what your

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conduct has been in avoiding temptation; how you have made use of the means of grace; the days in which you may have lived without God, or if you prayed to Him, when you did so as a form, without any real faith or love; the days in which you have been so presumptuous as to live without “faith in the Son of God,” and to meet trials, temptations, and duties, without seeking strength from the Holy Spirit; the Sundays that have come and gone without having been improved, and sermons heard in vain, and public worship joined in outwardly only, without reality; the little help, or possibly great discouragement given to Christian ministers and Christian members by your very coldness; the time lost never to be recalled, and of all that could have been done for the ignorant, the afflicted, the wicked, the sick and dying, for friends and relations, which has been left undone, and never can be done in the other world. Think of what your Master has said, who is to judge you—that “herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit”—that “if any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross *daily*, and follow me”—that “many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? hast thou not taught in our streets? have we not done many wonderful works in thy name? and I will say unto them, I know you not; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.”—think of this *now*, for think of it one day you must: and if you do so with any degree of truthfulness, I am sure you cannot enter another year without pouring out your heart in humble confession, and laying down your burthen at the foot of the cross, crying out, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, and according to thy tender mercies blot out all my transgressions!”

Allow me now to put what I have to say in a practical form:—

1. When you review your *mercies*, consider how you are affected by them. It is easy, I know, to say, and to say so far truly, “Thank God for them!” Yet the whole spirit in which they are possessed may be intensely selfish. We may have been seeking our life in them to the very exclusion of God from our hearts, forgetting that “a man’s life,” says our Lord, “consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” What things? Any creature things whatever! To make these our *life*, that is, our happiness, or to esteem them as essential to our happiness, is, as our Lord adds, for a man “to lay up treasures for himself, and not to be rich towards God.” This is that “covetousness which is idolatry,”—the worship of *Self*, through what ministers to Self.

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2. As you remember your *sorrows*, remember not only how you were sustained and comforted under them, but, what is of incomparably more importance, consider how far you have been realising God's purpose in sending them. That purpose may have been to perfect you by trial; or to prove your loyalty to Him; or to *prevent* evil in yourselves and others. But never forget that the lesson of all lessons is, that we or others should find *life*, and life eternal—that is, as I have said, life in the knowledge and in the love of God, which will satisfy and endure for ever; or, if this is already found by us, that we should possess it “more abundantly.” Now, whatever tends to make us realise that what we often call and think to be “our life” is yet no life—that money, friends, or earthly enjoyments cannot fill the immortal soul, or be its portion for ever;—whatever awakes us from this dream and dispels the delusion, and makes us know the excellence and reality of true life in God, must be a blessing of the highest and richest kind. Yet what has such a tendency to do all this as sorrow, and the very trials which we so much deplore? The pain is no doubt great—often agony—a very cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye; but the gain intended by the operation is incalculable and endless. Yet, what if all the good is lost through our blindness, ignorance, hardness of heart, pride, self-will, and unbelief? Alas! alas! if we too “go away sorrowful” from Christ when He threatens to take away our “much riches,” though He does so in order only through this very discipline to induce us to follow Himself, and by the cross to gain life eternal! Alas! when it can be said of us, “Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day; that ye might know that I am the Lord your God.” And what is their punishment? “They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward. *Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more!*” What a real loss of friends would this be! For by separating ourselves through unbelief from Christ, we thereby for ever separate ourselves from our friends in Christ, if they are with Him!

Ye who have experienced comfort from good in affliction, bless God! “O Lord, my strength, my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction!” “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” Let the remembrance of the past, also, strengthen your faith for the future. As you “let your requests be made known to God with prayers and supplication,” do not forget the “*thanksgiving*” for this will help you henceforth to “be careful for nothing.” He who has led you out of Egypt, through “the depths,” and across the desert, will never leave you nor forsake you.

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3. As you remember your *sins*, consider how very ignorant you are of their number or their heinousness. But if you could enumerate each sinful thought, word, and action committed during the past year and during your past life, there is something in you *worse than sins*, and that is *sin itself, the evil heart*, the wrong mind, out of which sins proceed; for the corrupt tree is worse than any definite quantity of fruit which it has produced; the ever-flowing bitter fountain is worse than any definite quantity of water which has come from it. But whatever you have been or done in time past, what do you intend to be and to do *now*? Is it your intention to continue in sin? However dreadful the thought is, yet many, if such is your real intention, will sympathise with you. For many *do* continue in sin, and resolve to do so, for the present at least. Will you, then, permit the year to close, and with an unconcerned eye behold all its sin and sins added to those of other impenitent years, finally sealed up for judgment? How will you then stand the reading of your autobiography? Read over any page now, peruse the life of any day, and ask, Has this been the life of one who believes there is a God to whom he is responsible? Point out one solitary proof, and such as you think Christ will accept, in all these twelve chapters of the past year, of a heart which loved God, or had one mark of a sincere though an imperfect follower of Jesus Christ. And if you cannot do so, will you permit the volume to close for ever without a cry for mercy, without imploring God to wipe out or destroy in the atoning blood of Jesus these pages, which cry "Guilty" in every line? Will you not resolve rather, through the grace given to every honest man who wishes it, to begin and write a new volume, which shall witness to a changed life, and be inscribed no longer with all that is selfish, and of the earth earthy—"without God or Christ in the world." Let it be so, I beseech of you, my reader. Have done, now and for ever, with this shocking *mutiny* against your God. End the weary, shameful strife. Be, then, at peace with God, and remember that for *you*, if you believe in Jesus, there is free pardon, restoration to favour, a new heart, a new life, which is now life eternal.

And for you who have long given up sin as a master—who know that while the "flesh wars against the spirit, the spirit wars against the flesh," thank God and take courage! "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Hear the words of our invincible Leader, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world;" "Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world."

This year we may die. Let this mere possibility lead us to redeem with greater earnestness what remains of life to the service of our God; so that when the next year dawns upon this world it will find us, if we are in the other world, remembering our mercies before God's throne, our sorrows for ever vanished, and our sins for ever blotted out; but that if we are still here, it will see us living more worthy of our mercies, finding true good in our sorrows, and obtaining the victory over our sins!