

THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS.

TWENTY-FOUR SERMONS

DOCTRINAL, EXPERIMENTAL, AND PRACTICAL,

ON

IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

BY

CHARLES GORDELIER.

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PREFACE.

THESE Sermons were preached, during the course of seven years of my ministry in the City and the East of London, and are arranged chronologically. Their publication was commenced in the hope that, with the Lord's help and blessing, they might prove useful to some of Zion's children, "the living in Jerusalem;" and now being favoured with seeing the volume completed, I desire to dedicate it to those who love the truth as it is in Jesus, and know by heart-felt experience its life, light, and power. As a literary production, I am sensible it contains many defects, but I shall hope not to be made an offender for a word by those who read for spiritual profit. I cannot but express my devout gratitude and unfeigned thanks for the Lord's condescension in owning this feeble effort; for, judging from the numerous intimations which I have received from all parts of the country, during the issue of the work in Parts, the word thus sent forth has been much blessed in edifying, refreshing, and comforting many of his "hidden ones," particularly in congregations destitute of the ministry, and also to invalids, the aged, and others unable to reach the public sanctuary.

The reader will perceive that most of these sermons possess a decided doctrinal tone, as well as that they are experimentally treated. Modern taste, it is true, is quite averse to this old-fashioned mode of preaching; but doctrinal truth is essentially important to the believer in

Jesus; it is the food of living souls, and forms the basis of genuine experience; indeed the lack of it may be considered as the cause of so much of the ignorance, instability, and flimsiness we see in religious professors. I have, therefore, without attempting complete statements of theological topics, unreservedly declared those distinguishing truths which, in our day, are so little mentioned and so much despised. I have not shrunk from avowing my firm belief in the true and proper doctrine of our Lord's Eternal Sonship. I have also strenuously asserted the spiritual nature of real religion, and the necessity of a divine revelation for a true knowledge of Jesus Christ. And, believing that experience is the criterion of truth, I have aimed to set it forth as derived from my own exercises of thought and feeling; being convinced that if a minister of truth wishes to benefit the minds and hearts of others, he must be guided chiefly by that which he finds most beneficial to himself; and if in any measure I have been made useful in the church by means of these sermons, to God be all the praise. To extol the riches of his grace, to exalt Christ, to crown him Lord of all, and to build up believers in the faith, is my one aim and all my desire in attempting to serve the cause of Truth.

CHARLES GORDELIER.

LONDON, 13, STEPNEY GREEN,
October, 1866.

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ERRATA.

Sermon 18, page 16 of Part 5, in the heading, the date should be *September*, not *October*.

Sermon 19, page 41, top line, read, before *men*.

Sermon 20, page 50, in the heading, the date should be the *17th December*.

GOD'S CHILDREN FED BY THEIR FATHER'S HAND.

A SERMON,
BY CHARLES GORDELIER,

PREACHED AT NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL, LONDON,

On Lord's Day Afternoon, October 14th, 1860.

"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—Ps. lxxxi. 1.

WHEN a soul has been quickened by divine grace, born again of the Spirit, such an one feels the eyes of his understanding are enlightened,—he sees things in a new light. The Bible, which before was to him a sealed book, he now perceives to be a revelation of the mind of God towards him; he finds there revealed the way in which a sinner may be saved; how that God sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to take into personal union with himself our nature, in which he made an atonement to God's law and justice for our sins. He gave himself for us; his sacrifice has been accepted. Sinners of every class and clime may now approach the Divine Majesty at the throne of grace through the exalted Mediator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and now mankind is everywhere called upon to repent and to believe the gospel. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved;" and the promise is to those who, having been drawn by the Father, leave the world, and have come to Christ for life and salvation, that God will be a Father unto them, and they shall be the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty.

Sons and daughters! What a high and holy privilege is this; to be adopted into God's family; to be called God's children; to call God our Father; to realise this great and glorious fact by faith in Christ. How unspeak-

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able its blessedness; how unspeakable the love of God whence it flows.

Now this adoption into God's family being ratified by the death of Jesus Christ, it follows that every blessing consequent thereon and connected therewith is everlastingly secured to all who are united to him by a true and living faith. "He that believeth on him hath everlasting life;" he shall never perish. He that believeth on Jesus, as the Scripture hath said, shall never thirst. He that cometh to Jesus as the Bread of Life shall never hunger.

"The souls once sprinkled with his blood
Possess a life that never dies."

Eternal life being thus assured to every believer, it follows that this life must be continuously supplied from the great fountain of life, Jesus Christ himself; he is the only fountain of spiritual life—only he who created life, and possesses it in himself, can impart it; he only can sustain it, he only can renew it when the soul is weak and fainting. This is a great fundamental truth in which every believer should be well grounded, and the inquiry is no less important: "Am I a believer in Christ? Am I a child of God? Do I know and do his will? Am I really living by faith on the Son of God? Am I trusting to his atonement for the free and full pardon of all my sins? Am I, day by day, depending upon him for all I need? Am I looking to his righteousness for the clothing of my naked soul?" If so, then the words of the text will help us to understand how this life in Christ, of which I have been speaking, is supplied and continued to the soul, I mean such who have fled to Christ as the only refuge set before them in the gospel—the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

You will perceive that the text and its connection refer to the chosen people of God, the Israelites of old; the Psalmist commences with a solemn exhortation to praise God and to solemnise the Passover. He then introduces God as speaking and expostulating with his people on account of their idolatry, and repeated departures from him as the fountain of living water; yet, notwithstanding, God treats them as a compassionate father,—treats them as hungry, starving children, who have wandered far and wide from him; they are invited to come to him, and he most lovingly calls upon them to look to

him for all they want, and says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

The meaning of the text is undoubtedly spiritual, and can only be so understood by those who are spiritually discerned. The words are spoken to us as children, or rather as babes,—babes in Christ. If we are willing to look at ourselves as such, then, let us consider :

I. The exhortation.

II. The promise.

III. The means.

I. The exhortation: "Open thy mouth." The believer is here called to exercise his own faith, that faith which is of the operation of the Holy Ghost. This the believer must exercise, or his faith will neither grow nor be strengthened; he must feel his own dependence upon God for the supply of all his needs. Like an infant, he must be fed—he cannot feed himself; he must open his mouth—his mental capacity; he must receive his life from the food supplied to him. As it is in nature, so it is in grace; this the believer will do, because he feels his need. He feels hungry; no food can satisfy him but the living word; the divine life can only be maintained as imparted to him. He may have been filled with the world, its pleasures, its sins, but he has not been satisfied; sin and the world have taken away his appetite; he has no relish for the gospel; he is growing weaker and fainter, but when he comes to himself he will say: "I will arise and go to my father; in my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, why should I perish with hunger?" Ah, why? God calls to the poor soul, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Come to your father as a hungry child; I will fill your soul with the bread which cometh down from heaven, which, if a man eat, he will live for ever. Open, then, thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." My hearers, how is it with you? Are you perishing with hunger? Do you want the bread of life, the bread of heaven? Do you feel as a babe, utterly dependent, looking to Christ as your only and all-sufficient good? Do you indeed feel willing to receive food as a helpless infant—to have it supplied as babes are supplied, just when it pleases your heavenly Father, and with the measure he pleases? If so, O bless and praise God for such a condition of mind and heart. The world knows nothing of

this ; only God's children hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are they, for they shall be filled.

If, then, you are a babe in Christ, a child of God, you know what it is to have tasted and handled of the good word of life, you cannot receive any other ; your language is :

" Wealth and honour I disdain ;
Earthly comforts, Lord, are vain ;
These can never satisfy ;
Give me Christ, or else I die."

No, poor soul, you desire to be fed with the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. (1 Pet. ii. 2.) You want to thrive—to live on Christ, and to grow in Christ. Open, then, your mouth—open it wide—let your faith receive a full Christ ; let it be an expanded faith, so that Christ and all his fulness may be received and enjoyed ; so shall you live on Christ now and through all eternity.

But further, did you ever notice a nest of young birds—birds just fledged ? How piteous and imploring they look, all of them with open beaks, gasping for food ; they seem to say, " Feed us, feed us, we perish." These poor birds can neither fly nor walk, they are totally helpless, but they open their beaks, and open them wide too. See how they gasp for the food the parent brings. Have you not seen, too, many times, the infant gasping, as it were, to receive the breast ? Look at its little mouth, it is open wide. So it is with the soul—it sees that none but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. Are any of you gasping for heavenly food, the sincere milk of the word ? You shall have it ; Christ has promised to supply it : " The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. He will satisfy thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's."

II. The promise:—" I will fill it." God is the promiser ; he undertakes to fill the soul. Yes, God who has quickened the soul will certainly keep it alive. None can keep alive his own soul ; this is what God himself undertakes, it is God's work. He has engaged to supply the soul with all its wants ; he that began the good work of divine grace in the soul will carry it on till the day of Jesus Christ. " No good thing will he withhold from them who walk

uprightly"—those who are looking to him and depending on him; they shall be filled. These are Christ's own words; 'tis he who restores the fainting soul. If you faint through weariness in his ways, will he plead against you with his great power? No, he will put strength into you; he will fill your mouth with arguments; he will fill your mouth with the heavenly treasure of his word; he will refresh your spirit with suitable provision from his word, with those exceeding great and precious promises which he has so abundantly stored up for every time of need.

Are you troubled, greatly distressed, sunk in the depths of despondency and gloom? yet remember, God will not forsake you. You may not see his hand, still his hand shall supply your every need. What if you are not supplied day by day—from hand to mouth; it may be that God wills it otherwise. Think how Elijah was supplied; in the strength of one meal did he make a journey of six weeks. God knew what Elijah had to do, and so gave him strength for all that time from one single meal. Is anything too hard for the Lord? No. What is there that God cannot do for his people? He will time every blessing for them exactly as they may want it; and he will adapt them according to his infinite wisdom from that fulness which is in Christ Jesus. Yes, every hungry, gasping soul is supplied, not only according to its faith, but according to its actual need. Our heavenly Father takes care of all his children; none fall short of food, all are well provided for. The hungry soul has an open mouth—I mean, an open faith, an expectant faith, a waiting faith; it receives gladly the communications of grace; it lives and thrives upon the truth as it is in Jesus. "Bread of heaven," says the soul, "feed me now and evermore."

Again, God fills the open mouth of the soul with more discoveries of himself as the all-sufficient good; it feels and acknowledges every day:

"In Christ my treasure's all contain'd;
By him my feeble soul's sustain'd;
From him I all things do receive;
Through him my soul does daily live."

He makes the believer more acquainted with the realities of divine truth, the preciousness of the Redeemer, the sweetness of the promises, the unction of the Holy

Spirit; yea, he fills the hungry soul with good things, but the rich he sends empty away. He fills the seeking soul with all joy and peace in believing, that it may "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." He fills the soul with the "fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus unto his glory and praise."

I have said God fills the believer's open mouth, (I mean the hungry desire, the hungry faith,) with the preciousness of the Redeemer. Yes, he that lives on Christ lives on a full Christ; with whom there is plenteous redemption; he feeds on Christ all through the way of his pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan; he feeds on Christ as his Mediator, through whom he approaches his Father God at the throne of grace; his thoughts dwell in delight on this glorious fact; his heart abounds in joy and peace, as he realizes that the Lord Jesus is the Way to the Father, the Truth of the gospel, and the Life of his soul; his desire is to the remembrance of his name; his heart is full of love and adoration of the dear Redeemer; his mouth is filled with praise to him as the God-man, Christ Jesus; his mouth is filled with humble, earnest, and continuous prayer to him as the Christ who is over all, God blessed for evermore. He cannot live a day, no, not an hour, without an experimental knowledge of these great truths; he finds religion to be a reality—it is heart-work, and where there is no heart-work there is no open mouth to God; but the living soul is filled with Christ as the hope of glory. Christ is made unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Thus the soul is filled with the preciousness of the Redeemer in all that can be known of his Person, work, and character; it is filled with the fulness of him who filleth all in all.

III. The means. I have spoken to you of what it is to open the mouth, and told you something of what is implied by God filling it; now we are to consider in what way God fills the mouth of him who is spiritually hungry.

1st. By the direct communication of his own Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The soul is renewed by the Holy Ghost, is born again, it is a new creation. It is not only quickened, but is sustained by the immediate operations and influences of God the Holy Ghost. Its life is one, I may say, of heavenly inspiration; there is no real peace, consolation,

holiness, or joy, with which the soul can be filled but what is the direct result of the Holy Spirit's work.

2nd. God fills the hungry open mouth of the seeking soul with heavenly food from the treasury of his own word—that blessed book which we call the Bible. This book is one of the great means by which God fills his people: "All thy people shall be taught of God." Taught by his word, which is their guide, their rule of life; it is the map of their journey through the wilderness; it is the great magazine of heavenly ammunition, from which they are furnished to fight the great enemy of souls; it is the great store-house of all the promises which God speaks to his people—and tells of the fulness which is in Christ. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and applies them with unction and power to the soul. The word without the Spirit's application to the heart is but of small value; it may be of some use to the understanding, but if the understanding only is enlightened, the heart is left poor and dry; mere knowledge of God's word is comparatively of little use; we must have something more, we must have power; there must be influence:

"True religion's more than notion,
Something must be known and felt."

Yes, God's word is only a means, a channel of communication; it is, nevertheless, a choice means; we cannot value it too highly, we cannot know enough of it, but we must look upon it only as a means by which God fills the mouth, the faith, of the believer. He that is hungry will not make too much of the means by which he is fed; he will prize it most highly, but he will rejoice more in the food by which he is fed, and most of all in God his Father, who giveth every good and perfect gift for him richly to enjoy.

3rd. Prayer is also one of the means by which the soul is filled. I said just now the Christian's life was one of inspiration, an infusion of heavenly power and life by which the soul is animated and sustained, a breathing in, a drawing in, of life by the very act. So, also, it is one of breathing out, the soul breathing out to God in prayer is the soul opening its mouth that God may fill it; the soul feels its need of mercy, it prays for it; God gives it. The soul wanders from God, mourns the loss of light, it feels the burden of guilt; it opens its mouth in prayer for restoring grace, it opens its mouth wide for the joy of his

salvation to be restored, and it is done; "For as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." He meets with his returning children, he kills for them the fatted calf, he feeds them with his choicest meat. Prayer, then, becomes a means by which the soul is fed; it shows life within; it is the channel by which the soul receives renewing life from Christ, and he who is not much in prayer cannot be said to have much life; he only exists. Believer, God calls upon you to open your mouth wide; be then much in prayer. Surely, if believers felt their need, and knew how much God would bestow, they never would go on in that crawling life which we too often see. Why are they not more happy in Christ? Why are they not more useful for God? Because there is so little divine animation in them. They are alive and lively for themselves, for their own profit, for their own pleasure, for their own objects; but O, for God, how dull, how slow they are. If there be such an one present, pray for quickening grace; pray earnestly, pray always; open your mouth wide—God is waiting to fill it.

4th. Praise is also another means by which God fills the soul with divine life. He that is much in prayer will also be much in praise. Prayer brings every blessing from above, and the soul returns its praise for the good it receives. Not only so, the believer praises God for his loving-kindness and truth; for the majesty of his glory, his excellences of character and works. He praises God for the redemption provided in Christ, and is filled and strengthened in the contemplation of divine truth, to which praise to God leads the soul. Praising God is a means of divine life.

5th. The ministry of the word is another means which God employs to fill the soul. "That the soul be without knowledge is not good;" no, it would starve. As it is in the earthly life, so it is in the spiritual; we cannot all prepare the food we eat. So God has provided the ministry of his word, by which his children shall be fed. They are to be fed with knowledge and understanding—God's word; his truth is the material the servants of God are to use in dispensing the word of life; but they are only the means by which God fills the soul. Remember this, my hearers; look not for too much from the minister; look to Jesus Christ, expecting, through him, to be supplied. See, the hungry babe is not satisfied with the

mere breast ; it is the milk which it affords that it seeks ; nothing short of that will satisfy its craving appetite. So is it with the child fed with a spoon ; the spoon is used for conveying the food, it is true ; but if the spoon were gold, it would be of no use to the child without the food ; the instrument is nothing of itself. The soul wants food. Ministers are nothing in themselves but empty vessels. This they often feel, and perhaps you sometimes may have found it so in hearing ; but blame not the instrument if you are not fed. Perhaps you are looking at the instrument instead of looking higher ; look to Christ ; pray for your minister, and you shall not be disappointed.

6th. Afflictions and trials are also means of grace to the soul—Hezekiah, David, Job to wit : “ O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit ; so wilt thou recover me and make me to live.” (Isa. xxxviii. 16.) See also Ps. lxxx. 5, where God is said “ to feed his people with the bread of tears, and to give them tears to drink in great measure.” Look, then, upon difficulties, trials, crosses, losses, poverty, bereavements, as a part of those means through which God will supply your spiritual life. You have been asking him to make you more acquainted with his salvation, to grow more in grace, to know more of Christ, of his love, and this is the method the Lord takes ; it may be a rough way, but you will find it to be a right one ; the oak thrives none the worse for being shaken with the storm, and you will not be shaken more than you are able to bear, nor longer than is needful for your good ; indeed, we have often reason to say,

“ Blest is the sorrow, kind the storm,
That drives us nearer home.”

It is a good thing that the heart be established in grace, not with divers meats or fancies ; afflictions and trials feed and establish the soul in the divine life far more truly, though not so pleasantly, than the sunshine of prosperity.

To conclude, what shall we say to these things ? We have attempted to show you that God is a Father ; that he has a family of children ; that he supplies them with food. He calls them to him that they may be fed—to open their mouth wide and he will fill it. He is no niggardly Father ; he is rich in mercy to all who call upon him in truth ; he will make all grace to abound towards

them in Christ Jesus; he will feed them with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock will he satisfy them. He is able to do exceeding above all we can ask or think; he is waiting to be gracious. His language is to all and each of his children, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "Open it in prayer, open it for food, I will fill it with substance, the bread of God. You shall know more of me as your Father; you shall know more of Jesus Christ; you shall know more of my Spirit's influence; you shall be fat and flourishing in my courts; you shall live for ever in my presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at my right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore."

Now, let me ask myself, and each of you ask yourselves, Am I a child of God? Do I look upon myself as a babe in Christ; as dependent and waiting to be fed; content to be fed as an infant, with just such means as God may choose? Or am I looking too much to means, and not enough to Christ? O, remember, the best of means without the grace of the means, are poor barren things; a dry breast is of no use to an infant; no, nor yet an empty spoon to a child. O, for grace to look at things in their right light; means as only means. Ministers and ordinances are nothing of themselves, but Christ is all; he is all in all. Then let us look to Christ as the fountain-head of all supplies; let us come to his fulness just as we are, empty, hungry, and dependent. He invites us to come; he knows that without him we are starving. Let us, then, come to him just as we are, and open all our case before him, and say,

"Just as I am, without one plea,
Save that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

[This was the Author's second sermon in public; it was printed in the "Penny Pulpit" at the suggestion of a ministerial friend and the proprietor of that work, who were both present when it was preached. The Author has been credibly informed that this sermon and five others, preached at New Broad Street Chapel, and which appeared in the same publication, have been translated into the Welsh language, and have been read to congregations in the Principality.]

THE BELIEVER'S MOUTH CLOSED BY FALLING INTO SIN.

A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER,

PREACHED AT NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL, LONDON,

On Lord's Day Afternoon, November 11th, 1860.

"O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."—PSALM li. 15.

SOME of you may, perhaps, remember that on this day month I addressed you from the words of the 81st Psalm, 10th verse: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." I then endeavoured to explain that in calling upon his children to open their mouth wide, God called upon them to exercise and fully expand their faith in him, and receive thereby those blessings he was ready to bestow. This afternoon we have, on the other hand, the believer calling upon God to unfasten his lips, so that with an open mouth he might show forth the praises of God.

To praise God is certainly the duty, the privilege, and the happiness of the believer. Praising God is the blissful employment of all the inhabitants of heaven. Archangels, cherubim, and seraphim are for ever sounding his lofty praise; before him these mysterious, created beings are perpetually veiling their faces and saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory." The spirits of just men made perfect by the righteousness of Christ, now before the throne, are for ever singing the high praises of him who hath redeemed them by his blood. Praise, too, is the business of the saints on earth; the people whom God hath formed for himself, they shall show forth his praise; "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion." To praise God is both the desire and the aim of all who have been called out of darkness into his marvellous light.

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But what is praise? This is important to know. We read, "All thy works praise thee." This is said by David himself, when speaking of the works of God. Again he says, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High." "Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is excellent." And again: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." (Psalms l., xcii., and cxlviii.) Praise is a confession and acknowledgment of the wonderful excellences of God; it is a feeling of admiration in the heart, and gratefully expressing it by the tongue. Praising God is expressing admiration of his works in creation, in providence, and in the manifold operations of his grace in the hearts of his people. The contemplation of God's works, his truth, and his loving-kindness leads the devout soul to find his only happiness in singing to the honour of his name, and in making his praise glorious.

The psalmist, David, king of Israel, was one who well understood the subject of which we have been speaking; his psalms abound with expressions of praise in every conceivable form, and he is well called the sweet psalmist of Israel. How much he enjoyed and valued praise, may easily be known by reading the psalms in which he speaks of being deprived from attending the house of God, either by affliction, distance, or persecution. We know his heart; it was he who said, "I will praise the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth." But ah, poor David, it was not always so; he could not always praise. When his soul was in prison, a spiritual prison, his prayer was: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name;" and, if we are rightly informed as to the occasion of the psalm whence we have taken the text, we can easily perceive *why it is, how it is, and when it is* that a Christian man cannot praise God.

David appears in the psalm before us as an humble suppliant for that mercy which he had so disregarded and abused; he whose province it was to administer justice, and protect the innocent, forfeited all claim to his character as a man of honour and as a king over that nation who were chosen to be a holy nation, a peculiar people, the people which God had chosen for himself, of whom he said: "They shall show forth my praise," and in which

David, their king, was to take the lead. By the sad occasion, which is but too well known, David not only brought dishonour on himself and dishonour on the nation, but dishonour on the cause of God; not only so, he deeply wounded his own conscience; he lost the light of God's countenance; he wofully felt what an evil and bitter thing it was to depart from the living God; and now, "robed with sackcloth, and crowned with ashes," he entreats for mercy, laments the corruption of his nature, prays for pardoning and cleansing grace, and to be restored to former favour.

In the text before us we have a prayer that the lips may be opened, so that the mouth may be set at liberty; implying, of course, that the lips are closed. Sin, in the regenerate heart, is ever followed by guilt, sorrow, and shame; and if by penitence, with grief. Grief, especially when accompanied by remorse, shuts up the soul in the blackness of its own prison, and deprives it of the power of looking for divine aid. This the quickened soul feels to be a loss more than it can sustain; not to praise God! not able to look up! to feel itself weak, and yet not able to look to the strong for strength. Oh, sin! what hast thou done? Thou hast taken away my hope; my hope, my honour are laid low in the dust. I now no longer can speak the praises of him whose mercies and goodness have followed me all the days of my life. But, as if the soul had all at once come to itself, it resolves and says: "I will yet pray for pardon; I will pray to God as when I first sought his forgiving love; I will pray that he may remove his stroke from me, for, like Cain, I feel my punishment is greater than I can bear.

In the text there is to be observed what is called a metonymy of speech, *i.e.*, the effect is spoken of for the cause; the lips are asked to be opened, meaning the heart, the affections; the fact being, if the heart is open—free—the lips are so too; on the contrary, if the heart—the feelings—are shut up, so are the lips. David, in thus asking for the effect to be produced, and with the best aim, asks also for the cause—namely, his heart to be set at liberty; he has sinned, he wants pardon, peace, joy; and till he has this realised, there can be no song of praise from him. To praise God is his main object in asking for his lips to be unclosed; it has always been his delight; but now his mouth is closed, he feels a guilty man, and like a guilty

man he has nothing to say. If ever his mouth is opened again, he feels God must do it; hence his prayer: "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

My impression is, from the peculiar language employed, that it is a figure of speech involving an allusion to a mode of punishment which was common in some countries, and most probably in Palestine, (see Ps. xxxix. 1, in the margin;) certainly it was well known in this country, though many years since. The instrument of punishment was called a "brank," literally a bridle or muzzle, made of iron, and employed for keeping closed the mouths of offenders against good morals, especially those who with their tongue had disgraced themselves and annoyed others. At all events, if the "brank" is not here alluded to, the effect in a spiritual point is the same, and I shall look at it in this light. God puts a "brank" upon all who offend against him, and until God removes it, the mouth is not at liberty. God means to punish, but he means to do the offender good notwithstanding; and when he is truly humbled, penitent, and returns with all his heart in earnest prayer, God will then remove the "brank."

Observe, then, I.—*That guilt is a "brank" on the mouth of God's people.*

This I am sure you will not deny; indeed, I am sure you will at once admit it. You know, and I know too, that when we have sinned, we have found it to take away the use of the tongue. Who can praise God with guilt on his conscience? Guilt empties out the heart of all good emotions and feelings. He can't love as he did before, he can't sing as he did before, he can't even pray. O, when a child of God sins, he makes himself a miserable being; he has shut himself out from enjoying the communications of God's favour, his loving-kindness! There is no communion now. Like as when one friend wrongs another, what a shutting up there is of intercourse with each other; there is no freedom of speech, no interchange of kind looks, no hearty greeting of the hand; so it is with the soul and God. It was so with the first man, Adam; before he sinned he was holy, happy, and enjoyed intercourse with God; he loved to hear his voice; and, at God's call, his willing feet ran to meet him in swift obedience; but when he transgressed, O how reversed the scene! God calls, but no answer: "Adam, where art thou?" No

answer. Again: "Adam, where art thou?" No answer. No, his mouth is stopped; Adam is brought guilty before God; guilt was a "brank" upon his lips, he could not speak, he had nothing to say, so he went and hid himself. But was Adam the only man who has hidden himself when God called to him? when he called to him in love, called to him in mercy? O no; there are some of you here, I doubt not, whom God has called and called again, but you have not answered. You have striven to hide yourselves; your mouth has been shut up! Ah! it is sin that has done it. Sin has taken away the use of your tongue.

It was sin, too, that closed the mouth of Zacharias; not sin in its grossest form, as in David's case; nor yet in the form of disobedience, as in Adam's; but it was the sin of unbelief. He had no faith; he could not "take God at his word," and so he was struck dumb for a season. O, my friends, I am afraid there are too many of us who, like him, have found no liberty for the tongue, because of unbelief and doubt. Doubt and unbelief prevent many a soul from praising God. Faith is like a lark—it rises from the earth, and as it soars higher and higher, it sings stronger and stronger; but unbelief—base, blind unbelief—is like a mole, it runs from the light, burrows and buries itself in the earth, knows nothing of praise, never looks up. Unbelief never sung a song in its life. Unbelief, like a "brank," keeps the mouth closed.

But further, self-righteousness will keep a man's mouth shut. Like the man who accepted the invitation to the wedding, but did not accept the wedding garment, what could he say for refusing it? Nothing; he was speechless; he knew the terms, but he refused to submit. Did he think he should pass muster and not be noticed? Vain man! He could talk to his fellow-guests freely enough; but to the king who came in to see his guests not a word could he say; the "brank" of guilt and shame had closed his lips. O how many there are who get into churches and chapels, and talk with their fellow-members so as to pass for Christians, but before God have not a word of praise to utter. They have never submitted to the righteousness of Christ. They cannot put off the old man with his deeds; or they think their own doings and moral worth will save them; they prefer their own method to God's. Alas for them!

" Self-righteous souls on works rely,
And boast their moral dignity ;
But if I lisp a song of praise,
Each note shall echo, grace, free grace."

My hearer, let me ask you if you know anything of the mouth being stopped before God on account of sin, guilt, shame, unbelief, self-righteousness? If you do, you know something of David's experience; shut up as in a prison—put upon "the silent system"—not a word can you speak; not a word dare you speak; but you can feel. Well, blessed be God for that. Though not lively, yet you are alive. You well remember, I dare say, when God quickened your soul. He opened your eyes, your heart, and your mouth too. But now your tongue is silent, your mouth is padlocked, you cannot open it. Sin condemns, conscience accuses; but though the soul is shut up in the prison of his own guilt, he yet sees a glimmer of light shining through the chink of his past experience; he mourns his lonely state; he grieves, but he hopes, and his petition is: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name."

II. Let us observe, THAT THE RENEWED SOUL DEPLORES SIN IN ITSELF.

Nothing can be more sure than that David hated and deplored the sin into which he fell, and which doubtless was the melancholy occasion of this and other psalms being written which bear his name. No man could appeal to the heart-searching God in the way David did if he were not sincere. To doubt this, would be to take away the value of testimony altogether. David sinned; David mourned; David repented; David prayed; David was reclaimed; and, blessed be God, David again praised. Now, to make a man feel the sinfulness of sin, it must be obvious that he could not go on in a sinful course and be in the enjoyment of God's presence at the same time. No man has ever found it so, nor ever will. It is utterly impossible that it should be so in the very nature of things. We are called from sin to holiness: "Be ye holy," saith God, "for I am holy." God hates sin; so should we. If we love God, how can we love sin? Christ hath no fellowship with Belial. Sin is an enemy to God and to the soul of man. Then to make a man feel the hatefulness of sin, he must be made to feel its bitterness, its awful consequences; he must be made to feel that God is of pure

eyes; that he cannot look upon iniquity. But more than this, he must know something of God's character, of his love, of his mercy. If he has tasted something of God's grace, of the preciousness of Christ, and reflected on what his ransom cost the Saviour, he will then feel and know something of the hatefulness of sin. His language will be, not "O, what shall I suffer!" but, "O, what have I done!" Not so much dreading the consequences of sin, but shocked more because of having committed it against God and his own conscience; of having grieved the Spirit, and of its having put him out of the power to enjoy the presence of God till he has been rebuked, chastened, and punished. Neither can there be any restoration of peace, joy, freedom of spirit, or freedom of speech, till God has unlocked his lips, taken the "brank" off his lips; till then he cannot attempt to praise God. His ear must be reassured of God's loving-kindness, his heart must be set at happy liberty, for it is impossible for the regenerate man to speak *of* God, *for* God, or *to* God, if his conscience is upbraiding him. "O, sin," says the soul, "how it has destroyed me; how it has withered my affections, blighted my hopes, clouded my sun, darkened my prospect! O, sin, thou hast taken away my evidences; I now hate thee with a perfect hatred. O, woe is me; if grace prevent not, I am undone. O, Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me; I feel I am all wrong, but do thou put me right; my soul has gone astray like a lost sheep, yet will I not forget thy precepts."

III. My third observation is, GOD'S PRAISE MUST COME FROM THE HEART.

God receives nothing from the hypocrite, nor yet from the formalist. Dr. Watts thus expresses it:

" Their lifted eyes salute the skies,
 Their bending knees the ground;
 But God abhors the sacrifice
 Where not the heart is found."

Nor does God receive praise from the thoughtless tongue. Many there are, it is to be feared, who take up the matter of singing the praises of God more to please themselves than to serve God; these persons seldom reflect on the subject they are singing, nor keep in view the Object of praise. It is the tune that occupies their thoughts; and often, it is to be feared, that if the tune is not one to their fancy they will not sing at all, plainly

showing that to praise God is not their object, however much they may like psalmody. O, my friends—my young friends in particular—be not more occupied with the tune than with the theme; remember, God's praise must come from the *heart* as well as the tongue.

But let us observe, as it is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made before God," so "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." When the heart is full of love to God the lips will be full of praise; if the heart indites good matter, the pen is as in the hands of a ready writer, and it can then speak of things concerning the King.

The truth is, the believer can only praise God with the heart when the heart is filled with joy; filled with joy in the Holy Ghost; filled with all joy and peace in believing; filled with a sense of pardoned sin; filled with gratitude for mercies bestowed, for favours received; filled with an assurance of divine love; filled with the manifestations of divine love; filled with bright views of the Saviour's glorious Person, his work, and character; filled with devotion and adoration in the contemplation of those rich truths which God reveals in his word, whereby his soul rejoices in the fulness of Christ, who is made unto him everything he can possibly want, both for this world and the next. He finds heavenly realities on earth; the very thought that God is his God, his Father, fills his soul with joy; to feel that Christ is his, that Christ died for him, that Christ is his mediator, his advocate, his intercessor; O, those things make him feel full of joy unbounded, unspeakable; it is, indeed, Christ in him the hope of glory. This it is that helps the soul to praise God. It will never be content with anything short of it; hence the prayer of the Psalmist: "O, Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

IV. Let me now observe, in the fourth and last place, **THAT PRAYER IS GOD'S KEY TO UNLOCK THE HEART.**

I have already explained to you how the heart of the regenerated soul is shut up by sin, unbelief, and so on; that when the heart is thus shut up, the lips are closed, and God cannot be praised. Not to praise God is like death to the renewed, heaven-born soul. This we have already shown. But, you see, *all* I have been putting before you is "*heart-work*." My hearers, **TRUE RELIGION**

IS ALL HEART WORK; without the heart, there is no religion that will do you or me any good; there is no praising God unless the heart is quite right with God. This point has been already touched. You have seen the connection between praise and the state of the heart; how the one is depending on the other. Now we have to show you how the state of the heart is connected with and depending on prayer.

Prayer, I have just said, is God's key; that is, it is the key which God puts for the sinner's use; it is put into the bosom of every child of God; it is ready, there, for meeting every difficulty, every trouble, every trying case. You remember Bunyan's pilgrim, "Hopeful;" how, with his key of promise, he opened every gate in Giant Despair's castle. That key Jacob possessed, and with it opened up God's resources, and obtained what he wanted: "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good."

"Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give."

Prayer unlocks the heart. When the soul, feeling itself destitute, miserable, helpless, falls back upon God, it prays for help; prays for grace; prays for strength; prays for the light of his countenance; prays for the restoration of the joy of his salvation; and in doing so, the soul gathers strength; faith is invigorated, hope is encouraged. Then the soul is enlivened; and, being thus restored and enlivened, it is fitted for praise; it has a feeling sense of God's light, love, and favour within, and it must praise. It cannot help it, any more than children can help expressing their joy when pleased and gratified with their parents' love and gifts. Who has not found the words of Cowper true?

"Prayer makes the darken'd cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

Yes, the believer knows this is true. When faith and love are in lively exercise, the heart is unlocked; when the blessings from above have been received, then comes praise from the heart. Prayer and praise are so closely connected that whoever finds himself in the mood for prayer, will soon find himself in the mood for praise. Prayer is God's key to unlock the heart. Prayer unlocked the heart of Hannah. She sought the Lord, ob-

tained the blessing ; and she, whose lips only moved in prayer, which was not heard by mortal ear, soon moved those lips, and with her mouth joyfully expressed her praise and thanksgiving loud enough for every one to hear ; so joyful was it, that an inspired historian has recorded it for our comfort and instruction. Look at Zacharias, too, when his mouth was unclosed, how soon praise was uttered ; and his song of praise is also recorded. So was it with the people of Israel. They said : " When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream ; then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Hezekiah, too, was, when restored to health, filled with praise. " The living, the living ; he shall praise thee, as I do, this day." David, too, how often he spake the praises of God when his heart was set at happy liberty ; in one instance, (see the 39th Psalm,) lest he should sin with his tongue, he resolves to put on the " brank " himself ; but in doing so, he exceeded his good intentions. Still we see plainly the whole history of a Christian's case ; when obliged to keep silent, how it affected David's heart, and what result followed ? " I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue ; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence ; I held my peace, even from good ; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me ; while I was musing the fire burned ; then spake I with my tongue."

You see, then, from all this, how much prayer has to do with praise. Need I tell you that what begins in prayer on earth ends in praise in heaven. Ah, Christian ! think of this ; prayer will lead you to praise. Prayer opens the heart ; the heart is warmed ; and a warm heart makes the silent tongue speak. O, Christian ! cultivate the habit of prayer ; avoid sin in every shape and form ; be not faithless, but believing. If you feel, at any time, your affections chilled, the praises of God silent upon your tongue, remember David's resource, prayer : " O Lord ! open thou my lips." Observe his vehemence and earnestness, as indicated in the very language of his prayer : " O Lord, open thou my lips. O take off this 'brank !' Let me speak freely of thy goodness ; let me speak freely of thy love and mercy. It is sin that has closed and fastened my lips. I am the offender ; but now, O Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry ; hold not thy peace at my tears."

Is this the language of any of you? If it is, be assured, then, God will soon remove the "brank." If sin has closed your mouth, and you have been before God as an humble penitent, he will soon open your lips ; he will restore peace to you by speaking pardon to your soul ; you shall be set at liberty, your tongue shall sing aloud of his righteousness all the day long, and your lips shall greatly rejoice when you sing praises unto him who hath redeemed your precious soul. You will sing praise to the Father for displaying such marvellous and sovereign love in adopting you into his family. You will sing praise to the Son for his unparalleled love in taking your place—suffering instead of you—that he might bring you near to God. You will sing praise to the Spirit for quickening you when dead in trespasses and in sin ; for revealing his truth to you ; for opening your understanding ; for keeping you from the works and ways of the destroyer ; and last, but not least, for restoring your soul when fainting in the way, or falling through temptation. May the Lord, in his rich mercy, lead you all to humble, earnest prayer, that he may open your lips to speak his praise.

‘ And wilt thou in dead silence lie,
When Christ stands waiting for thy prayer?
My soul, thou hast a Friend on high;
Arise, and try thine interest there.

If pain afflict, or wrongs oppress ;
If cares distract, or fears dismay ;
If guilt deject, or sin distress,
The remedy's before thee—pray !

'Tis prayer supports the soul that's weak,
Though thought be broken, language lame ;
Pray, if thou canst or canst not speak ;
But pray with faith in Jesus' name."

H. A. T.

THE NEST DESTROYED, BUT THE BIRD SAVED.

A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER,

PREACHED AT NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL, LONDON,

On Lord's Day Afternoon, May 12th, 1861.

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."—DEUT. xxxii. 11, 12.

THE Book of Deuteronomy is so called because it signifies *a second law*, or *the repetition of the law*. It is the last of the five books denominated the Pentateuch. It is a kind of manual of divine instruction, and contains a compendium of such laws as concerned the people generally, as to their civil, military, and religious government, omitting, for the most part, that which related to the priests and Levites. It contains, indeed, a commentary upon the moral law, and is enforced by the strongest and most persuasive exhortations to obedience. It was particularly adapted for the benefit of those who, being born in the wilderness, were not present at the first promulgation of the law. Moses, the great prophet of Israel, was the author of this book. He appears to have written it about a month before his decease. It contains the history of about forty-six days, and he sets forth in an animated manner the amazing wonders of God's love to Israel, as the sole cause of Jacob's seed inheriting the land of promise on which they were about to enter. With the present generation—for the former, with the exception of himself, Caleb, and Joshua, had all died in the wilderness—he entered into a new covenant, which

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not only included that previously made at Horeb, but which also renewed and ratified those assurances of spiritual blessings long before imparted to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and he bade them commemorate their first entrance into Canaan by engraving upon a plaistered stone wall the precepts of God's holy law, which was to remain as a memorial of Jehovah's love, faithfulness, and power to his people. I might just mention that the prophecies of Moses increase in number and in clearness towards the close of his writings; those respecting Christ are in this book more explicitly foretold than in the preceding books, and are described as the completion of the Jewish dispensation; and, previous to "the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death," he addressed them in a song which recapitulates their whole history and describes their entire character. He states his object in the twenty-first verse of the preceding chapter; and in the chapter containing our text they are reminded that the Most High divided to the nations each their inheritance, and that he chose for his own portion Jacob as the lot of his inheritance. Moses then alludes to that point of Jacob's history where God first met with him as a wandering fugitive in the wilderness, near to Luz; how he led him about and instructed him, kept him as the pupil of his eye; and, in the text before us, how "as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." In the figure thus employed, the life and experience of Jacob is not only thus set forth, but also that of Israel as a people. The figure was doubtless well understood by the Israelites; for, as we may suppose in that rocky and dreary region, the habits of the eagle and the eaglet had often been noticed, and especially as God had himself employed the same figure to Moses in the commencement of his journey: "Ye have seen how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." (Exod. xix. 4.) God lifted up his people right out of the slavery of Egypt and brought them to serve him in the beauty of holiness, a free and independent people.

Just let me observe here, that the people Israel, though long held in bondage and though they had often sighed by reason of their hard bondage, yet they made no attempt to

break their yoke; it was not till Moses came and stirred them up to seek their liberty that they attempted it. They would have lived and died slaves in Egypt, if God had not, in his rich mercy, and in the remembrance and the performance of his oath which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, sent them a deliverer. So is it with God's spiritual Israel now; and some of us can well remember how contented we were with the world, this spiritual Egypt. We made no attempt to leave it; we felt the hard service of sin, we found no real happiness, no real prosperity, no real gain to the soul. No, the longer we serve in the world the poorer we become. We make no effort for a better state of things; we make no complaints, yet we feel we have no ease. But when Moses is sent home to us, when God's holy law strikes the conscience, stirs us up, shows us our condition by nature in the sight of God, and to what blessedness God will bring us, then we awake to a deep sense of our slavery to sin, our slavery to the world and to the devil. We are then glad to escape from the bondage in which we were born; and the soul is at length led, under the guidance of the heaven-sent Moses, though by a rough and terrible passage, through the Red Sea of repentance, to leave the slavery of Egypt for the freedom of the Church of God in the wilderness.

The people of Israel, let it be observed, while in the wilderness, often rested in it; following the course of Providence, it is true, guided by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, but, in either case, always in connection with the Tabernacle. Whether it was two days, a month, or a year, as the cloud moved, so they journeyed, according to the commandment of the Lord. Doubtless, they liked resting better than travelling; for, though travelling is an onward movement towards the end, yet is it labour and toil; and, such is the indolence of our nature, we are too apt to be taken up with the things about us, instead of forgetting the things that are behind and going forward. While the Israelites rested in the wilderness, and were well supplied and cared for, we hear no complaints; but when travelling, we then hear that "the souls of the people were much discouraged because of the way." Thus is it with us, while we are travelling in this time state. So long as we are not disturbed, we make no complaints, we are disposed to settle where we are and to rest in the

things which the wilderness supplies ; but God reminds us, that here we have no continuing city. He says to us, "Depart ye, depart ye ; this is not your rest, it is polluted." He stirs us up, and bids us seek the better land. He who called us out of Egypt's darkness and misery to take possession of Canaan's fair and happy land, to serve him for ever, will never allow us to stop short in any intermediate state of this temporary life.

But, now, let us come to the figure employed in the text : "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him."

The eagle, as naturalists tell us, has a strong affection for her young. She displays it by courageously protecting them in a time of danger, her assiduous attention in finding them provision, and in her unwearied efforts in teaching them to fly. We are also told that as soon as the young ones are strong enough to fly and to provide for themselves, the old bird stirs up the nest, takes away the soft, comfortable, and warm inside, tears it to pieces with her claws, chases them from it, and will not permit them to return. Thus they are aroused from their sloth and inactivity, and made to exert their own strength by trying to use their own wings. Sometimes the old bird will take the young one on its back, and soar aloft, and then shake it off into the air ; and if too weak to sustain itself, the old one will fly under it, and catch it on her wings to prevent the fall. Thus the eaglet is taught to fly. The nest is destroyed, but not the bird ; to save the bird, the eagle destroys the nest, and the young eagle becomes fitted to provide for itself.

Now, in like manner are God's dealings with his people. God stirs up our nest, the place where we feel comfortably settled, the place where we feel most at home. Not only does he *stir up* our nest and take out the comfort of it, but he *breaks* it up, often destroys it altogether ; makes us move out, his gracious design being to bring us nearer to himself ; and he intends, by the discipline of his hand, that all our discomforts and trials, and the making away of those things to which we are too much attached, shall be the means of strengthening the wings of our faith, to elevate our affections to him, and to fit us for enjoying that rest which remains for all the people of God.

Let me illustrate this. First, when we are in the nest of this world, we have no desire to fly towards heaven. We are of the earth, earthy. God calls to us : "Depart ye, depart ye; this is not your rest." We heed not the call; our answer practically is, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "We find satisfaction in this present world; we do not want to be disturbed." "Let us alone." "Art thou come to disturb us before the time?" Yes, blessed be God, he does disturb our rest in the world. If he disturb us not we shall be ruined. We shall perish in the nest if he destroy it not. And God does destroy it. He destroys our hope of finding happiness merely in the *pleasures* of this life. He destroys our expectation of finding pleasure in the ways of sin. He destroys our hope of finding satisfaction in any of the *things* of this life. He destroys our hope of ever finding peace with him from anything we can do, or anything we possess. He destroys all our vain hope in trusting to our own righteousness. We cling to our own notions as to how we may be saved from the wrath to come; but all our false notions and our refuges of lies, everything in which we trusted, is swept away, and the soul is left to try its faith *alone on Christ*. God teaches us the folly of our own fancies, to trust to him, to hang upon him. Salvation is to be found alone in Christ; there is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved. Till we are brought to this point God takes away everything that keeps us from himself.

Secondly, the believer in Jesus, while travelling in the wilderness of this world, is often disposed to and is apt to settle comfortably down in some of the circumstances in which a good and gracious Providence may be pleased to place him. Job is an instance of this. Outward things prospered, family blessings were numerous, he felt his personal influence was for good; he acknowledged that health and the bread of plenteousness were God's gifts, and he thought—ah, mistaken thought!—he thought he should never be disturbed. "I shall die in my nest." Ah, if he had lived there till he had died, he never would have soared to heaven with that heaven-taught flight of faith: "Behold, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." What did Job lose by his nest being broken up! Nothing. What did

Satan gain by his hellish challenge? "Break up his nest," said he to God; "the bird will never fly towards thee; he is sure to break down." No, never! God's people may have their nests broken up—God means to break up their nests—but the birds shall be saved, they shall never break down.

Yes, God may sometimes allow the devil to break up our nest, as he did in Job's case, and he is delighted to do it. If he has a commission to break up any of our nests, depend upon it he will soon set about it. He will do it with all his heart, "his eye will not spare;" he will make us feel it, too. But God's eye is upon him; he has his instructions, which he dare not go beyond. He wants to ruin the bird if he can. He hoped to ruin Job, he was sure he should ruin David, and he thought to have ruined Peter; but, no! God only allowed him to ruin the nest. He takes care of the bird all the while. The nest, it is true, has been shaken, dreadfully shaken; is, in fact, broken up quite; but not the bird, that is saved. God does not mean that any of his eaglets should be always in the nest; they must learn to fly towards heaven; so he takes away one thing at a time, then another, one after another in succession; that which we so much loved, that in which we so much trusted, that which gave us so much pleasure, so much delight, so much comfort, so much ease—is all taken away!

But after all, what is a nest? Is it not in itself a mere collection of rubbish? nicely arranged, it is true, according to the instinct of birds, but to the mind of man it is seen to be but mere rubbish; a thing not worth caring for; a thing of no earthly use whatever, though to the poor young birds it is everything of comfort. Just so in the mind of God is this world and all its charms, in itself considered. To the Christian, when under the teachings of the Spirit of Truth, it is a mere collection of the veriest rubbish that can be found; it is so to the eye of faith, though to the eye of sense the world seems a very comfortable place. We are apt to think so, Job thought so. Worldlings are commonly very comfortable in their nests; "they have," as Asaph says, "more than heart could wish;" and if grace prevent not, they will live and die in their nest; and then, when the fire of God's wrath against sin comes, it will burn up their nest and themselves too.

There is one thing to be observed. In the destruction of the nest, not a single feather of the young bird is destroyed or lost. Think of this, you who may be sharply tried with the loss of your outward comforts. Not a gift or a grace of God's Spirit shall suffer by any of the dealings of his hand. Rather the wings of your faith and love shall be made strong thereby, and you yourselves enabled to fly better and more swiftly to heaven. Peter thought, when he was about to be shaken in the devil's sieve, that his faith would fail and he should be lost. "No," said his Saviour; "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Peter was a gainer by the shaking he received, for it fitted him to strengthen his brethren. Believer! the shaking of the nest, while it lasts, most truly, is not joyous, but grievous, but afterwards it produces a better state of things, a better state of the mind, a better state of the heart. See Paul's opinion in his Epistle to the Hebrews, xii. 11: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless it afterward yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Blessed discipline! Happy the man who can trace the health of his soul, the strengthening of his faith, the increase of his love, to the destruction of his nest—his worldly comforts, his worldly hopes, his worldly affections. God will secure the best interests of his people while he shakes their nest, but not a single essential feather shall be lost. As the great Physician of real value, he will destroy the disease, but save the patient.

Again, we are told the parent eagle takes the eaglet on its wings, lets it fall, makes it try its own power. It does indeed try the poor little creature; but the old bird catches it on the wing while falling, and saves it. So God, in like manner, with the believer. Sometimes he appears to have quite forsaken him. How alarmed is the poor soul in such a case! Hear what David said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?" "Be not far from me, O Lord, for trouble is near. O my strength, haste thee to help me." And God was near to help him, and joyfully he acknowledged it. (See Psa. xxii. 11.) Look, again, at Asaph, (Ps. lxxvii.,) when he was left to try his own wing. What does he say? "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean

gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" But, presently, God catches him underneath; then poor Asaph, finding his support, says, "This is my infirmity." He found he was mistaken in his opinions of God's dealings with him; and he, brethren, like us, made more mistakes than one. At another time, he tells us his feet were almost gone; he had well nigh slipped, he thought there was nothing better than the worldling's nest; but being lifted into the sanctuary, then he discovered his foolishness, and acknowledged his stupidity, and said to God, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Thus was it with king Hezekiah, when his nest was disturbed. Indeed, Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, threatened to take it all away; but he only disturbed poor Hezekiah's imagination, for God put a hook in that proud man's nose, and sent him unexpectedly back. Many of God's people have their comforts threatened; but let them, like Hezekiah, spread their case before the Lord, and if it be that an enemy has done it, God will soon take up the matter for them, and settle it in their favour.

But though at first it was only Hezekiah's imagination that was really disturbed, yet we see that his excessive fear brought upon him a severe fit of sickness; it brought him almost to death's door. His nest *was* disturbed, though in another way; he was brought into deep affliction, and to try the strength of his own wing. How soon he felt his weakness; how soon he felt his life consisted not in the abundance of what he possessed; what a sudden disruption there seemed of all his happiness, his power, and glory! How easily God can disturb our nest, and show us the vanity of everything in this world! Rank, wealth, honour, sink into nothing the moment God puts his finger upon them. Our troubles form a grave in which most of our comforts are soon buried out of sight.

We see, too, what piteous complaints Hezekiah utters when left to try his own wing: he thought he should drop quite to the ground. "I said, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living; from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me; mine eyes fail with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." Then, when God caught him up, and he felt again the

safety of being borne upon eagle's wings, how he changed his song and tune! "O Lord," says he, "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so wilt thou recover me and make me to live. The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth." (Isa. xxxviii.) Thus the Lord teaches his people to make observations in their experience; it is in the school of adversity, he teaches them their most valuable lessons, and instructs them in the most weighty truths of the gospel; they are taught more through the medium of troubles and trials than of comfort or prosperity; indeed, as Mr. Serle truly says, "God's people are seldom trusted with much prosperity; and, when they are, it very rarely appears for their good."

Poor Hezekiah, how many of God's dear people have been like him; thrown out of long-continued comforts and left to find new resources, they find no immediate answer to prayer; broken with breach upon breach, and their way hid from the Lord, apparently cast away from his presence; but says God, "for a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." (Isa. liv. 7, 8.)

Nor must we pass by the case of poor Jacob; in fact, his history belongs to our text. How his nest was stirred up again and again through all his pilgrimage of life! First, he was unhomed through his mother's deceit and his own falsehood. My friends, let us take care that our difficulties and troubles do not arise from our own making. Doubtless poor Jacob, as we all do, felt leaving his parents' comfortable nest. Many young persons' first trouble is in leaving their parents' roof; but they shall not be left alone; for they shall find, when they commit their way to him whose wisdom cannot err, whose love never fails, and who is the disposer of all things, that he will be sure to provide for them and fit them for going through life.

Jacob, you remember, on his awaking from his dream of the ladder to heaven, vowed a vow, that if God would be with him and bring him again to his father's house, the Lord should be his God, and the stone that he had anointed should be God's house; meaning that there he

would come to reside and worship God. Twenty years rolled on. The nest in which he had settled was made uncomfortable by his uncle; he departed, and God brought him in peace and safety to his fatherland. What was Jacob's duty, then? Clearly, I think, to have settled at the place where he vowed; but no, he went to Succoth, and there built a house for himself and booths for his cattle. Did he stay there? No; he then went to Salem, then to Shechem, bought land, and dwelt there. There he erected an altar to God, the God of Israel. In thus erecting an altar to God, where he had pitched his tent, he was right; but in going there to reside he was wrong, because Bethel was the place where he vowed should be his dwelling, and where he would worship God. Jacob seemed to have neglected and forgotten that vow; but God had not. Again, he was wrong in purchasing the land where he dwelt. God had expressly *given* him the land, and Bethel in particular. He needed not, therefore, to have purchased what was previously his own, both by gift and by inheritance; but so it is, when we forget God and our religious obligations, we make strange mistakes, and get into very sad troubles. Poor Jacob's nest at Shechem was soon stirred up by family troubles, and he was forced to leave his little freehold for his life and go to Bethel at last. But, strange to say, even at Bethel he did not remain long. There he lost his dear Rachel. Again he journeyed farther still from Bethel, and another trouble befel him in the matter of Reuben. Thus it has ever been; those who have once connected themselves with God's house find no peace or safety in wandering from it; the farther they go, the more frequently is their nest stirred up.

Neither was Jacob without his troubles when he had settled down in the place of his purchased birthright. There Joseph was stolen and sold by his brethren. This was a sore trial to lose that dear boy. 'Tis true he had twelve sons, but this one he could not spare. How often it is we are called to give up that which we cherish most! And how often it happens that God's stroke falls heaviest upon the part which can least bear it! This is our view of the case; but God knows what is right. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind." Poor Jacob never forgot the loss of dear Joseph; and there are some of our troubles that seem to make an

indelible impression upon us—we carry, as it were, the mark to our grave. We see, too, Jacob's nest was again stirred up when he had to part with Simeon. Then Benjamin also. Oh, what resistance; oh, what clinging to the nest; not a twig will he give up; he holds on tightly. He says, "All these things are against me; I shall go to the grave in sorrow." Ah, he little thought that the taking away of his darling Benjamin was to be the means of bringing him to his dear Joseph. It was God who routed the good man's nest, took him and bore him up above all his trials, as on eagle's wings; so the Lord alone did lead him. And now he says to Joseph, "I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath showed me also thy seed." Yes, God gave him more than he took away. He takes away our earthly nest, our perishable nest; and gives us in place an "incorruptible crown, and an inheritance undefiled and which fadeth not away."

Brethren, if these are our views of God's dealings, and of the blessed results of his teaching, why then are we so slow to take the consolations of his grace? Why do we grieve at being called to give up any of the comforts we possess? Is it not because we are too much absorbed in the things of earth? We profess to be pilgrims, "strangers in the earth, as all our fathers were;" and yet we seem to be forgetting our high calling, forgetting the end we should have in view. Instead of travelling through the wilderness, we seem to be wanderers and loiterers in it, leading, as it were, a sort of gipsy life. Brethren, let us remember this world is only for our use *pro tem.*—for the time being; our life in this world is a life of passing on, a passing through it, not remaining in it. No permanent rest is allowed for God's people in the wilderness of this world. None are suffered to make for themselves a nest out of any of the rubbish, the perishable rubbish of the things of time. If they attempt it, they will be sure to be stirred up, and the comfort taken out of it, whatever it may be.

In the figure employed in our text, and from the remarks already made, and the illustrations adduced, we see how God teaches his people to fly towards heaven. He tries the strength of our faith. He proves to us our weakness. He shows to us our worldliness. And if his method of dealing seems to be rough, he is gentle and kind notwithstanding. His loving-kindnesses are ever

towards us. We may be sometimes alarmed, but we shall never be really damaged. We may lose much that we loved, but we shall love him more purely. We may lose the perishable rubbish we so fondly cherished, but we shall not lose him. No, never.

“What if our dearest comforts fall
Before his sovereign will ;
He never takes away our all ;
Himself he gives us still.”

So when God seems to leave us, as it were, to find our own way, to exercise our own wing, it is not to hurt us, neither to alarm us. God means his eaglets to fly above ground, to exercise their wings for heavenly use ; he is near to us, really nearer to us when we seem most forsaken by him. Oh, how great is the difficulty of parting with the world and the things in it ! It is no easy matter to part with right eyes, with right hands ; it is no easy matter, without divine support, to bear the loss of property, the loss of income ; it is no easy matter to give up beloved relatives or friends, an affectionate son or daughter, one's husband, or one's wife. They seem parts of ourselves, parts of our very existence. The world without them seems a blank, without its charms :

“The fondness of a creature's love,
How strong it strikes the sense ;
Thither the warm affections move,
Nor can we call them thence.”

The fact is, our hearts are too full of this world, our nature loves it ; thus it is we find it so hard to part with it. Like foolish children who have eaten to repletion, and yet will not desist until they are nearly choked ; so are we often nearly choked with the cares of life. We are unable to breathe freely in the atmosphere which God designs for us to live in ; but the Lord will carry on his own work notwithstanding ; he will strip us of everything that obstructs his own glory. His plan is that we shall live by faith ; our plan is to live by sense, and thus, by reversing God's method, we make our own crook in the lot, and give ourselves the wounds we feel. Yet, even our own follies God will make subservient to his glory and our real good. He will make the world a complete cross to us ; he will make it strike daggers to our very souls, to keep us from clinging to it ; he will make it a sharp, piercing spur, to drive us nearer and faster to himself. Now, if we

find the world a cross to us, it will never hurt us; if it wound us ever so deeply, our wounds shall be our health. Indeed, whatever it is that we find brings us nearer to God, and lays us low at his feet, cannot but be a blessing in itself; it may have the name of adversity, a cross, trial, stripping providence, and I know not what else beside, but these are nothing but ill names which we, in our ignorance and perversity of temper, give to what God is pleased to do, in his infinite love, wisdom, and mercy, for our soul's eternal good. We have contracted a false opinion of the world, and a false love to it and the things of it; yet at times desiring to be not of it, but to rise above it, and yet loth to give it up. Strange inconsistency; one part of us clinging to earth, the other part attempting to soar towards heaven. We feel we cannot rise above the earth. Like a bird with clipped wings, or with a clog fastened to its feet, it cannot fly or rise above the earth; so our souls are kept down by the things of time and sense. We vainly strive to free ourselves; we feel it is the world that binds us to it, and keeps us from rising higher. We dread the process that is taken to free us from our chains. We dread the stroke that is to set us at liberty; but it must be done. God will do it, and effectually too. Our sharpest sorrow shall yield us sweetest comfort; and invariably we find our greatest blessings are connected with our greatest troubles, and so God makes use of them to bring us nearer to himself. How true are the words of Dr. Young:

“ Our hearts are fasten'd to this world
By strong and endless ties;
And every sorrow cuts a string,
And urges us to rise.”

Let us now, in conclusion, make a few practical observations arising from what we have been considering.

1. *God's fatherly affection* which he displays towards each and all his dear children. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” He sympathises with them in all their wants, pities their weaknesses; “he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust.” His love and affection are constant; his care is all-sufficient. Let us, then, cast all our care upon him, for he careth for us; and he hath promised he will never leave us nor forsake us. (Ps. ciii.; 1 Pet. v. 7; Heb. xiii. 5.)

2. *God's fatherly discipline* which he exercises over his children. The discipline of God's hand may seem to be severe, sometimes rough and sharp; but we must not estimate the character of his dealings by our feelings, wishes, and wills. We are apt to measure God's method by our own fleshly notions; but the Lord will sift us from all our chaffy thoughts, that we may know only the power of his truth and goodness in his providential dispensations towards us. We must be careful to not to misrepresent God's hand towards us, nor to misunderstand God's object in correcting us. The trials and afflictive dispensations which he sends are for our present and eternal benefit; "all things work together for good to them who love God and are called according to his purpose." He chastens us for our profit. He means us to see the vanity of all things beneath himself, and to bring us to a state of heart and mind which shall lead us to feel that no part of this world is to be our rest. "It is polluted."

3. *God's gracious teachings.* Like as the eagle fluttereth over her young, and spreadeth abroad her wings, so God, in like manner, by various methods, teaches his people. "All thy people shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy people." "Who teacheth like him?" said Elihu to Job. This was the man who thought he should die in his nest, who cursed the day of his birth. He was taught to know he was nothing, that he was vile in the sight of God, though upright before men. God graciously teaches us the true value of the things of time, and shows to us the value of the heavenly inheritance to which he means to bring us; he leads us into all truth; he teaches us to rise from earth to heaven. We never forget what God teaches us in the school of experience; his lessons are burnt in with the fires of afflictions, trials, and sorrows of every sort and kind; but the blessedness of all this is, that all his teachings lead us to himself.

4. *God's leadings alone are effectual.* The Lord alone did lead Jacob; there was no strange god with him. When God leads us to Bethel, we soon put away all our strange gods. When once he begins a good work, he never leaves it, but carries it on to the day of Jesus Christ. "See," says God, "how I have borne you as upon eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." My dear hearers, all God's fatherly discipline, his gracious

teaching, flows from his fatherly affection ; his object is, that all his dear children, when cleansed by his Spirit from the pollution of this world, shall be brought home to himself, and live in the enjoyment of his love for ever.

Believer in Jesus, you see the end God has in view by breaking up your nest in this world ; it is to bring you unto himself. He means to bear you up far above the world. You have, doubtless, often prayed that you might be brought nearer to him ; you have often sighed to have more acquaintance with him “whom to know is life eternal.” When you first knew God, you prayed often and fervently that you might know more of him ; you have prayed that you might *grow* more in love, in faith, and in every grace ; “might more of his salvation know, and seek more earnestly his face.” Well, then, are you surprised because God is answering your prayers ? If you are longing to live nearer to heaven, depend upon it every nest you settle in will be disturbed. He will un-comfort you in it ; he will unfasten every tie that binds you to earth ; he will separate everything that intervenes between him and yourself. You shall, indeed, be borne up above the world, far above its spirit, far above its pursuits, far above its charms. God will do all this for you *himself*. You will mount up as on eagle’s wings, and thus he will blessedly bring you to himself. Say, then, to your soul :

- “ Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
 Thy better portion trace ;
 Rise from transitory things,
 Towards heaven, thy native place.
 Sun and moon and stars decay ;
 Time shall soon this earth remove ;
 Rise, my soul, and haste away,
 To seats prepared above.
- “ Cease, ye pilgrims, cease to mourn,
 Press onward to the prize ;
 Soon the Saviour will return,
 Triumphant in the skies.
 Yet a season, and you know,
 Happy entrance shall be given ;
 All your sorrows left below,
 And earth exchanged for heaven.’

SAMSON'S HISTORY A WARNING TO BACKSLIDERS.

A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER,

PREACHED AT NEW BROAD STREET CHAPEL, LONDON,

On Lord's Day Afternoon, June 9th, 1861.

“ And she made him sleep upon her knees ; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head ; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson.”—JUDGES xvi. 19, 20.

SAMSON, the subject of our text, was certainly an extraordinary man. He was altogether a wonderful man. In all the biography of the Bible we have not his parallel. His history as a man of God is full of the deepest, the most terrible instruction.

Just for a moment let us refer to his parents. The short relation we have of them is pleasing and interesting. Manoah and his wife were simple-minded persons, but their faith in the God of Abraham was pure and earnest. Jehovah most graciously revealed to them his purposes of love and grace respecting his people Israel ; to themselves, as parents, they are promised a child, a precious gift in those days ; and to the people, through them, that this child shall be the beginning of their deliverance from the oppression of the Philistines.

There is something here very striking and worthy of remark. Look at the first verse of the thirteenth chapter : “ The children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord ; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.” You see here is a repetition of evil doings, and a chastisement is awarded accordingly, and that for the space of forty years ; but see again, at

the same time that God afflicted his people for their sins, he nevertheless, in his tender mercies, provided deliverance. All the time of their oppression there was growing up by the side of the oppressor, a deliverer. Samson was born, and at the end of forty years the Spirit began to move him at times in the camp of Dan in behalf of his nation. In this portion of history you see what you may often see in your own, that God's promises of help are oftentimes more prospective than immediate, and you are called to wait, not in suspense, but in hope; for all God's promises are certain, and if God has once made a promise, there is always ground for trust; the eternal grace is sure. The people had to wait till Samson was a full-grown man. The time, doubtless, seemed long. God's purposes, like some rivers we read of, are lost sight of for a while; they run underground a long way before they break out; but in the end the vision shall speak, it shall not tarry one moment behind the appointed time. God has not only appointed the time for chastisement against sin, but he also in mercy has appointed the time for its completion.

The character of Samson, doubtless, is one surrounded with difficulties; but we are not left in doubt as to his faith in God, or of his personal interest in the covenant of grace. The inspired writer to the Hebrews has recorded his name amongst those who "obtained a good report through faith, and who are now inheriting the promises." This one fact must quite decide any scruple we may have as to his possessing the true fear of God in his heart, whatever may be our opinion as to some parts of his conduct. We can understand how a man may be upright, moral, generous, loveable in all his deportment in life; but he may be, nevertheless, an unconverted man; that is to say, unregenerate in his mind and heart by the Spirit of God. He is a man of the world for all that. On the other hand, it is possible for a truly converted man, one whom the Spirit of God has called out of the world, to exhibit in his life a chequered, an uneven course. There may be, indeed relapses into old habits of sin, there may be numerous infirmities; but yet, for all that, there may be the power of divine grace so seen at intervals as to make it manifest that such a one may be a good man, a partaker of divine grace, though encompassed with infirmities. May the Lord keep you and me from being such

a one. Such a one is but little credit to the religion he professes ; such a one knows but little of either its power or its comfort. Samson was such a one ; but let us learn from his history those lessons of instruction which may be profitable for us, for which intent, indeed, the pen of inspiration has recorded the narrative.

From the remarks already made you will not expect me to advance any thoughts as to Samson being a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true there are some points of resemblance between what is deemed the type and the anti-type ; but I consider the drawbacks in Samson's general life and character so serious and so considerable, that I cannot suppose that the honour of Jesus Christ can either be set forth, or his people edified by any particular comparison which might be instituted. I am aware that my views do not accord with those generally held ; but I do not consider the common notions on this subject correct. I believe Samson to be a type of all self-willed, self-sufficient Christians, especially such who may be called to take the lead or prominent part in the public department of Christian service and duty.

Samson's history, therefore, under the aspect in which I am about to present it, is that of a man falling from a high position, to which both the promise and the providence of God had destined him to occupy. Now, the history of the falls of God's people is always instructive, though painful. Who can read the cases of David and Peter without serious and profitable reflections upon the mutability of even the most exalted and favoured partaker of God's rich gifts and influence ? That of Samson's is fearfully instructive. He was largely endowed with the Spirit of God. (See chap. xiii. 25 ; xiv. 6 ; xv. 14.) He was, from his birth, peculiarly devoted to the service of God, acted as his viceroy, and for twenty years was the protector of the commonwealth of Israel ; yet he fell into the most debasing sins that mankind can be guilty of. He possessed enormous muscular power, and probably a large bodily frame ; his animal passions were also strong. These were, perhaps, the stronger of the two, for he evidently failed to govern them. Besides his strong natural powers, he had imparted to him the qualifications and capabilities for a patriot. His tribe, Dan, lay next the borders of the Philistines, and was naturally subject to the incursions and oppressions of that warlike people. Sam-

son was, therefore, raised up for a deliverer in that part where a deliverer was most needed. God not only knows how to send deliverance, but the exact spot, and also when. These things will God do for his people, and not forsake them. And if any of you are troubled on this matter, learn to say with the poet, Newton :

“ To his will I'll leave the rest,
The when, the how, the where;
His goodness will appoint it best,
Without my anxious care.”

But is it not surprising, that Samson, a Nazarite from his birth, a man so devoted to God, the prince of his nation, should be found in the land of the enemy, under circumstances not only culpable for a man of any position, but the most revolting to the purity of the faith he possessed. Mark this; in the last verse of the thirteenth chapter we are told, “in the camp of Dan,” his own proper place, there “the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times;” and had he remained there, amongst his own people, the Spirit would, doubtless, have continued to move him. The Lord meets his people who remember him in his ways.” (Isa. lxiv. 5.) But, observe, in the first verse of the next chapter we read, Samson, of himself, went to Timnath; there he saw a daughter of the Philistines, and fell at once in love with her. His impatience has no bounds; he urges his parents with a vehemence that seems to us somewhat childish. They reason with him; but reason is of little avail where passion is in the ascendant; and so, against the remonstrance of his parents and the law of God, he married her. But no blessing was there. How could there be? How soon a quarrel ensued. It is true, it ended in the defeat of the common enemy. And from the fourth verse of the fourteenth chapter, it appears that God intended to bring good out of evil; but we see in Samson avenging his private quarrels nothing that indicates him to be under the fear of the Lord. She who once pleased his eye is now the plague of his heart. His temper is his master; and certainly the enemy was weakened thereby, and kept in fear, for even a standing army could be of no use while such a man was in the opposite camp to annoy them.

We see too that Samson was conscious of his supernatural strength, he was conscious too of his vow—he perfectly understood the nature of his oath—his own life

had made that his own act and deed which his parents had done for him in infancy ; yet he knew not his own weakness. His mind was as feeble as his body was strong ; his religious energies suffered from the temperament of his mind, and so did his position and character. He had not strength to govern his own passions, though self-willed to the highest degree. He had not sufficient wit or judgment to keep within his own camp, though he perfectly understood his public relation to his own people. Nor was it from a political motive for the general peace of the nation that he did not keep in his place ; self was his governing power ; he did not keep in view the law of the Lord. All his troubles, his difficulties, and the viler sins into which he afterwards fell, arose from this one great defect in his character, his great love of self ; he did not keep in view God's holy law.

There was one circumstance, however, in which God most mercifully interposed in his behalf. The Philistines demanded of the men of Judah Samson himself as a compensation for the injuries he had inflicted. The people of Judah, a true emblem of all heartless religious professors who value the friendship of the world, and who for fear of its frown will betray any one whom God has called to his service, gave him into the hands of the Philistines. As soon as the war shout was commenced, and Samson was in imminent danger, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he burst the bonds of cord that bound him. He had no weapon ; his own people forsook him, but not his God. He spied on the ground the jaw-bone of an ass, an article which he might have broken in his hand with the first blow ; but no, with that sorry looking and undignified weapon, he dealt superhuman blows, he slew a thousand men ; and, mark you, these men faced him about courageously and stood to the attack ; but what is the use of ten thousand men against only one if God helps that one ; however feeble and contemptible the instrument, God will help his oppressed people to do mighty things in his strength. Doubtless, some of you can say,

“ Oh, I have seen the day,
When by a single word
God helping me to say,
‘ My trust is in the Lord,’
My soul has quelled a thousand foes,
Fearless of all who did oppose.”

It was the hand of God in the hand of Samson; and so with the jaw-bone of an ass he slew a thousand warriors and laid them in heaps. Samson knew who had given him such mighty strength and valour in that emergency, but he failed to give God the praise and the acknowledgment; keeping self in view, he makes his boast: "With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men." Not one word of praise to God in all this! Now what follows? There is the reaction of all this exciting incident; he is fainting, ready to die of thirst; the God who gave him such prodigious valour to kill a thousand men does not keep him from fainting. He is left to his own weakness; he gives no glory to God; 'tis true, he prays, and he confesses the deliverance; and he expresses his fear of dying at last in the land of the enemy. Where is his faith? We see his fear; that arose from his love of self—unmortified self; there is in all this, not one word of praise to God. The very record of his casting away the jaw-bone seems to intimate the vain-glorious spirit of the man! How different was David, who, after a similar feat, laid up the weapon of his enemy as a trophy before the Lord. How unlike Samuel was Samson. Samuel set up a lasting memorial to the praise of God for the deliverance wrought at Mizpeh: "Ebenezer; hitherto hath the Lord helped us." But Samson merely calls the place by a name which referred to his own misery: "the well of him that cried;" a monument to his own self-pity! No praise is here ascribed to God. Why not an Ebenezer? surely it deserved one! Ah, my friends, the secret is now about coming out. When you see a man vainly puffed up in his own fleshly mind, depend upon it, if you look a little longer, you will soon see that man tripping up, his heart veering about towards himself. God will soon leave that man to himself for awhile and let him find out to his cost how much native strength he has got, and what it will do for him, and where it will leave him. Oh if God leaves a man to himself for awhile, it is next to being left in hell for an eternity! Pray then, as David did, for he knew well the history of Samson: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Samson's boasting and vaunting was the secret of his beginning to fall; he began here to fall as a man of God, in the next step as a patriot to his country, and subsequently as a man in the common relations of society.

Now where do we find Samson after this miraculous interposition? Not making his way towards the tabernacle at Shiloh; not calling together the people, saying, "O, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." No; but immediately he goes, not where duty or providence call him, but into Gaza, the principal city of the enemy. Ah, yes to be sure, he is exalted now; what can hurt him? He can go anywhere. Who's afraid! He is like the giddy moth round the candle light; he is hovering around the full blaze of sin, and he thinks he can go near to it, and into it, and come out unscathed. Does he think so? Ah! he is not the only man that has thought so. Let us look again at Samson. He has gone into the stronghold of the Philistines flushed with his victory, trusting to his own strength; and what has he gone for? Is it to attack the enemy in his own person, alone, and unaided; to beard the lion in his own den? No; it is to rush headlong into sin—sin in its grossest form! He dashes and plunges into the most disgraceful circumstances in which a man can possibly be found. This is Samson the Nazarite—the patriot of the people Israel! And all this too was told in Gath, it was published in the streets of Askelon!

His going to Gaza makes a stir among the people; they all know their enemy. What an advantage to know your enemy, and to know how to use your advantage. These men of Gaza are determined at once to use their opportunity, and they are resolved to secure him. And God makes a stir too. He disturbs Samson; he gives him no peace; Samson cannot quietly enjoy his sin. No; God routes him out in the dead of the night, and this time most mercifully delivers him out of the mouth of hell. He carries off the gates of Gaza and leaves the city open and insecure; a figure, indeed, if he thought of it, of his own state of heart. We read of no song of praise from Samson for all this; there is only the bare record of what a great feat he did in a most extraordinary and perilous time, as if it had been but an amusing incident in his life. Ah! Samson appears outwardly strong, but he is really getting weaker and weaker; like the moth, he is getting nearer and nearer the flame which will scorch his strength, and soon we shall see him drop with no more power to rise!

What is the next step? Caution? taking more heed to his steps? walking circumspectly, not as a fool, but as a

wise man, and profiting by his past bitter experience? No; sad to tell, not at all!

Again he goes into the enemy's country, boldly defying danger, and trusting to his natural prowess in case of danger. He is at least sixty years of age, and surely by this time has come to years of discretion. He has judged Israel twenty years, and must possess some judgment as to what is fit and proper for him in his position; surely he must know how to take care of his character. "No harm," thinks he, "can happen to me; I've braved dangers before to-day. I have no fear; I can at any time beat a whole army at once; the Philistines are all afraid of me. But I don't like to be seen by my own people, indulging my passions, and so I have come here out of their sight for shame, because I am a Nazarite and their prince." Ah, Samson! "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." This is the man who knows his own strength, but does not know his own weakness; O, what dangerous knowledge! O, what dangerous ignorance!

Now he is found in the vale of Sorek; beautiful place, no doubt, one mile and a half from the vale of Eschol, where, perhaps, he had been to taste the gigantic and luxurious grapes which were so famous. Well, he has crossed the brook; he has left his native place once more, and is now again in the land of the enemy; but he never more returns. He meant to return unquestionably; for, of course, "he must have some relaxation from the cares of public life; he must have a change for a season; he will be all right when he comes back." Yes, when he does come back! But he has gone too far ever to come back. He has gone over to seek another strange woman, the woman that flattereth with her lips; he takes up his abode with her; he has become more devoted to this woman than to the interests of his own people or of the cause of God. Here he feels quite at ease. Nothing has occurred to disturb him this time; there are no walls and gates to enclose him, and he is not likely to be known in this shady, secluded spot; or, if anything should arise, well, he is very near to his own land; he has only to cross the brook, and there he is all right at last. This woman with whom he has taken up, like most of her class, is mercenary to the last degree; yet she is more a patriot to her country than he is to his. There, you see a bad woman, as it were, a good patriot; and here, you see a good man,

professedly so, a bad patriot. The woman's services to her country have, however, to be bought, but by a higher price than Samson gives for his pleasures. She takes that, too, and not a mean sum either from such a visitor. The five lords of her people come to her and offer her 1,100 pieces of silver each, £600 of our money; a large sum for her truly, but a cheap bargain for them; and what for? Not to know where Samson's weakness was; no, they all knew that; nor did they want another proof of his power, they had had enough of that. What they wanted to find out was, the secret of his great strength.

Observe how cautious she is; how unsuspecting he is. Her manners of course appear different to him than they appear to us, because we know all the history. She is a fascinating woman, doubtless; no appearance of falseness—sweet tenderness of manners. She admires his fine person, wonders at his great strength, and is inquisitive about it. He thinks it is mere womanish curiosity, and takes it all in. She appears open and frank in her suit, and candidly tells him why she wants to know; but in such a way as to contradict her tongue. He, simple man, can say *No* up to a certain point and put her off besides; he really can say *No* again and again; but she is importunate, time after time. She gains upon his resistance, and wears him out at last. He can hold out no longer; he has no more strength to say *No* now; he tells her the entire secret of his strength, and in such a way as satisfies her of its truth.

Now we are not to suppose all this was the work of a visit or two. She no doubt left enough time to intervene to disarm him of suspicion. She only appears to be playing with him; but she, like a fierce beast of prey, has her eye watching for the proper moment; then she will strike, and strike surely too. We have no record of the process, but only of the results.

Let us imagine, then, one sunny afternoon, when all the former conversation had perhaps been forgotten and passed out of his mind. He laid himself down to sleep, as, probably, he had often done before, with his head in Delilah's lap. To him what a sleep! it was the last sleep of the Nazarene—it was the sleep of death! Oh, Samson, Samson! If your godly parents could have but seen you then; they would have stood aghast; they would have shrieked with horror; they would have shed tears of blood, to see you so vilely casting away the fear of God, blasting their hopes,

sacrificing the welfare of your people, and not even scrupling to ruin your own soul!

Look at Samson fast asleep in her lap. Her arrangements have been all previously made against the next opportunity. She sends for the barber, and is sitting, as they all do in the East, cross-legged upon the carpet or mat, and he fast asleep upon her knees. See, the bright scissors are doing their fatal work! He does not feel it. The invincible and sacred locks are laying scattered upon the ground; there he is, a shorn man, a degraded man. He has broken the covenant, he is no longer a Nazarite to God; he has told the enemy the secret of his great strength and how he may be deprived of it. Foolish man! Was it not enough to disclose the secret of his strength, but that he must also disclose how he could lose it? But so it was; he parted with his advantages as the patriot of his country, just he did with his honour as a man; his sacredness to God he valued no more than his own reputation. Samson is now no stronger than any other man; but, O, awful to relate, "he wist not that the Lord had departed from him!"

Delilah pretended to be facetious with him, and raised the former cry, and which had before raised his scornful laugh: "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" He awoke. She began to try his strength, and found out, before he did, that his great strength was gone. There lay his seven locks at his feet; and then she called out in a loud and confident tone, which not only aroused him for the last time, but was the signal for those in the next chamber: "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" "Ah, ah," said he, "I will go out and shake myself as at other times." Ah! he did shake himself, but in a more terrible manner than he had done before. He shook with horrible mortification. He could no longer shake himself and gather up his strength. Bitter remorse, like the Philistines, took possession of him. His great strength had gone from him, and, not unlikely, his common strength failed him too! Not that his great strength lay in his hair, but it lay in the keeping of the peculiar covenant under which he was related to God. His unshorn hair was the visible and outward sign of his being a Nazarite to God, and a pledge from God to impart the continuance of his superhuman strength. Samson suffered this sign to be removed; he broke his vow, and thus forfeited the thing signified. God abandoned him

as a supernatural man, but he was not cast out of the covenant of grace. His name was not blotted out of the book of life, but he was no longer a Nazarite. He was left like any other man; he was weak like other men, as he said he should be if his hair were taken away. His eyes, which were first the occasion of his sinning, are first punished; they were put out; and thus he reaped what he sowed. But it was better for him to lose his eyes than to have his whole body cast into hell. He was made a prisoner for life, and though a prince, performed the most menial work of the prison. We will not follow him there. I doubt not but that his reflections were of the bitterest and most painful kind, and there was no relief for him in tears, because his eyes were gone. His repentance was deep and genuine. He mourned for his sins more than for the loss of his eyes. He could indeed then see better without them. It is far better for a man to lose both his natural eyes, than to be blind to his spiritual state before God. Samson's hair, howbeit, grew again; so did his piety, and so did his great strength; but not his position in life; that was gone for ever, and what he so much dreaded he had at last to endure. He died away from his native land; not unpitied, but certainly unhonoured. Would that he had lived as he died, a praying man! What a different result there would have been. As a Nazarite he would have been the more conspicuous; his nation and the cause of God would have been better served; he might have lived in honour and died in peace; his name would have been cherished in the affectionate remembrance of his people; and then his name, his history, and his character would have been handed down to posterity untarnished and without a stain.

Let us now, in conclusion, observe from all this, one great fact, and that is, that the principle of falling into sin is the same in every other case as in this of Samson. His case is not one of apostacy from religion, but of backsliding from the ways of God; and as none of us who profess the name of Christ are exempt from the influence of Satan, the world, or our own deceitful hearts, we shall do well to reflect:

1. The NATURE of backsliding. *It is dangerous*; once begun, there is no knowing where it will end. The beginning of sin is like letting out of water, there is no calling it back. It is done and cannot be undone. *It is secret*; the outward indications do not show themselves

at once. Many are backsliders in heart, though not in open life; that has yet to come—it will come if grace prevent not. *It is deceitful.* The soul is led astray by very subtle means, often by that which appears to belong to religion itself; error in sentiments and false zeal in God's cause have deluded many in the fold of the church. Even the externals of Christianity will draw the heart aside if the soul be not simply and constantly looking to Christ. *It is gradual;* it is a downhill course. Backsliding often commences on the mount, even when the soul is full of lively zeal, and especially if blessed with success in religious effort. Self is apt to be elated, and then the soul goes down step by step; the farther from heaven the faster towards earth.

2. The EFFECTS of backsliding. At first there is *unconsciousness*; like Samson, who knew not that the Lord had departed from him. Few have any feeling of their first declension. How insensible was David till Nathan pointedly told him of his sin. Like Bunyan's pilgrim, who dropped his roll some time before he discovered his loss, we are often insensible of the value of what we lose till we are brought to feel the need of it. We lose our joy, our comfort, our hope before we miss them; we complain of soul desertion at such and such a time; but we are invariably wrong, for it was before then. What we now feel is the effect of a previous secret cause. How often Christians may be seen insensibly to lose their power and influence, and sometimes their character, from causes difficult to trace or ascertain. Coldness and deadness in private duties are often more manifest than felt. How relaxed the attention and the desire towards heavenly things. There is also a loss of a tender conscience. This is like a gauge, it shows the measure of the distance we are receding from what which at one time would have given us great anxiety. Then old habits, unsubdued sins, rise and rebound with all the force of a spring that has long been depressed. Then darkness of mind follows the loss of fire in the heart. The feelings are benumbed, actual and open sin is often the result. Then, when guilt with its horrid form stares you in the face, you are aroused with something like a sense of what an evil and a bitter thing it is to depart from the living God.

3. The CAUSES of backsliding. These are numerous. Satan has a thousand baubles to induce a believer to take off his eye from Christ. This one principle regulates

Satan in all his movements with the church of God; he is ever aiming to keep the believer from prayer and the word of God. The neglect of secret prayer has been generally traced as the cause of most of the slips and falls we see and feel in the Christian life. So also the neglect of praise for special mercies. This is not commonly observed; but watch its influence, you shall soon find that there is as much connection between praise and living near to God as there is in prayer. Prayer is said to be the life of God in the soul; so is praise; that is, they are sure evidences of life. Another cause of backsliding is the unsubdued strength of carnal affections; the conflict, instead of being maintained, is too often suffered to run into a compromise, and there is a cherishing within of what ought to have been uncompromisingly chased out. The seductiveness of our own hearts is another cause; the understanding is sometimes blinded by our feelings. The allurements of the world are endless and various in their fascinations, and bring many sincere souls into labyrinths from which it may be hard to escape. Another cause is, indulging in the pleasure we may have from either the success of any effort beyond our expectation, or when we are exalted in ourselves and become full of ourselves, and show a boasting spirit like Samson. Also wandering into forbidden paths; tampering with temptation; quenching or grieving the Spirit by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption.

Let me say, too, that another cause of backsliding is not abiding in Christ; that is, not abiding in the truth, not attending to the ordinances or keeping in the ways of the gospel. Neglecting the house of God, or the adoption of opinions derogatory to the truth and honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, will invariably lead to backsliding.

4. The RESTORATION of backsliders. Commonly, afflictions of body or estate are employed as chastisements; for when the believer becomes obtuse in his affections towards God, hardened in sin, there is no other method of making him feel but by affliction, as Samson in the prison-house. The Prodigal mentioned in our Lord's parable is another instance. Another means of restoration is a forsaking at once the sin into which one may be brought; also an honest and hearty confession of sin to God alone; let this be the first step. Backslider! go back at once to the place where the first departure commenced—secret

prayer in the closet. Neither let it be forgotten that God must be acknowledged and praised for his constant goodness, mercy, and grace. Seek also, more than has ever yet been done, God's honour and glory. Pray for self to be put back and kept down.

But the first and the efficient cause of all restoration is God's everlasting love; it is his restoring grace: "He restoreth my soul," saith the Psalmist; he brings back the wanderer, his heart of stone is melted down by the fire of God's love. The Holy Spirit revives the drooping soul and brings it back again to himself. Were it not for the unchangeable love of God, the soul would be cast off, the backslider would never be restored; "I am God, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The final perseverance of every true believer is guaranteed by every attribute of Jehovah.

"Whom once he receives his Spirit ne'er leaves,
Nor ever repents of the grace that he gives."

But let none presume on the restoring mercy of God. 'Tis true he invites the wanderer to come back to him, and he has graciously put words into his mouth, and encouraged him to come just as he is; but he must not presume in his heart that he will be fetched back. Were Saul, Judas, Demas, and others who could be named, were they brought back? If you are a wanderer from Christ's fold you will be brought back, but, depend upon it, it will be on your part with bitter weeping, deep lamentation, and humble supplication.

Lastly, let the backslider be *warned* by the sad history of Samson. Remember, when Samson first trod the forbidden path, the land of the enemy, how his parents remonstrated with him; then God sent a lion to check him in his course; but he resisted both. God generally, in some way, withstands the backslider in his first wanderings; hedges up his way with thorns, reproves him, gives him intimations in the conscience, warns him from his word, warns him from the cases of others. Pray attend to this, heed the first warning; think not that you will be brought back like Samson in a second deliverance. The sending of the lion was a soft whisper of reproof, and to bring him back; the deliverance from Gaza was a voice of thunder; but he disregarded both. "God speaks once, nay, twice, but man perceiveth it not." It may be he will speak no more; he spoke no more to Samson. He spake twice, he then let him alone. Take a note of that.

"Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." (Hosea iv. 17.) If you are not resisted in your backslidings, if you find your way to sin easy and plain, depend upon it God means to let you alone. But O, if you find you are checked, if you are resisted, regard it as mercy; it is mercy urging you back. Go no farther, stop short, go back at once; God will receive you and restore to you the joy of his salvation. But if, like Samson, you are self-willed, blinded by your passions, and disregard the merciful intimations and resistances of God's Spirit, I say, "Beware of him, provoke him not;" for whatever may be the power of your talents, the strength of your character, the energy of your will, or your resolution of purpose, or even the loftiness of your position, like Samson, God will bring you down, and you shall not be able to rise; like Samson, "a wound and a dishonour shall you get, and your reproach shall not be wiped away."

My dear hearers, let us all take warning from Samson's history. If such dangers attend the strong, how shall it go with the weak? Guard, then, against the decline of your spiritual frame of mind. Watch and pray. Cultivate a tender conscience. Enter no forbidden path. Let your gifts and opportunities be used for God, not for self. Remember the word of truth, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they who despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

"THE GREAT PLAGUE OF THE HEART;"

BEING AN EXTRACT FROM THE AUTHOR'S SERMON
ON I KINGS, VIII. 28.

THERE is another plague of the heart, more subtle, more insidious, more deceitful, than the one just named (Unbelief). It is that of *Pride*. It is more difficult to perceive. It is less difficult to hide. It assumes as many shapes, forms, and characters, with as much facility and adroitness, as those mountebanks, so noted for mimicking a variety of characters at a theatrical entertainment. So deceiving is pride, we hardly see it with the same dress or the same face twice. Pride is so mixed up with all we are and all we do, that it becomes, as it were, a part of us; if we are told of it or look for it, we see it not. Pride strives to hide itself; never shows its own face, never wears its own dress, speaks not with its own voice, and colours all its own doings, so that it shall not appear. With the natural man it succeeds well. He is

well pleased with himself; and if found in the profession of religion, he is still more delighted with himself; for profession is the material which pride employs to deceive and catch unwary and unstable souls. Pride is the spider in the house of God; it weaves its web from its own bowels, sucks out the life of all whom it catches; but it becomes the pest of all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth. Pride, therefore, does not succeed with the upright, for it is opposed; for where God begins his good work in the soul, he plants the grace of humility. Humbleness of soul is that spirit which God approves. Pride is that spirit which God abhors. Pride is that cursed sin which cast angels out of heaven; and many a delight has it cast out of the heaven-born soul. This, I dare say, some of you have known to your sorrow; and I can say with Dr. Watts:

"But pride, that busy sin,
Spoils all that I perform ;"

and with dear Mr. Hart :

"Do what I will, it haunts me still,
And keeps me from the Lord."

And because this humbleness of soul, this poverty of spirit, is so blessed to feel, and is enjoyed by the believer, therefore pride comes in all its protean forms. Does God shine in upon the soul, and speak peace, joy, and liberty? Oh, how pride creeps in and causes the soul to be satisfied with itself; to rest upon its frames and feelings, believing they will ever continue. Such souls think their mountain stands strong; they are lifted up. Then soon the poor soul discovers its error in not always resting on Christ. The light of God's countenance is lost sight of; the cause is pride, but it has hidden itself; it has, like the spider, hidden itself; it has cast its filmy web over the eye of the soul and brought it into darkness. Then the believer comes to the throne of grace to mourn and to deplore the loss of God's presence; and still, even there, will pride creep in and show itself, aye, in some feelings of disappointment and mortification. It will show itself even in tears of sorrow, so subtle is it and so difficult to detect. In outward things, visible as it may be to others, it is often concealed from the view of those who are under its influence. If such a one is favoured with gifts for public usefulness, O what a hotbed do they prove for pride. Puffed up with fancy's airy dreams, till, as Mr. Hart very truly says,

"The heart uplifts with God's own gifts,
Makes even grace a snare."

The soul is tempted by the cursed spirit of pride, to make a kind of show or dealing with those gifts for exalting self. If with a gift for verbal prayer, what longings for the prayer meeting; always there. If with a gift for public speaking, and some supposed knowledge of God's word, what burning desires to preach, what longings for a pulpit; and, as I once heard the late Mr. Gadsby say, "If God does not open a door for them in his providence, they will lift up the latch themselves and walk in." Ah! this is true to the very letter, and all this under the specious pretence of doing it for the glory of God and the good of immortal souls. But it is the spirit of Ahimaaz: "Howsoever, let me run;" (2 Sam. xviii. 22, 23;) yes, and run they do, and run fast too, very fast, and

then stop short. How so? Because their brains have run out as fast as their legs ran; so they soon give over, and curse the pride of their hearts the rest of their days; for they find God never sent them. This kind of pride, however, only affects a *few* comparatively, but pride and vain glory work in *all*, more or less; they will show themselves in endless forms. If a soul thinks itself to have more trials than another, it will gather pride to itself. If more afflicted in body than another, it will make it an occasion of pride. If employed in any department of Christian service, ever so humble, pride will creep in and "swell a haughty worm." Conversation, position in society or the church, dress, any peculiarity, no matter what; pride will, like flies, feed upon anything—hot, cold, sweet, sour, clean, filthy, holiness, corruption—nothing comes amiss. But, O, to the child of God, exercised by this subtle and cursed spirit, it is the plague of his heart. Say, believer, is not this the torment, the plague of your heart? "Ah!" say you, "indeed it is. What a world of trouble it has occasioned me! How uneasy it makes all things between God and the soul!" Thus it is, that much of our discomforts arise from pride, this plague of the heart.

Closely allied to this plague of the heart is another, but it is still more difficult to detect and to subdue, and that is *Self*. Self-seeking, self-praise, self-pleasing, "Wonderful self," as Mr. Huntington styles it. This is the great idol of the heart. This is the idolatry which God's work is labouring to destroy and cut down; and it may be remarked, that if the Spirit of truth reveals the working of this subtle and insidious enemy to all righteousness, it is no small proof of his gracious teaching. I am not referring to what is usually termed self-sufficiency or self-conceit; but a seeking of self in whoever is engaged professedly for God; the preponderating ruling motive being self, self-advancement, "to be seen of men," seeking one's own glory, "loving the praise of men." Repudiate it as we may, yet there is a tendency to it even in the best of men, and the best of men have been most distressed about it; their self is the plague of their hearts. The more active the believer is for God, the more his singleness of heart is opposed by this spirit; it obstructs his honesty of purpose, sincerity of aim, even if the object be ever so praiseworthy, and ever so far removed from self; yet sometimes, when it is detected and exposed, the shame is so great that one is led almost to think there has been no simplicity of intention at all, no godly sincerity, but all self, self. This is often to be noticed in those moments of mortification and disappointment we are called upon to feel when our schemes, plans, or prospects have been thwarted or foiled.

No doubt, self-seeking creeping in thus occasions the Lord to confound our Babel-building and to smash our pet schemes; and it is only by *his so doing* with us that we learn what *we are doing*. If we were as careful as to what God did with us, as we are in what we do for him, our mortifications would be less and not so painful; but it is our self, our unmortified self, that is pained and grieved; it is our self that suffers, not his work. We sometimes think we are losing ground. No, we are not, the lower self is cut down, the higher grace rises. God's work goes on best when self bleeds most. This is painful experience, but self must fall. Dress it up as we may, and make it look like grace according to our fancy, self will be stripped off and the shame of it made to appear. God

stamps upon all our nonsense and crushes it into powder; he dashes it into the cup of bitterness and makes us drink it, that we may be sick of ourselves and of our follies; then it is we find that self-seeking, flesh-pleasing, is the plague of our hearts; nothing but our own experience will prove it to us. If God blesses us in anything in which we have been concerned, self will be elated, because *we* have been employed, *we* have appeared in it, we have figured out upon the stage; if otherwise, then self is vexed. Self is never pleased if it labours and others enter into its labours; self has no liking to sowing and not reaping. Self likes to have everything in its own way, likes everything that it does to prosper, and is regardless of any one else's comfort or interest, so that it may stand foremost or prominent in some way. If self could have its way, it would wrest the sceptre from the hand of Jesus and take the crown from his head, and display them for itself. This wickedness God sees, though we do not; so God, to make us hate self in every shape, causes us to feel it to be the plague of our hearts; and when this is the case, then it is that a man grows out of love with himself and falls at Jesus' feet, making his grace his song and boast, and crowning him Lord of all. Now, mark you, this is not the work of a day or two, like Jonah's gourd, but a long life-time. I have been nearly forty years coming to this point, but seem to have made very little progress yet; if any at all, I bless God for it. If God did not make us feel the plague of our hearts in this way, it would be the death of us; but God, to save our souls alive, kills our pride, kills our self-seeking; kills everything that opposes the work of grace in the soul. God means that all his children shall be out of love with themselves, but in love with him, his grace, and his work; for this purpose he puts us into the furnace repeatedly, and when all self, pride, and everything that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God is melted down and consumed, then the true gold will shine with the Refiner's image to "praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 7.)

Still, there is yet another sore grief which is felt by many a believer, who would trust to Christ alone and his finished work for life and salvation; it is the offspring of both Pride and Self; I mean Self-righteousness. How many souls, when convinced of sin, attempt in their own strength to attain eternal life, on the footing of their doings. How they labour, and tug, and toil to work out their own salvation; always aiming at and going about to establish their own righteousness, yet always failing; but like Job, until they are better taught, they will maintain their own supposed integrity and their own righteousness; they will not let it go. (Job xxvii. 5, 6.) But when the Spirit of Truth opens up to them the spirituality of God's law, that Christ has fulfilled it and delivered them from its curse by his life and his death, and that they are accepted in him, his righteousness being imputed to them, O how soon they renounce their own righteousness and count it as filthy rags; glad are they to flee naked to Christ and cleave to him. Ever after, they view all notions of creature merit as the very plague of their hearts; free grace becomes their darling theme, and their prayer is now, that they "may be found in him, not having on their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. iii. 9.)

JEHOVAH'S THRONE

THE

BELIEVER'S SANCTUARY.

A SERMON,
BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT JEWRY STREET CHAPEL, ALDGATE,
On Monday Evening, July 7th, 1862.

"A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."—JEREMIAH xvii. 12.

THE apostle Peter assures us (2 Peter i. 20, 21) "that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of private interpretation, For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And concurrent with this testimony is that of the apostle Paul, (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17,) wherein he says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." From these two unexceptionable witnesses we derive this important fact, that there is no part of God's word but what is divine truth, it being ALL divinely inspired; and though every part may not be equally important in matters of salvation, yet, nevertheless, the whole is to be regarded as God's word. This is a truth which every sincere believer in Jesus must hold with a firm grasp, like as the manslayer clung to the horns of the altar when the avenger of blood was at his heels. Here he will be safe though danger is near; for in these days, sceptics and infidels, both in the world and the professing church, are perpetually aiming to undermine the foundations of our faith, either by pretending to grapple with supposed difficulties, or making some frivolous objections which really are of no moment what-

ever. Not being themselves under the teachings of God's Spirit, these cavillers "understand neither what they say nor whereof they affirm;" yet, forsooth, they will tell us there are things in the Scriptures which *cannot* be explained, and allege there is "a defect, a mistake;" that the Scriptures are but *partially* inspired. Now this is indeed marvellous on their part, for them to take upon themselves to judge what is and what is not inspired, or to solve the knot of a difficulty by cutting it. How much better it would be for men to confess their inability to deal with questions above their comprehension, than to be finding fault with what has defied the attacks of disputants for ages past. Does it not remind one of a common saying, "Bad workmen always find fault with their tools"? Men would, indeed, be wise above what is written; but such wisdom as this "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish."

I make these remarks in consequence of the attacks on the sacred writings which have been recently made by one who is evidently "full of all subtlety and mischief, a child of the devil," though under the name and wearing the garb of a bishop. It is no small mercy to be able to see the drift of such men, and to know the spirit they are of.

Now, we readily grant there is in the Scriptures a diversity of subjects, as well as of style and ability, according to the natural abilities of the several writers. Things profound and obscure, in what belongs to God we expect to meet; but *partial* inspiration, insuperable difficulties, or radical deficiencies, we cannot for one moment admit. We take our stand upon this truth: "A *ll* Scripture is given by inspiration of God." We make no pretensions to understand everything. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter; in the meantime let us wait, we are perfectly safe here, for we are standing on a rock. Variety of subject-matter is obvious to us all; but it is the extreme of folly to deny the divine character of any particular part because we have at present no eyes to see it. The supernatural element runs through the whole, though some portions are sufficiently plain as to require no elucidation whatever. Then, again, we find there are some which can be easily opened up with aid close at hand, as if the key hung by the door side, the context being sufficient. Others, indeed, seem as though they

were enclosed in a hard case or outer shell, like a nut, which has to be broken up by external help, that is, a knowledge of history and of the manners and customs of Eastern nations being of great assistance. And there are others like choice articles deposited in a cabinet, the key of which the owner keeps in his own care, these cannot be opened and displayed until we have the key direct from Him whose province it is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us.

Of the last class I consider are the words which I have read as a text for this evening's discourse. They are a sentence in itself. It does not appear to me that they are connected with either the passage that goes before or that which follows. The power of God's Spirit upon the mind of Jeremiah is thus remarkably seen. There are a loftiness and grandeur in the language that seem to bespeak something divinely precious within its hidden meaning, and which could only have been spoken under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost. O may the same Spirit aid us in forming right conceptions of "the truth as it is in Jesus," and to a firm apprehension of it; so that we may not only escape making or receiving fanciful and mistaken impressions, but find profit and comfort in the consideration of what I believe to be a choice and delightful portion of God's holy word.

Our text speaks of a sanctuary. A sanctuary, as you know, is a sacred place, sacred to the worship of God. The word is also used for a place of protection, of retirement, of shelter. Here, doubtless, in a literal sense it refers to that inner chamber of the Jewish temple, called the Holy of holies. It was a peculiarly sanctified place; called, indeed, "a worldly sanctuary," as in Heb. ix. 1, because its materials were of a visible kind, and could be approached unto. It was ordained for the local worship of Jehovah, the Most High God, and for the congregated service of his people. Within this inner chamber, which was screened by a vail, was placed the ark of the covenant, overlaid with gold and sprinkled with blood. This was called the mercy-seat, and over it the glory of the Lord shone between the cherubim. There Jehovah took up his symbolical abode, and appeared to his servants from the time of its erection in the tabernacle to the time of the destruction of the first temple. In this sanctuary, (the Holy of holies,) on the great day of atone-

ment, the High Priest, as the representative of the people, presented the vicarious blood of the sacrifices as typical of an expiation for sin, and with it sprinkled the mercy-seat, agreeably to the divine command, all which prefigured the Saviour's intercession and the sinner's acceptance with God. But the Jewish dispensation has long passed away. The temple and the sacred ark, with its table and candlestick, have all been destroyed. Ichabod has been written, in large characters, on the place where the temple stood, and on the people themselves—"the glory has departed."

The Lord's dear people, his spiritual Israel I mean, have, however, a sanctuary which no outward circumstances can possibly destroy. It is a place which the vulture's eye hath not seen; it is the secret tabernacle of the Most High, the pavilion where the soul may hide in the time of trouble; it is the throne of grace, where believers in Christ may pour out their hearts before him; it is, indeed, a hallowed place, sacred to God the Father, sacred to God the Son, sacred to God the Holy Ghost, and sacred to every sinner seeking for life and salvation through Christ Jesus. And there is also another sanctuary besides this secret sanctuary of the soul; there is the open or public sanctuary, where the unseen Jehovah, the uncreated I AM, Jehovah Jesus, may be worshipped by all who love his name. It is found in the place where God's people meet in Christ's name to worship him in spirit and in truth; for "God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 24.) In all such places where the name of Christ the eternal Son of God is recorded, he comes to bless his people; Jesus himself is with them, and it is his presence which constitutes a place of worship a sanctuary to the humble, believing child of God.

I have already alluded to the Jewish Holy of holies, and in the 9th chapter of Hebrews, which was read, sufficient has been said upon the subject. I might, indeed, refer you to a passage (Ezek. xi. 16) where the Lord God declares "he will be a little sanctuary" to his people; but I am rather desirous, as the Lord may be pleased to help me, of presenting to your notice some of the characteristics which constitute the *place* of our sanctuary. There are four things which claim our consideration:

I. A Throne.

II. It is high.

III. It is glorious.

IV. Its ancient date: "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

I. The place of this sanctuary is said to consist of a **THRONE**. This is to be understood of the elevated place and seat reserved for a monarch when presiding over an assembly of his people. It is the chief seat, as is indicated by its being raised above the common level. It is the seat of power, the place of government, the source of all authority and law. Spiritually considered, the place of our sanctuary is the throne of the heavenly King; it is Jehovah's throne, a throne of grace, a mercy-seat. From this throne the God of heaven dispenses his favours to his royal favourites. Here, wonderful to tell, "pardoned rebels sit and hold communion with their Lord." Yes, at the footstool of divine mercy every rebel made the subject of divine grace comes as an humble suppliant for life, pardon, and peace. Though once they were rebels and broke his holy law, yet now he bestows from this place mercy and pardon. It is here he gives peace to anxious penitents; it is here he bestows gifts to his children; it is here he administers justice to all who are oppressed; it is here he commands, regulates, and overrules all things by the word of his power and his providence, both for the good of his people and the destruction of his enemies. It is here the believer comes for life, justification, sanctification, grace, power, and authority. He comes here to have a faith's view of the infinite majesty of the eternal Jehovah. It is here where he has humbling views of himself; it is here he has exalted views of the Person, work, offices, and characters of his most glorious Lord and Redeemer; it is here he rejoices that "the Lord reigneth," and that he has been made willing in the day of His power, and crowns Jesus Lord of all.

Come, believer, what think you of this throne? Does it correspond with your experience? Has it not been a throne of grace, a mercy-seat to you, when sunk in misery and despair? Was it not here you first drew, as it were, your vital breath of humble, fervent prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner"? Is not this throne all that we say it is, ay, and much more too? How can

poor finite mortals like ourselves pretend to sum up or describe the glory of this throne. It is the foundation of all our trust, all our hope. We set our seals to the truth which Newton has written:

“When first before his mercy-seat
Thou didst to him thy all commit,
He gave thee warrant from that hour
To trust his wisdom, love, and power.”

II. This throne is said to be *HIGH*. Yes, *it is high in its own nature*; for it is holy. “Thus saith the Lord, I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.” (Isa. lxvi. 2.) O ye trembling ones, ye whom God’s word has made to feel nervous, a shaking within, God is very near you. High as is his throne, it is as low as you are: your spirit is just such as is fitted for it. He raises you to his holy throne, “for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” “Be not afraid, only believe. You say you feel yourself sinful; but he says your iniquity is purged. Why do you doubt his word? If your iniquity is purged, you are clean,” made to be partaker of his holiness. Let God be true, and unbelief be put to shame, and hide itself in the dust of self-abasement.

This throne is *heavenly*. Far above all that is earthly. “Thus saith the Lord, heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool.” (Isa. lxvi. 1.) “It is 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.” (Eph. i. 21.) O what a mercy this is to the poor, tried, persecuted child of God, oppressed above measure by the sons of earth. They would not only crush the life out of him if they could, but they would rob him of his throne. But his God is in the heavens, and His throne is eternally settled in the high court of heaven. From this throne God utters his voice on behalf of all his persecuted saints: “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.” (Ps. xii. 5.)

This throne is not only heavenly, but it is *spiritual*. Far above all that is material and carnal, sensual and groveling, and of an earthly nature. They that are of the earth do mind the things of the earth, are earthly in

themselves, and, like the worms of the earth, they rise no higher than the earth. To this heavenly throne they never glance an eye, they never look to Christ, they never come to the mercy-seat, they never look to this high throne with hope for mercy and pardon. But the renewed soul, the spiritually taught believer, looks to Christ, he comes to God, he minds the things of the spirit, he looks to Him who dwells in the high and holy place; and Jehovah in return looks "to him who is of an humble and contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word."

Again, this throne is high above everything of human nature; above all human conception, high above all carnal reason. It is high above the reach of Satan's rage; above the reach of men's pride, malice, or persecuting spirit. It is high above the reach of all sin and guilt. Sin cannot enter here; for death, hell, and the grave have been completely subdued by him who sits upon this throne.

This throne is *very high*, so high, that no human merit can reach it; no self-righteousness can touch it; no, not even come near it; no, not even one's own blood. Our own blood, if it were shed for our own sin, would be but the well merited penalty. It could never, by any possible means, be a propitiation for sin. This throne is holy, and must not be polluted with the blood of a sinner; but it may be sprinkled with the blood of the spotless Lamb of God; the mercy-seat of the Jewish tabernacle was never sprinkled otherwise than with the blood of a lamb or bullock, without spot. This was the shadow of good things to come. The blood of our Immanuel is an atonement, it is a propitiation, for it was an acceptable offering in righteousness. His Person being holy and immaculate, therefore his blood, his merits did avail; and because this blood of sprinkling did avail, it speaks better things than that of Abel; for Abel's offering, good as it was in itself and acceptable, was but the type and shadow; but this is the substance, the true sacrifice for sin; and because it avails, it is accepted for every believing sinner who comes to this high throne for grace and help in every time of need; be he ever so humble, ever so lowly in himself, here is access for him, free access; but none to the high-minded and carnal professor, the sham Christian, the nominal Christian, the proud, boasting pharisee; it is out of his reach altogether.

III. This throne is not only high, but it is said to be **GLORIOUS**. It is glorious because it is the throne of the eternal Father. He sits here in all the glory of his divine majesty.

“ His glories shine with beams so bright,
No mortal eye can bear the sight.”

It is glorious because from it God's countenance shines upon us in the face of Jesus Christ; glorious through the blood of the eternal covenant, the blood of the Son of God; glorious because of the all-sufficiency of his atonement for all who come to God by him; glorious because of the completeness of his atonement to the satisfaction of divine justice.

“ Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flame;
Our God appear'd consuming fire,
And vengeance was his name.”

But there is no wrath now. The throne is sprinkled with atoning blood. The Father is well pleased with his Son Jesus for his righteousness' sake. He has magnified the law and made it honourable. The church of the living God is accepted in him: for

“ In him the Father never saw
The least transgression of his law;
Perfection, then, in Christ we view;
His saints in him are perfect too.”

This throne, then, becomes glorious through the mediatorship of our divine Lord, our ever-living Head, our glorious substitute, our most glorious Christ. It is glorious to us because by this new and living way, (his mediatorship,) we can now come to God. We are brought nigh by the blood of Christ; we, who were once far off by the sin of fallen Adam and by our own actual transgressions, are now permitted to approach this throne. His atonement hath both cleared the way to our approach, and hath made it the place of our sanctuary. This throne is most glorious to behold with the eye of faith; most glorious to realise in the conscience of every sin-pardoned rebel. Every sinner enlightened by the Holy Ghost finds pardon at this throne of the heavenly Father, through the blood of Jesus Christ his dear Son; and it is from this throne that peace is applied to the conscience by the

same Spirit who first led him to it. Believer in Jesus, is not this your experience? I am sure that it is, if I may judge from my own. Seeking soul, are you desirous of finding pardon and peace? seek it here; seek it at this glorious high throne, the only place of your sanctuary.

Further. This throne is glorious, because it is founded and established upon the infinite and immutable holiness, justice, truth, and love of God the eternal Father. "God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness." Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne," "Mercy and truth shall go before his face." (Ps. lxxvii. 8, Ps. lxxxix. 14.) All the divine perfections combine to make this throne glorious. Whatever God is, that is his throne. The perfections of Jehovah cannot be considered apart from himself; they are not abstract qualities; and, glorious as is this fact, if I might so say, his throne is still more glorious to his Church, because these divine perfections are seen all concentrated in, and radiating through, the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. How could we, who are fallen creatures in ourselves, approach Deity in its abstract form. Impossible. Our nature, as fallen creatures, is depraved and could by no means, in the moral fitness of things, ever be brought into contact with the divine nature. "No man hath at any time seen the Father, or ever can see him; but he that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father." This is provided for in the economy of redemption. The saints of God who are dear to him by covenant love, shall be made near unto him by the Son of God taking their nature into personal union with himself; and in virtue of this covenant engagement the Holy Spirit regenerates them, thereby making them partakers of the divine nature and meet for the heavenly inheritance. Here, then, we see the throne of Jehovah made most glorious by the personal acts of each of the ever blessed Trinity. By the Father's love, the incarnation of his Son, and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, the people of God find this glorious high throne is made the place of their sanctuary. It is glorious in itself; it is made glorious to the saints of God—to all of them, the weak as well as the strong—to all who come thereto for life and salvation.

And, because this throne is *holy* it is *glorious*, "glorious in holiness." Where sin entered this world and ruined the nature of man, the throne of God stood immutable.

Divine justice is immutable; sin left it still as inflexible as it ever was, though dishonoured. The law being broken, the sinner must die. This was the divine decree; it had gone forth. "The soul that sinneth shall die." Shall, then, justice be dishonoured by leaving sin unpunished? Shall the authority of God's law be weakened by letting the sinner go free or escape with impunity? No! But, though God will by no means clear the guilty against the principles of his righteous government, yet, glory be to his rich, free, and sovereign grace; he hath devised means by which his banished ones may be not expelled from him. He gave his only begotten Son to take their place and stand. He became their Surety in that covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure. In the fulness of time he was made flesh, became their substitute, magnified the law by his perfect obedience; and made it honourable by his death as an offering for sin, and thereby expiated all their guilt. Thus the justice of God was satisfied, his holiness vindicated, and now the blood sprinkled upon the mercy-seat ever remains as a propitiation for sin to all believers whose consciences in this time-state, may again contract fresh guilt.

And now, because divine justice has been satisfied in the death of Christ, and the majesty of God's holiness maintained by his obedience, therefore the everlasting love of God can be set forth and divine mercy displayed to every seeking, returning, penitent sinner. It was because of God's everlasting love that the Son of God became the Surety of his church. He took their Law place, and he fulfilled, on their behalf, the law which they had broken; and his obedience is imputed to them, and becomes their righteousness; therefore are they without fault before the throne: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) This throne, then, is glorious, because divine mercy can now be displayed to every poor sinner feeling his lost, ruined, rebellious state before God. O, is there a poor soul here who feels his want of mercy? See here, how rich, how full, how free it flows through the death of Christ! O may the Spirit of truth help you to lay hold of the hope set before you. This is the glorious gospel of the grace

of God: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Well has it been said, "His glory is great in our salvation." How honourable to God; how safe to man. The Son of God has made his throne most glorious. Let me repeat it; our Lord Jesus Christ, by his perfect obedience and complete atonement, has set forth the divine perfections most gloriously:

"Mercy and truth on earth have met,
Since Christ the Lord came down from heaven;
By his obedience, so complete,
Justice is pleased, and sin forgiven."

Here, then, you see, is another precious truth set forth, making this throne glorious in every point of view—sin forgiven,—so that every sinner, every prodigal, every rebel against God's law, coming to this throne, trusting to the atoning blood of Christ, shall find pardon. There are no ifs, no buts, no may-be's; but all is positive, gracious assurance. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. lv. 7.) This is God's truth—truth from his own lips. Do you doubt it? Try it for yourself. Truth is the rock, the firm foundation, on which the throne of God rests. What can you have better for your own soul to rest upon?

God's truth is the rock on which the church's faith is built. Your doubts and your fears cannot shake it, though they often shake you and make you tremble. O, pray for strength in your soul; he will give more grace, he will strengthen your faith and your hope. May he enable you to lay hold of this precious truth: "There is forgiveness with thee;" so shall you blessedly find pardon and peace,—saved from hell; saved from sin; redeemed to God!

IV. I pass on to notice, in the fourth place, the *ancient date* of this glorious high throne. *From the beginning*, Earthly thrones have no such date. There is one throne in Europe which, indeed, has lasted nearly three hundred years in one direct line; but what is that short period of time compared to the date of this glorious, high throne of which we are speaking? for from the beginning it has been a glorious high throne.

What, then, is here intended by "from the beginning?" From the beginning of time? As far back as the creation? Yes; that is included, certainly; but that is not the full meaning intended. I think it means long before time began,—long before nature had its being. I believe it to mean in the beginning of the eternal covenant of grace. It had its beginning in the everlasting love of God the Father. It had its beginning when the glorious plan of redemption was formed by the eternal Three-One Jehovah. It had its beginning in the council of peace between the Father and the Son; and thus in eternity, from the very first of man's ruin being foreseen, was the existence of this sanctuary, this glorious high throne. It was the place of our sanctuary, as we stood in Christ, before time began; before the foundation of the world. It had its beginning from the moment when the Son of God became the Surety of his church. This was proved on earth when the first man sinned. The promise of the covenant of grace was first declared to him as the blessed result of the sanctuary being already in existence from the beginning. Christ was our sanctuary before Adam fell. To suppose the contrary would involve the necessity of believing God to be taken by surprise at the unforeseen event of Adam's fall, and not providing a scheme of salvation until the necessities of the case pointed out what was requisite to be done; all which is a grave imputation on the wisdom and knowledge of God, yet this is believed in and insisted upon by many of the preachers of the day. It is, I know, in harmony with the human brain, but not with the word of God. The scheme of salvation as a remedial expedient *after* the fall of man leads to free-will, gives God's word the lie, and takes the crown from off Jesus' head, and casts it to the ground. Let me ask your attention to the scripture contained in the Apostle Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. iii.: "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." (v. 9 to 12.) Here is revealed the eternity of the

Lord Jesus Christ. His Person is eternal, his Mediatorship is undertaken in eternity,—hid in God, revealed in his incarnation; revealed unto us by his Spirit. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh." From the beginning, the great Head of the church was the Sanctuary of all believers, the whole church of God: "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world." So that there comes out this great and glorious fact, that before Adam fell, before the earth or the heavens were made, the Church of God was safe in Christ our Sanctuary. Listen, again, to another portion of Scripture. (Col. i. 11-18.) "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."

We have now to consider, in the last place, a most vital part of our subject. Our text says, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of *our* sanctuary." That little word *our* is of great importance in a subject like this. Jeremiah used the word *our* rightly. He, as a Jew, worshipping the only true God, Jehovah, could, on behalf of his nation, at least so far as the true Israel of God were concerned, say, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of *our* sanctuary." But God is no respecter of persons, nationally so. The Jews, as a nation, are no longer the exclusive people of God; nor are *we* because born in a Christian country, so called. True religion is a personal thing; it is a matter of faith between God and the soul; an inwrought work by the power of his Spirit. Now, my hearer, can you say, "*It is my* sanctuary?" Be not afraid to examine yourself, or to commune with your own heart. I have no wish to bring you into bondage by a raking question of this sort, but rather into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Come, let me appeal to your con-

science ; let me ask you plainly, have you come to this sanctuary as reclaimed rebels for mercy ? Are you looking for mercy to atoning blood ? If so, you have Jesus standing before the throne of his Father as your eternal Mediator, your Advocate, Intercessor : " He ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto God by him."

If, then, the Holy Spirit has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus, he has taken of the things of Christ and revealed them unto us ; he has revealed this great, grand, and glorious truth, that the throne of Jehovah is our sanctuary ; a sanctuary by virtue of his immutable holiness, his inviolable justice, his everlasting love, and his adorable mercy. Again, let me tell you, by the atoning blood of Immanuel the justice of God has been satisfied and his holiness everlastingly vindicated. Now, God's eternal love can be set forth and his abundant mercy bestowed to every returning prodigal. This sanctuary is raised on purpose for all who feel their need of Christ, as a place of refuge and security from the curse due to sin, and the stings of a guilty conscience :

" No fiery vengeance now, no burning wrath comes down ;
If justice calls for sinner's blood, the Saviour shows his own."

" Let us, therefore, come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find help in every time of need." You who stand trembling and fearing lest you should find the door of mercy shut, O take courage ; come just as you are ; wait for no human fitness, no creature merit ; fear not. What is it hinders ? Look away from yourself ; look to Christ alone :

" The door of his mercy stands open all day,
To the poor and the needy who knock by the way ;
No sinner shall ever be empty sent back,
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus' sake."

THE
MINISTRATION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

A SERMON,
BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT JEWRY STREET CHAPEL,

On Monday Evening, July 21st, 1862.

“ But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”—
JOHN xiv. 26.

THERE is no history in the world like that which records the last week of our Lord's public life on earth. It is crowded with incidents of the deepest interest to all believers; their life and their hopes of immortality are bound up in it. Neither is there any discourse in the Bible like that which fell from the lips of our Lord on the night in which he was betrayed; for it contains the germs of all those truths which the disciples were taught to hold as the doctrines of the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

This verse which we have taken as a text is a portion of that discourse. It contains a most important doctrine—the ministration of the Spirit. Its central truth is, that the Holy Spirit is the Teacher of the Church of Christ.

This central truth arises out of the gracious compact between the Eternal Three in the Covenant of Grace; it is based on the fundamental truth of the Trinity in Unity of the glorious Godhead, in the distinct Personalities of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is God the Father sending the Holy Ghost, in the name of his Son, to teach his people divine truth—the way of salvation.

Such a revelation as this by the Lord Jesus Christ to the believer renewed in the spirit of his mind must

necessarily, therefore, lead him to regard the teachings of the Holy Spirit as being in the highest degree most essential and exceedingly precious. This teaching is the Sun which illuminates the whole hemisphere of divine truth, and enlightens the eye of the understanding. Divine truth can only be understood by those who are spiritually taught. The natural man does not, cannot, receive the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; that is, they can only be discerned by the spiritual man (1 Cor. i. 14).

Observe, in the 16th verse, our Lord first speaks of the Holy Ghost as another Comforter; **MENAHÉM, PARACLETOS**, signifying an advocate, comforter; and a sweet truth it is to feel that sinners such as we have such an Advocate and Comforter—so near to us as to be dwelling in us. Jesus our Advocate in heaven for us with the Father, and the Holy Ghost our Advocate within us while on earth. O, what a glorious Comforter! Jehovah, in each of his divine Personalities, is the one Comforter of the Church of God in its militant and triumphant state.

But we must further observe, the Holy Ghost is also called the Spirit of Truth. Here his *character and office* are first developed; then, in our text his *Person* is fully declared; while, at the same time, both his mission and the manner of it are so graciously explained that we cannot but see all the Persons of the Godhead are united in bringing the redeemed to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. What a testimony we have here, both in this, the 26th verse and also the 16th verse, to the fact of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. Not a Trinity of *manifestations*, as some aver, *but of persons*, really and truly. The *Son* prays the *Father* for the gift of the *Comforter*; then the *Father* sends the *Comforter* in the name of *Christ* the Son. What a glorious Trinity in Unity! The undivided One, the uncreated and eternal Jehovah; distinct in their Personality, yet one in the Unity of the incomprehensible essence; distinguished as to order of subsistence and also by their personal qualities. Each Person is God most high, and all three Persons but one undivided Godhead, the same in nature, and equal in power, glory, and eternity; so that the Eternal Father, the Eternal Son, and the Eternal Spirit are the one incomprehensible Jehovah. This great truth, however,

we must remember, is more a matter of faith than of the understanding.

" To comprehend the great Three-One,
Is more than highest angels can ;
Or what the Trinity has done,
From death and hell to ransom man."

I pass on to notice, in connection with our text, that the range of knowledge possessed by the disciples was extremely limited till they were specially taught by the Holy Ghost. Their ideas of Christ's kingdom were very vague and imperfect. Their notions were chiefly of an outward or worldly character. They were not suddenly prepared by the Lord to receive spiritual truth ; they were slow of heart to believe all what the prophets had spoken. His teaching was gradual, apparently at times ineffective, for oftentimes He upbraided them ; but in this discourse He assured them that their memory should be enabled to recall the things He had said, and He intimated to them that He would not then say what at a later period of their understanding and experience would be more needful and advantageous for them to know. The principal ideas which Jesus seemed to impress upon the disciples were, that the Comforter would further unfold those truths which he had already begun to impart, and that the Spirit's teaching would not only be found to agree with that of his own, but would also have one object in particular—the displaying to them the glorious Person, work, and character of the God-man Christ Jesus, in the redemption of the Church by his atonement to God the Father for their sin.

Here, then, is our position as believers. The inspired word is complete ; all needful truth as to our relations with God is there revealed. We have all the advantages the disciples possessed, yet how little we know of divine truth ; we still require teaching. What can we know without ? We need the ministration of the Holy Spirit as much as ever the disciples did. Now, if you and I have been made sensible of our ignorance and our need of his teaching, we shall not fail to seek his aid in helping our conceptions of divine realities, both at this and at all other times whenever we read and meditate on his holy word.

I. Let us now attempt, in the first place, to make a few remarks on

The Person and Nature of the Holy Ghost. The word *Person*, I am aware, is not employed in Scripture to designate the Holy Spirit, but it is nevertheless plainly implied; nor is the word *third*, but both terms are commonly used merely for distinction's sake in the human mind, and have no reference to order of time or equality. The Person of the Holy Spirit is God, equal in nature, power, and glory with the Father and the Son—distinct in his Personality, yet one in the Unity of the incomprehensible Jehovah. Of his Personality, we may say, that Christ always speaks of him as a Person, as is plainly indicated by the use of the pronouns *he, his, himself, &c.* I would fain quote a number of scriptures for proof, but this would take up too much of our time; and besides, I must bear in mind I am not discussing with Unitarians or Socinians. I doubt not but that most of you are familiar with the word of God on this important branch of truth, and that you receive it with joy and love as well as faith. Respecting the *nature* of this divine Person, he is *Spiritual*, essentially so, hence his name; and, being in his essence spiritual, is invisible to the bodily sense of sight. He is *omnipresent*, being everywhere present in the hearts of all true believers in Jesus; he dwells in them—making their bodies his temple. He is *holiness*, essentially so, hence his name; and, being essentially holy, he is the author, source, and fountain of holiness, purity and goodness. He is *divine*, essentially so, and hence he is often spoken of as the Divine Spirit. Believers in Christ are said to be partakers of the divine nature, because all that they possess of holiness, goodness, spiritualness, truthfulness, and heavenly-mindedness is derived from him. He communicates, imparts to them of his spirit, not his essence as God, but his nature. He is *truth*, essentially so; he is called the Spirit of Truth (John xvi. 13). He that is holiness itself cannot but be truth itself; no truth can be received and known until the Spirit of Truth imparts it. He is *Almighty*, essentially so. Thus it is we use the words “God the Holy Ghost.” His operations in the hearts of men fully demonstrate that he is God. What but an almighty power can renew the mind of man in the image of Him who created him? What is your own experience on this matter? Has it any correspondence with the declaration of God's word? You say you were once dead in trespasses and in sins; you were dead to God; but now you humbly

trust you live unto God. Well, then, who quickened your dead soul? Who opened your blind eyes? Who turned your affections to things above, where Christ sitteth, and made them to savour of the things of God? "O," say you, "it was God the Holy Ghost. His power I felt to be almighty, invincible, and irresistible; and it was as gracious as it was free." Ah, my brother or my sister in Christ, it is so—

" 'Tis God's inimitable hand
That moulds and forms the heart anew."

" Learning and wit may cease their strife,
When miracles with glory shine;
The voice that calls the dead to life
Must be almighty and divine."

On the other hand how sad, and how awful, is the state of those churches, families, and individuals who are without the teachings of God the Holy Ghost. Whatever understanding there may be of Bible truth, it is but the letter of it, not the power; they have no vitality, no spirituality, no real godliness. The mental or mere natural reception of the great truth which we are speaking of, is totally powerless in itself. Divine and almighty power is indispensable to receive and to acknowledge the Person and operations of God the Holy Ghost.

II. I proceed now to notice in the second place—

That the Ministration of the Holy Ghost is by virtue of the Commission and Authority of God the Father.

When we speak of the Holy Ghost as the administrator of the Covenant of Grace, we by no means intimate or intend to infer that he is inferior in power, nature, glory, or authority to either of the Persons of the Father or the Son. The offices of each Person in the Trinity for carrying forth the great work of Salvation are as distinct as are their Persons. The object is one—the salvation of the Church of God. All are united and engaged in it equally, even as the Godhead is one; hence the salvation of each and every elect vessel of mercy is of God alone.

God the Father loved the Church with an everlasting love. He determined on the salvation of his people; He chose their persons in Christ His Son, who became their Covenant Head; he blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him before time began, before the foundation of the world, before the fall of Adam. It

is manifest, therefore, that nothing having respect to the merits or works of the creature could have moved the mind of God. Doubtless he foresaw that *all* the race of mankind was involved in the ruin of the first transgression ; but that he should save some and not save all can only be ascribed to reasons of his own sovereign goodness ; and in speaking of God's sovereignty, just let me observe there can be nothing of arbitrariness in the nature of God as a sovereign. This would be absurd to suppose. He has revealed that his justice is fully satisfied in the death of his Son as the substitute of his chosen, and therefore we ascribe the work of Salvation to God's free and boundless grace.

God the Son has equally and fully manifested his grace in the Salvation of his Church, in undertaking in the fulness of time to become Incarnate. The love of Christ passeth knowledge, when we consider "that for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." That he should leave his primeval glory, the glory that he had with his Father before the world was, and take our nature into personal union with himself, is wonderful indeed. Well does he deserve the name Wonderful (Isaiah ix. 6). Wonderful in his condescension to take our nature ; wonderful in his willingness to take our low place ; wonderful in his love to become our Surety, Mediator, Substitute, and Redeemer. What could move him thereto but his own innate love to us ? The love of Christ is as truly inconceivable even as he is in himself the "unspeakable gift" of God the Father. It is under this view of Christ's free, boundless, and eternal love to us, when made known to us under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, that our souls become animated and fired with love to him. We love him because he first loved us ; and it is his love which becomes the ruling principle in us to serve him and to follow him in all that his will and word direct—the love of Christ constraineth us in all we are and do.

God the Holy Ghost is also manifested as being equally engaged in the work of Salvation as the Father and the Son. His work, if I might so say, is more demonstrative, more tangible, being brought home to our consciousness and experience. He is the Witnesser of what the Father *is*, and what the Son *has done*. His office is to testify to the believer of the truth as revealed in the Scriptures.

He does not, indeed, speak of himself in the manner that Christ speaks of himself; but all his operations in the heart, and his communications to the understanding and the affections bear ample testimony of his work, character, love, and power as being fully equal in divine grace, love, goodness, truth, and power in all that concerns the covenant of grace and the salvation of each believer in Christ.

Thus we perceive, as revealed in the Word of God and by his Spirit, the several parts of the great work of man's redemption, which each of the divine Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity have undertaken to perform. The salvation of the church, in the eternal plan and mind of God, is perfect and complete, though in the personal experience of individual believers it is not so until the spirit is dismissed from the body, and the body itself is redeemed from the power of the grave on the morning of the general resurrection. Salvation, effectively, is wrought out *in our time-state*, and in harmony with God's providence on earth. All God's people, therefore, in harmony with the manifestations of his truth on earth, and the general designs of his providence, are, in process of time, sooner or later brought to a knowledge of himself by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and their characters as believers in Christ, while in the world, are known by the fruits and graces of the Spirit, which they produce and exhibit in their general conduct and manners of life. Being separated from the world in its spirit, pursuits, pleasures, and maxims, they show that their sentiments, motives, and course of life are regulated by the principles of the gospel. Such only, whose outward testimony of the salvation within, can be deemed worthy of the name of Christian. O! my hearers, how stands it with you? This is a solemn question; let it come home to you, and examine yourselves. Know whether ye be in the faith.

But I must not forget to speak to the point in hand. I said that the ministration of the Holy Ghost is by virtue of the commission and authority of God the Father. I have given you a general statement of the method of salvation in the several acts of Father, Son, and Spirit, and also a brief sketch of the manner in which it is developed in those who are its participants; I have now to show more particularly *the authority* which God the Father possesses in relation to the work of the Spirit.

God the Father, by virtue of his own proper nature as

God, as the Creator of the universe, the Creator of man and of all other intelligences, has authority alone over all things which he has made. (Ps. xcv. 5; and c. 3.) "Behold, all souls are mine." (Ezek. xviii. 4.) "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay?" (Rom. ix. 20, 21.) "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him?" (Isa. xl. 13.) "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. iv. 35.) "He is Lord of all." "He is King of kings, and Lord of lords." "He is the only Potentate." (Acts x. 36; Rev. xix. 16; 1 Tim. vi. 15.) The centre of all authority, therefore, is in God, and all other authority must be derived from him; for he is the source of it. As, therefore, the plan of man's redemption originated with God, he alone has the right of authority as to the method of its accomplishment. This is seen in his own choice of the persons saved, his blessing them in Christ, giving Christ to be their head, and in giving them to him as his body, the church. (John xvii. 2; vi. 9; Eph. i. 4, 22; v. 23; Col. i. 18.)

Now comes the gracious disclosure of the Redeemer himself. The promise of the Holy Ghost, as the Comforter of his sorrowing disciples, is declared to them. His Personality is revealed in the designation given of his nature—the Holy Ghost. Then we have the manner of his coming made known—*sent by the Father*. Not that his being sent implies inferiority. By no means. The part each Person of the Godhead takes in salvation is a *joint* transaction, though *personally distinct* in its accomplishment. The work of salvation in men's hearts is begun and carried on by some one, and in some manner. Can we define it in any other way than the Saviour himself has done? Being a spiritual operation in the soul, can any other person than the Holy Ghost take possession of us, create in us a new heart, renew a right spirit, dwell in us, teach us, comfort us, lead us, and preserve us unto his kingdom of glory? 'Tis true Christ dwells in our hearts, but then it is by faith, not personally; that could not be. And there is a sense, too, in which it is said both God the Father and the Son dwell and abide with the believer, (John xiv. 23,) but even this is as the spirit of

love; and here is the secret, the main-spring, as it were, of the Father's authority in sending the Spirit as the Comforter of the church—he comes by virtue of his being the Spirit of love, the love of God the Father, and the love of God the Son. In all this there is equality and unity; not inferiority or priority. Jesus himself speaks of sending the Spirit; (John xvi. 7;) and in the 28th verse, of his coming forth from the Father. Hence, then, by the unity there is in the Godhead, there can be no inferiority or priority of either Personality, position, or essence in the Triune Jehovah. But seeing that we, for distinction's sake, ascribe to the Father the supremacy of all things, and that the origination of salvation was from his love, and was the moving cause of Christ coming into the world to save sinners, (John iii. 16; 1 Tim. i. 15,) so we perceive, as declared in the Scriptures of truth, the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father with authority, the highest authority, the best authority—LOVE—being commissioned to execute the work of salvation in each believer's soul in the spirit of love. GOD IS LOVE. We are witnesses of the fact that LOVE, as a principle, is the main-spring of all good felt in the heart, or done in the life. It is the powerful lever which moves man to exercise himself in acts of kindness for the benefit of his species. And thus we find revealed in the word of truth, it is the love of God the Father which moves him to send forth the Spirit to regenerate his elect vessels of mercy—to call them out of the kingdom of darkness, and to translate them into the kingdom of his dear Son. As, therefore, love is the great moral power by which men's hearts are moved, so we find there is, in the work of redeeming love, power, efficiency, and completeness.

“What almighty love decrees,
Almighty power performs.”

O! my soul, “his glory is great in thy salvation.” (Ps. xxi. 5.)

III. *We come now to show, in the third place, that the ministration of the Holy Ghost is IN THE NAME of Christ.*

The Holy Ghost comes not in his name. Christ did not; he came in the Father's name. The Holy Ghost comes in the name of Christ. His own name would have been sufficient had he chosen to have come in that, but we see a propriety and unity of action in his not doing so. Our Lord declares “he shall not speak of himself;” he shall

not refer to himself personally ; his own acts shall demonstrate who he is, what his work is, and from whom he proceeds. "He shall testify of me;" (John xv. 26;) "he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you;" (John xvi. 15;) and, indeed, throughout the whole of this valedictory discourse—the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters—we have most gloriously displayed the working out of our salvation by the Eternal Three. It is traced to the love of God the Father in eternity—the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus as our substitute, and the operation of the Holy Ghost in our hearts in this time-state; so that, in the covenant of grace, which is ordered in all things and sure, we see the salvation of each believer is effectually and finally accomplished in the same unity of *action* as there was in *purpose*. It is thus the work is made most glorious. The Father's love is made known to us by Christ himself. All that Christ has done for us is made known to us by the Holy Ghost, in the name of Christ, by his authority, by virtue of what he had done—that "name which is above every name;" that name in which we come to the throne of God for mercy, and find acceptance for his sake.

But now let us inquire what *advantages* the church of God derive by the Holy Ghost coming in the name of Christ.

1. *He represents the Person of Christ, and supplies his place.*—This, it seems, our Lord intimates is not only the intention, but that it would be better for his disciples than his own personal presence; for he says, "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you," (John xvi. 7,) meaning that the comfort and advantage of his bodily presence would be supplied by the Comforter coming to them instead, and abiding with them for ever; and he tells them, in giving his charge, to go and preach the gospel everywhere. "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Therefore the church of God, its ministers, especially, by the abiding and indwelling of the Spirit, have that which is equivalent to the personal presence of Christ; for they are essentially one. However advantageous it might be to have the bodily presence of Christ, yet it could only be in a limited degree, and in some particular locality, wherever he might choose to be, for it is impossible that his corporeal body could be ubiquitous—that is, in two or more places at one time. But seeing that

the Holy Ghost is not a corporeal being, but spiritual and omnipresent—present in the hearts of all believers—the advantage is to each and every member of the mystical body of Christ that HE represents the person of Christ and supplies his place in all their circumstances and conditions, the same as if Jesus Christ himself were bodily present with them.

2. *He works the works of Christ.*—As Jesus did not his own work, but the works of his Father who sent him, and in his name, so the Holy Spirit works not his own work in his own name, but he works the works of Christ, by whom he is sent, and in whose name he accomplishes it. (John xvi. 13—15.) That is to say, the work of the Spirit is not to reveal any new truth or grace, but to confirm and build up that of which Christ came to lay the foundation. The advantage of this is, that hereby we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. There is a perfect harmony and unity in all divine revelation and teaching. Whatever Christ has revealed of the Father, the Spirit takes of Christ and reveals unto the church. His great work, however, is to glorify Christ in all his offices and characters, just as it was the work of Christ to glorify the Father, by whom he was sent. Let believers bear this in mind, whenever they stand in need of his assistance in their work in the church of God, and for their own growth in grace and knowledge of the truth. Truth and grace are what Christ dispenses; (John i. 17;) the meaning of which, as I understand it, is *that which is revealed and that which is effected*. Now, since Christ has ascended into the highest heavens, and is for ever sat down on the throne of his Father, what could be more appropriate, and advantageous to believers in Christ, than that the Spirit of all grace and truth should take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us? And I say, if we are of those who believe to the saving of the soul, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”

3. *He is received as the Spirit of God the Father and of the Son—the Spirit of love.*—Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ love his name, love his person, love his work, love his word, love his house, and love his people. “We love him because he first loved us.” (1 John iv. 19.) “By this we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” (1 John iii. 14.) Believers not only love him that is begotten, but also love him that begat, for

every one who is born of God is born of the Spirit. (1 John v. 1; John iii. 5.) They love the Spirit; they love him because of the things of which he bears testimony in their hearts and experience—the Spirit of faith, of adoption, of a sound mind; they love him because of the name and person whom he represents; they love him because he is the Spirit of truth; they love him because he is the Spirit of holiness. Born of God, they hate all sin and all error, and are only happy and prosperous in their souls as he exercises his influence as their teacher, and sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts by his sweet influence and power: they love him because he is the author of all those gifts, graces, and fruits which indicate the life of God in the soul. Hence it is they pray him never to depart from them; not an exercise of devotion or meditation do they find profitable without him. Their spirituality of mind, desires, hopes, motives, joy and peace they derive alone from him; for all this and much more they pray him to bestow, and to abound in every good word and work, and therefore He is received as the Spirit of Love. Well will it be if all of us now present have received him as the Spirit of Love.

IV.—I pass on to shew in the FOURTH place, *that the ministration of the Holy Ghost is manifested to Believers by an evidence peculiar and proper to itself.*

By the phrase, “evidence peculiar and proper to itself,” I mean, as the work of grace is spiritual, so all its parts, operations, and witness are spiritual. What is true of the whole must be true of its parts. Every schoolboy is taught this, and it is believed in and acted on in the world. But in Religion, men seem to have a warped understanding, and vainly endeavour to bring to bear, things that have no common principles of agreement whatever. The things of the flesh are confounded with the things of the Spirit. What is a large part of the profession in the present day but a fleshly, carnal, empty round of performances in the name of religion. Thousands having a name to live while they are dead, scoff at spiritual religion and call it mysticism and fanaticism. Well, let it be so. Our Lord says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” John iii. 6. They are essentially distinct in their nature, and also in their operations. This is the teaching of Christ, and the evidence of the Holy Ghost is in his teach-

ing the Church all things which Christ came to do and teach.

God's word reveals to us that all men by nature are dead in sin, dead to God, dead to spiritual truth. The Gospel, that Christ died for sinners is preached to all men ; some believe and some believe not. The unbeliever is condemned because his deeds are evil, he loves darkness rather than light, he hateth the light, and will not come within its influence lest his deeds should be reprov'd. (John iii. 19—20.) The believer is saved, but his faith is ascribed to God, being his gift, and because of the Divine power working with the truth. (Eph. ii. 8.) Here then is the immutable truth of God. Man's damnation is of himself, but salvation is all of free, sovereign grace.

1.—His soul is quickened. Divine life is imparted. He is a new creature. He possesses life in Christ Jesus. His affections and understanding are renewed, renewed in the spirit of his mind—he has a new heart, not the carnal heart new modelled, as certain of our own poets have said.* The evidence of all this is peculiar and proper to itself—“in demonstration of the Spirit, with power and much assurance ;” the object of the affections being changed, a new direction is given to the will and to the affections ; a new motive power in all the thoughts, desires and aims ; the love of Christ is constraining, being shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost ; hence there is joy and peace in the Holy Ghost ; partly because there is a sense of pardoned sin, and, partly, because the Soul has found its centre. Christ is his ALL IN ALL. The believer is a new man in Christ.

2.—The Holy Ghost is his Teacher ; he imparts to the understanding a knowledge of divine truth, he is taught his state of heart, his own vileness, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its penalty, his own inability to save himself, that there is no justification by the works of the law, but only by and through the righteousness of Christ. He is taught to look to Christ, to trust in him, to come to him. He has an experience of these facts within him ; they are the exercises of a spiritual mind on spiritual things, leading him out of himself, and resting on Christ the rock of ages. Having tasted, handled and felt of the good word of life he is dissatisfied with any thing short of it ; this

* Watts's Hymns, B. i., H. 95,

leads him to seek and to know more of Christ, and to say with the poet :

“ Oh, could I know and love him more,
And all his wondrous grace explore ;
Ne'er would I covet man's esteem,
But part with all and follow him.”

“ That I may know him and the power of his resurrection ;” such a knowledge of him as would absorb all the powers of my soul ; to feel its influence so powerful as to feel myself risen from the dead, and never more to be found in company with the world. And for this the believer looks to the Spirit of all grace, and the Holy Ghost leads the mind into *all* truth—its depths—breadth—its heights—into higher, richer, brighter views of Christ's person, his work, his Offices and Characters ; he takes of the things of Christ and reveals them unto him ; hence the believer has most exalted views of Christ, of God the Father, and has the witness of the Spirit, such is his blessed experience of the heavenly truth. He is saved by the Eternal Three One Jehovah.

3.—*The teaching of the Holy Ghost is gradual in its method.* God's works are invariable, slow, and progressive, that is, in their development, but they are sure and certain. “ The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. iv. 18.) “ Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. i. 6.) “ Until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts.” (2 Pet. i. 19.) Our experience and knowledge is gradually obtained. We are first babes in grace, desiring the pure milk of the word that we may *grow* thereby : We are to “ *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” “ until we come to the full stature of a man in Christ,” “ growing up into him in all things.” (1 Pet. ii. 2 ; 2 Pet. iii. 18 ; Eph. iv. 15.) We are at best but fools and slow of heart to believe, for “ precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little and there a little.” (Jer. xxviii. 10.) But you will say, why does not the Holy Spirit teach us at once, the things we are to know, and efficiently, so as not to need this repetition and continuous labour ? I can only say, we are dealt with as are all other parts of God's creation, animate and inanimate. Weakness, growth,

progress, strength, completion are the characteristics and law of all things in this world. The very fact that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher proves that his work is in harmony with the proportions of all things, for he adapts his teaching to the measure of our understandings, and leads us step by step till we attain the knowledge and experience designed by our Heavenly Father.

4.—His *method is gracious*. How free and unsought, can we not say, all his teachings have been freely imparted. "He *gave* his good Spirit to instruct them." (Nehe. ix. 20.) "The inspiration of the Almighty *giveth* understanding." (Job. xxxii. 8.) "We know the Son of God is come, and hath *given* us an understanding that we may know him that is true." (1 John v. 20.)

5.—His *method is certain*. "Who teacheth like him," was the question of Elihu; young in years, but old in knowledge. What we are instructed in by him we never forget. God burns, as it were, instruction into us; he instructs us by the furnace, the flood, the cross, bereaving providences, stripping providences, painful afflictions. He tries us as silver is tried; and when he hath tried us we shall come forth as gold, that is, all gold, gold only, no dross. It is by these things men live, and in them they have the life of their spirits. His teachings are carved deep into the memory of our experience, and thus we have a blessed assurance of his work in our soul; and, when patience has had its perfect work, we admire the discipline, teaching, and the Teacher. We praise, wonder, and adore our Covenant God and Father for sending his good Spirit to instruct us.

6.—His teaching is *truthful*. He is the Spirit of Truth, essentially so; his attribute is truth itself. He leads into all truth; or, as our text says, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Time would altogether fail to speak of the Holy Ghost either as our Comforter or as our Remembrancer, blessed offices which he sustains for the use of the church in its militant state. Our main point is his ministrations as a Teacher. All truth—not the arts and sciences of human life, for that does not enter into the question, though all natural sciences are the gifts of the Spirit; (Exod. xxxi. 3; Isa. xxviii. 26;) but all truth needful to be known by revelation,—all truth as to redemption,—all truth to be known by Christ's

disciples as his ambassadors,—all truth pertaining to life and godliness.

And let me observe, that as truth is the essential attribute of the Holy Spirit, so the truth is the *instrumentality* of all his operations in the soul. He operates in no other way, though his operations may be *indirect* as well as *direct*, and always *sovereignly*. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8.) But whether his operations be direct or indirect, they are always by means of the truth. It may be a passage of God's word, a line of a hymn, a remark of a friend, a sentence uttered in the ministry of the word, or it may be the cogitations of the mind itself, or as I have just now said, by means of the fiery furnace, the watery flood, or any other method of his providence, yet it is the truth by which he works. I do not mean, of course, the mere letter of truth, but the power which he conveys with it into the mind of the believing heart. If you are spiritual men and women, you can understand what I mean. It may be I do not sufficiently express what I mean, but I know what I do mean, and I hope you do too. Neither do I wish it to be understood as if I implied that spiritual life is in the truth. No. If I understand the matter at all in any way, I would say, spiritual life is communicated to the soul, dead in sin, as a distinct principle altogether, though the instrumentality, as I have before said, is the truth. There is life *in knowing* the truth, but the truth is not life itself. It is but the medium through which it is known and felt. Life, I believe, is an essential principle known only to the great God himself. Man cannot understand it, it is unexplainable.

But how blessed to consider, that God the Holy Ghost leads the mind to know *all* saving truth. He opens it to understand "the truth as it is in Jesus." The believer prays, "Give me understanding, and I shall live;" (Ps. cxix. 144;) and in answer to prayer he is led to further, fuller, and brighter displays of Jehovah's grace and glory. In a word, his teaching is doctrinal, experimental, and practical. He sanctifies the believer by belief of the truth, and makes him wise unto salvation. He resides in the heart, and makes the body his temple. He is the

Comforter of the believer in all the exercises of the mortal state; he is the Author of all spiritual operations of the soul, the understanding, and the affections:

“ Leads him to Christ, the living way,
Nor lets him from his pastures stray.”

As the Remembrancer of the church of the living God, he recalls to the recollection truths received long time since and forgotten; promises of grace are revived with fresh vigour and encouragement that had long ceased to exercise hope and joy. By his secret influences, direct or indirect, spiritual life is constantly renewed and maintained, until the soul is brought to its eternal felicity in the heavenly state. He is the source, origin, and fountain of all that is known, or can be known and experienced, of truth, holiness, or heavenly-mindedness. His office and work in the covenant of grace being the going forth of Jehovah in the manifestations of his grace and mercy, in personal acts upon the souls of each fallen son and daughter of Adam as chosen in the covenant of grace. The great truth couched in our text is, that all we know and experience of divine truth is by the operation of God the Holy Ghost, accomplished in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, and by God the Father's commission and authority. What a thought is here presented to us! The glorious Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead are jointly engaged in distinct acts in teaching each believer the way of life and salvation. The Lord grant that this may be the portion of all now present, for his great name's sake. Amen.

DAVID GREATLY DISTRESSED,

BUT

DIVINELY ENCOURAGED.

A SERMON,

BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT JEWRY STREET CHAPEL, ALDGATE,

On Monday Evening, August 18th, 1862.

“And David was greatly distressed; but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”—1 SAMUEL xxx. 6.

I HAVE, as you perceive, omitted a portion of the verse, but do not thereby disturb its sense. The words which I have taken as a text have been presented to my mind with a considerable degree of force and sweetness; and the subject is one which I am sure the poor tried child of God will be interested in, and is likely to arrest his attention. May the Lord help us to say a few words respecting the things which we have tasted, handled, and felt of the good word of life which, with his blessing, may comfort those whose souls may be “discouraged because of the way.”

Probably, however, some may suppose, that not much good can be had from preaching on the historical parts of the Old Testament; but this is a mistake. It is very true, there are many passages in which we may see that every doctrine, every admonition, and every command of which God is the Author, has all the majesty of his name, all the weight of his authority, all the inflexibleness of his justice, and all the persuasiveness of his love; yet I think most persons must be sensible how much more lively and powerful the impression is upon the mind when they see the influence of God’s truth embodied in character and brought out into action under the varying circumstances of common life. Is it not the practical

illustration, or exhibition, of those very truths we are aiming to learn? And certainly it is easier to understand than when presented in the form of an abstract treatise or a set of short sentences. If we regard the histories and the biographies recorded in the Bible *as mere narrations*, why, we miss the very point for which they were written. Its biographies, especially, are full of the most interesting and profitable instruction. What is the life of Jacob, the history of Joseph, of Israel in the Wilderness, Samson, Hezekiah, and others, but the application of the theoretical principles of God's Word set before us and demonstrated in the actual experience and life of the man of God. It is God's truth displayed, not so much in description as it is in action. It is not the fine sentiments of the theorist, but it is the real attainments of the believer in Christ, which excite us to "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

These remarks, then, may perhaps induce you to ponder over some things with regard to David "and the times that went over him." His life and character are remarkably interesting in themselves, apart from what may be considered his typical or lineal connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. His name signifies "the beloved," "dear." Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Beloved of his Father; his dear Son, his only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John i. 18; Matt. iii. 17.) In David having this name given to him, who, though the last of a numerous progeny, we see is no less loved than the first-born, for it indicates the love of those who gave it. He was born at Bethlehem, as was his great anti-type, according to the flesh. In the fields of Bethlehem David kept his father's sheep. Our Jesus keeps his Father's sheep in his own hand, and none shall pluck them thence; the lion and the bear may attempt it, but shall be foiled. They may, perhaps, worry, but shall never devour.

David, no doubt, while tending his father's sheep in Bethlehem, often thought of the story of his excellent grandmother, Ruth. We can fancy David composing some of his choice Psalms, singing them to his music, in the very places where the young widow stooped to glean ears of corn for her aged widowed mother, and often, as she went along, dropping the tear of sadness; but how God changed

the scene : Ruth sowed in tears but David reaped in joy. So God has often done for his people since ; in the place made memorable by their deepest sorrows, he has made it to them a remembrance of his loving-kindness and their greatest blessings. It is true, indeed, David's youthful days were gladdened and brightened by the unexpected event of being anointed to be the future King of Israel. What his hopes and expectations were in the prospect of such an event we cannot say, but this we do know, "it was through much tribulation he entered the kingdom." Yes ; and so shall it be with every one of the Lord's followers ; tribulation is the path which they are called to tread, but through it they shall be brought, and the kingdom they shall enter ; they must enter it, for they are appointed to it. The King of kings himself has trod the path before, and he has entered the kingdom ; and where he is there must also his servants be.

David is said to have been "a man after God's own heart;" that is, David's heart was more towards God's will, his ways, his glory, than to his own self. The love of God evidently possessed his heart ; it was shed abroad by the power of the Holy Ghost. He was noted for his fidelity to God, his meekness, humility ; his love of God's cause, his zeal for his honour were remarkably apparent ; in the midst of his deepest trials, his keenest afflictions, we see more of him as the saint of God than the monarch ; great as he was as a king, we know more about his soul's intimacy with God than of his doings in the state. God called him, "David my Servant," and thus it is his character is established as a man of God. He was the servant of God, for he did God's will.

There are certainly, some points in his history quite indefensible ; his deception, his adultery and murder are utterly abhorrent ; they are stains upon him as a man, and cannot be extenuated in any degree ; yet these crimes form no part of his character, that is, his fixed character ; they may be considered rather as accidents in his life than any trait of what he really was ; he was nevertheless what God called him, "a man after His own heart," and we have no right to contradict. David was a good man, but he was not a perfect man ; he, like other men, had his failings, his infirmities, and his weaknesses ; but, from the fact of his great excellencies in other points of view, his faults appear to greater disadvantage.

But while we are talking about David, do not let us forget ourselves; neither must we forget him who knows how to act upon our weaknesses. Satan is as wise now as he was in David's time. He who knew David's weak points knows full well all our weakness and failings, and is ever plotting to turn them to our disadvantage. We are called to be sober, to be vigilant; for our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, is going about "seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. v. 8.) And you will see, by consulting 1 Sam. xxvii. 1-7, how Satan betrayed David into a false step. He deceives Achish, brings himself and his men into difficulties from which they very narrowly escape.

How common it is for men to bring themselves into perplexities and distress through deviations from the plain straightforward way of truth and honour in the first instance. This is it, sin deceives, blinds the judgment—stupifies the conscience, and, if grace prevent not, leads the man to perdition. You young folks make a note of that. Always observe the plain truth; suffer any disagreeable, indeed, the greatest inconvenience, rather than deceive others to get yourself out of trouble. And just let me say to you older ones, we ought to beware how we unite ourselves with the people of the world, or in any way that would lead us to compromise our Christian character. Their friendship, however sincere it may seem, may be a snare to us; the patronage of the world can be scarcely held with a good conscience. We may be easily deterred from the discharge of our duty, easily led to some mean trick to conceal what they dislike.

We see, however, in David's history, an exemplification of God's dealings in providence with his people. Afflictions and trials often accumulate one upon another until it seems as if a man's spirit could not possibly bear such a weight of trouble. Then, at some critical moment, just as the spirits are about to break down, God comes in with his timely aid and lifts them up.

In David's case the long misery he endured before he was king seemed to reach its height, when, on his return to Ziklag, he found his city, his home, and the homes of his mighty men consumed to ashes. His troubles had been many and various, but most severe when his brave, mighty men spake of stoning him, three of whom brake through a garrison of the Philistines once to get for him

a drink of the water of Bethlehem. Oh, this was distressing indeed. "David was greatly distressed."

I. Let us now look, FIRST, *at the source of David's distresses.*

His distresses comprised: He was an exile from his country; he was, in fact, an outlaw; away from the royal court of which he was an honourable member; separated from the person of his beloved Jonathan, from the society of his loving wife Milchal; debarred from the worship of God at the tabernacle; hunted out of the land of Israel by Saul and his followers. The Philistines had just worked him out of the protection of the king of Gath; the Ziphites had betrayed him; Cush had dealt treacherously; the Amalekites had spoiled and burned his own city Ziklag; he had, through that circumstance, lost his other two wives; his men had lost their wives and children,—his men had lost their all in serving him; they look upon him as the occasion of all their loss and misfortunes. Now they are all agreed and ready to stone him, none to defend him; they all conspire his death,—a death worthy only of some vile criminal. It was not martial law. Martial law, if he had merited it, he could have borne; but he was too good a soldier for a soldier's death, so they construe their misfortunes into a crime of his, and their satisfaction is to be had in stoning him,—a death in which all joined and conspired. It seemed inevitable; nothing seemed to turn up to soften them down. Oh, this did indeed distress the brave, bold warrior.

But these were not all his troubles. More than all these put together was that which he felt within; his own conscience accused him. David felt that the source of his distresses laid in his deceiving Ahimelech at Nob; his subsequent deviation from the path of integrity and uprightness placed him in jeopardy, and it would have ended desperately both with him and his men, if God had not overruled and moved the king Achish and his lords to send them away. Their suspicions of him were unfounded, but it was the way out of danger. God's providence is truly wonderful. David meant well, no doubt, but found his own judgment was not to be trusted. He has come now to his wit's end; now he knows where to find his God. He seeks God in the midst of all this confusion, uproar, and strife. He has no friend, no coun-

sellor out of all these chafed spirits; they are sworn against him, being his enemies wrongfully. He consults Abiathar the priest and Gad the prophet. They are with him, it is true, but their personal help can be of no use at such a time as this; but their sacerdotal position may. Happily David, though greatly distressed, feels bitterly the source of all his distresses, yet finds immediately the source of his encouragement—his God. There he found help; he was divinely encouraged under all his earthly distresses. "It is no marvel," says good Bishop Hall, "that God remembereth David in all his troubles, since David in all his troubles did thus remember his God." But thus it was, all David's springs were in God, from whence flowed those streams of his remembrance of God, and seeking his face; for all that leads to God, first comes from God, and leads to God again. As fountains in the valleys descend from the hills, so David felt it when he said, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." (Ps. lxxxvii. 7; cxi. 1.)

Now, in looking at the source of David's troubles, and the manner of their being heaped up together, and appearing as if they would all fall upon him like an avalanche and bury him completely, do we not trace something like our own experience? do we not, some of us at least, feel as if we had been where David was. We feel, this is the man who has gone before us in the same dreary, dark part, the valley of the shadow of death. How near he was to it! but he walked through it. How near some of you have been to the end of your life, or your hopes, and thought you were alone, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, but the voice of another going before in the same path helps you on. You are not alone; God is with you. Evil may be about you, all around you, dangers on every side; but, O, if God speaks or whispers but one word, you are encouraged; you fear no evil, for he is with you. (Ps. xxiii. 4.) There is a "needs be that we be in heaviness through manifold temptations." (1 Peter i. 6.)

"From all our afflictions, his glory shall spring;
The deeper our sorrow, the louder we'll sing.

II. We come now to consider, in the SECOND place, *the source of David's encouragement*. "He encouraged himself in the Lord his God." And we shall perceive, too,

that his encouragement in God was based upon several matters of fact that led him in the midst of his distresses to feel that though all men should forsake him, yet God would be true to him; he would be true to his own promise, he would be true to his own character. These several matters which we are now about to bring together in a focus, as it were, is what every tried believer feels he must do, for he finds his account in it. "In the day of adversity consider." Consider what? Why, what grounds you have for encouragement. This is what David did; and in looking at these several things we shall observe:

1. David's heart was established in the truth and providence of God, particularly in the promises made to him of his ultimate deliverance from Saul. 2. He had been anointed in the presence of his brethren, not privately, as was Saul; not only so, but with a *horn* of oil, not a phial, as in the case of Saul. These were two significant facts; spiritually, they have reference to the Messiah upon whom the Spirit was poured out without measure. Now the remembrance of this anointing, signifying God's gracious appointment, his setting him apart and dedication for the monarchy, must have been indelible; consequently, in all his subsequent reverses, his opposition and persecution from Saul, we find him ever resting on Jehovah's word for deliverance. 3. His confidence that God would deliver him was heightened from his own experience; he still trusted that he would be delivered as on former occasions. His combat with Goliath, his struggle with the bear and with the lion, he would never forget; nor had he forgotten the amazing escape and deliverance from the army of Saul which had encompassed him on the mountain; but Saul, hearing of an invasion, suddenly withdrew his troops and left David unmolested. Certain death seemed inevitable, and if his faith did stagger, in the presence of such a formidable host, can we wonder at it? "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." But if unbelief did make his faith to stagger, God's mercy held him up. Oh, how often we have sung those sweet lines of Newton:

"The saints need never be dismay'd,
Nor sink in hopeless fear;
For when they least expect his aid,
The Saviour will appear.

“ Once David seemed Saul’s certain prey ;
 But hark ! the foe’s at hand.
 Saul turns his arms another way,
 To save the invaded land.”

And have we not found it so too ? how often God has stayed his “ rough wind in the day of his east wind.” While there is a needs be for the rough and the east winds, he does not suffer two cold winds to blow at one time. If the enemy comes in like a flood, the promise is, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. Here you see is a resistance stronger than that which the trouble brings. And do remember this, O thou afflicted and tossed with tempest, and not comforted, all troubles must be met by a stronger force than that which they bring. Here you have it in that Almighty promise just quoted ; it is the believer’s breakwater. No flood can come beyond the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up ; he is Lord of all power and might. Your refuge and your strength are here ; here is your safety. He who lifts this standard for your salvation, times all his deliverances in such a way as shall be best for his own glory, your joy and comfort, and the everlasting confusion of all your enemies.

But I am running on and forgetting David. We were speaking of the several matters of fact which formed the basis of his encouragement in God. We have mentioned three ; here is another. 4. Jonathan’s friendship was at this time most invaluable to him. The thought of possessing one friend in adversity is an unspeakable solace. (See 1 Sam. xx.) Then we see another important element in David’s encouragements. 5. We see his constant consultation of the Divine will. I can only refer you to the several passages, which I hope you will read at your leisure : 1 Sam. xxii. 3, 23 ; 1 Sam. xxiii. 4, 11, 16. Then, as to his trust, see Ps. vii. 11, 12 ; proving as is said by the prophet, “ 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 ; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isa. xl. 31.) Then again, 6. We see, too, his consciousness of his own integrity and uprightness. (1 Sam. xxiv. 11, 12.) Look, too, at the 27th Psalm, which was probably written at about this time. Twice had David deceived others ; he had deceived himself ; he had seen and felt the bitterness of

expediency and deceit; now it is his earnest prayer, "Let integrity and uprightness *continually* preserve me." Well is it to feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin; for the stronger we feel the evil of sin, the more earnest will be our prayer for salvation from it.

7. But there was one thing more than all these: God was his all. "Whom have I in heaven, but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." To whom could he go in the midst of his distresses? The anointed of Israel, divinely assured of the kingdom, but, humanly speaking, never was farther from it when all his brave, mighty men threatened him with immediate and an ignominious death, but

"The mount of danger is the place,
Where we shall see surprising grace."

God stays their hand, though he suffered them to speak of stoning him. Many of God's people have been alarmed and felt in peril from the great swelling words of furious and malignant spirits, but their hands have been held in chains. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." (2 Peter, ii. 9.) He knew how to deliver "the man after his own heart" out of his many and grievous perplexities. God touched a secret spring in David's heart that led him to seek his help. He calls for the priest, and consults the Holy Oracle, and what does it say? "Pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." (verse 8.) Was this an impression on his imagination, think ye? No, indeed; he knew well the voice of God; he hung on that divine word—he hung on the promises; he was always a man in earnest, and nothing but realities, divine realities, would satisfy his heart. Look at the earnestness of his prayers; look at the earnestness of his praises; look at the earnestness of his thankfulness, in the 27th Psalm to wit. David never lost sight of God as his guard and guide. Even in the King of Achish's court he was not without Abiathar and the Ephod, and it was a happy circumstance that he and his men were sent away so early in the morning as they were. He had placed himself in a very questionable position with the Philistine army; certainly he never was so weak in himself. Though he had Abiathar with him, there was no consulting the Ephod; but when on his return he found himself sur-

rounded with difficulties and danger, then he knew where to obtain courage and resolution. He did obtain it, and at the time he most wanted it, and he applied it, too, with good purpose, even under the very worst of circumstances.

This energy of mind, as we sometimes term it, or, as it is expressed in the text, encouragement, is derived from God alone; he alone imparts it. There is no enduring energy of mind from any other source than what David himself says about it: "In the day of my trouble, when I called upon thee, thou strengthenest me with strength in my soul." (Ps. cxxxviii. 3.) This is the only true energy of mind—that which God gives. See what it did for David; it energized him so that he recovered his spirits, stood to his position as their captain, subdued the mutinous spirit of those mighty men, ordered them out, marshalled them in rank and file, and, taking the lead, bid them follow him, and he led them on to the pursuit, overtook the marauders, and recovered all. If you want to know something about these brave, mighty men, read at your leisure 2 Sam. xxiii., from the 8th to the end, and then you will estimate David as being superior to them all.

Now let me draw your attention to a few of the Psalms which were written by this sweet psalmist of Israel; they are at least eighteen in number, all showing that he knew where his strength lay. I can only name them by their numbers, but you will find it worth your while to note them down: Ps. xvii., xviii., xxi., xxxi., xxxiv., xxxv., lii., liv., lv., lvi., lvii., lix., lxii., lxiii., lxiv., lxxxiv., cxxiv., and cxlii. These and others were written under the inspiration of God, with, if I might so say, the ink of his own experience; and we, who have to follow in some measure the steps he trod, feel it is true. But look again at the following Scriptures; do not be weary with God's Word, for this is the instrumentality God employs to strengthen you. If you want real courage to battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, you must get it here. What does Job say? (xxiii. 6): "Will he plead against me with his great power? No! he would put strength in me," that is, courage, energy. "The Lord is the strength, the energy of my life." (Ps. xxvii. 1.) "God is the strength of my heart; God gives me courage and life." (Ps. lxxiii. 1.) "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;" (Ps. lxxxiv. 12;) that is, who derives his courage, his energy, his spiritual life from his God. Now, I

appeal to your own experience whether this is not the case? The Word may have come to your soul with an irresistible power, with a power that has upset all your doubts, fears, unbelief, rebellion, and I know not what beside, in one moment; or it may have come with a dove-like softness, with such a melting influence upon your spirit as to cause you to feel so deeply humbled and yet so divinely strengthened, that you have gone forth in the power of his might, and fearlessly faced the foe, and bravely conquered. I know your reply; it is so. You can say, with the Apostle: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," and with the poet:—

" O I have seen the day,
When by a single word,
God helping me to say,
' My trust is in the Lord,'
My soul has quell'd a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose."

I do not know that I have anything more to add except by way of practical observations, and these shall be few and brief. I trust that, under the anointing of the Spirit, some of the remarks which have been dropped may find an entrance into your heart, and have an abiding place there. We speak of those things which we do know, and testify that which we have seen. If God has appointed us to his heavenly kingdom we shall enter it most certainly, but it will be after the manner of David entering the kingdom of Israel, "through much tribulation." But mark the word "through;" we pass on, not staying in it, but every step of the way, whether light or dark, rough or smooth, painful or pleasing, is to bring us nearer to it. And then, as to that word "much," which seems as though it would, and does appear at times, to eclipse the believer's sun of his hopes, is it not most blessedly compensated by that delightful word "peace"? Does not our Lord say: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; in me ye have peace?" (John, xvi. 33.) Is not peace in Christ a complete compensation for all the troubles we are called to pass through? Oh, certainly it is; the troubles of this life we are *passing through*; this life is but a life of passing on to the heavenly kingdom; Christ is the believer's peace; enduring peace in the midst of changing scenes; and he that believes this truth hath entered into rest; his feet are on a rock, a foundation on which he

never can be moved or shaken ; be he ever so miserable in the world he is happy in Christ. "Let earth be all in arms abroad, he dwells in heavenly peace." "Jesus Christ, the Eternal God, is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." And "as his day so shall his strength be."

But now, in conclusion, let us from this portion of David's history which we have had before us, observe

1. That whenever we are called to pass through troublous times, *to be instant in prayer*—at the moment. If the believer in Christ has this spiritual habit of prayer, he will, at any moment of his exigences, turn at once to his stronghold. If you were a bird, the moment you saw danger, you would use your wings and flee away ; perhaps you do say, oh that you had wings, like a dove you would flee quietly and swiftly away and be at rest ; well now, the believer's prayers are his wings. With these, he flies at once to his God : and as wings are a part of the bird itself, so prayer is a part of the believer's self ; it is his native air, his vital breath, returning whence it came. As the bird has an aptitude for flight, so should the believer have an aptitude for prayer. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint:" if there were not always occasions for prayer, surely our Lord, who knoweth all things, would not have enforced its necessity. There is always a necessity for prayer, for we are always needy ; but never more so, than when wave upon wave, sorrow upon sorrow, comes rolling over the soul like a tempestuous sea. The thicker our dangers accumulate the more need for immediate prayer. "Lord, help me," "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me ;" these prayers are like anchor flukes, they are cast within the veil, they take hold of God's strength ; the soul that trusts such an anchor as this shall never be driven from its steadfastness ; no never.

2. Suffer yourself *not to be cast down*. Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. If you are perplexed with troubles of various kinds, be not in despair ; faint not, "If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (Prov. xxiv. 10.) Save your spirit from fainting by waiting upon God at once ; look to the strong for strength ; the rock of your strength is in him ; he will give you divine strength to bear up against earth's trials ; the energy, courage, resolution that you require for dealing with difficulties, oppressions, losses and crosses in the circumstantial affairs of life, God can

impart at the precise moment you most need it ; not before you want it, but at the time : “ In your patience possess ye your souls ; ” this is your Lord’s direction, a merciful provision for anticipated trials ; in the time that your patience is exercised, do not lose your self-possession. Suffer yourself not to be cast down, but hope in God ; rest in him ; wait patiently for him ; true, the soul is often cast down, but then there is no real reason for it ; if once the spirits give way, there is no knowing what will follow. Hope in God, look up ; trust his faithfulness and power. His covenant promises are engaged in thy behalf, for he hath said, “ I will never leave thee, no, never forsake thee.” (Heb. xiii. 5.)

3. That we carefully avoid adopting any expedients that may occasion us to resort to deceit and falsehood. God does not require it at our hands. He is a God of truth, just and right is he. He is a rock, his work is perfect. He is immutably the same. Nor can a sincere believer in Christ be otherwise : “ surely they are children that will not lie, and so he was their Saviour.” You have seen the difficulties and dangers David thrust himself into by his culpable falsehood to Ahimelech ; no one can tell where the mischief would have ended if God had not marvellously moved the court of Achish to send him away. Falsehoods, prevarications, equivocations are dangerous expedients for a child of God to meddle with ; they are sure to bring the soul into distress, guilt, and darkness ; there are no distresses in the soul so severe as the accusations of a guilty conscience ; oh, take heed as to how you get into difficulties ; but take more heed as to how you get out ; never forget, *expediency* brings more into difficulty and distress than it can ever get out. David’s case to wit, and Paul’s case, when he shaved himself and went into the Temple as though he still held with the Jews in Judaism. (Acts xxi. 23–30.) It was “ expediency ” that made him a prisoner for life ! It is true, God overruled his expediency for His glory and the good of his church, but expedients are not to be adopted for all that. The doctrine of human expediency is not to be found in God’s Word.

4. That courage of mind which is obtained from reliance on God will positively help us through the fiercest of foes—the deepest distress, and the most fiery trials. You cannot have a better illustration than our own text : “ David was greatly distressed, but David encouraged

himself in the Lord his God." Happy David! did the people stone him? No; "this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." (Ps. xxxiv. 6.) When God helped him, how undaunted he stood; how firm to his proper position; how resolute to command, and his men as ready to obey; whence came this sudden change; it was God alone that made David so invincible and beat down his foes before him; thus shall it be with every soul feeling its weakness and knowing no other resource but in God; strength for the day is God's gift; it is his promise; it is his prerogative; and it is his children's privilege to have. O tried believer; prostrated with life's troubles, or with soul troubles, your refuge and the rock of your strength is in God. Vain is all your contention, in your own strength, with the things of this world, of sin, of Satan. But if armed with strength divine,

"A feeble saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

Thus, as it was with David, so was it with the Apostle Paul and others that might be named; has it not been so with you? I know it has been so with me; and, I am quite sure, if God brings you into trials you never had, he will give you such grace as you never had.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. If earthly distresses surround you, encourage yourselves in the Lord your God. As David did, so do you; his God is yours. "Wait upon the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, upon the Lord." (Ps. xxvii. 14; xxxi. 24.) This is his own advice and direction, founded upon his own experience; and is it not in agreement with the immutable promise of Jehovah himself? "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isa. xl. 29, 31.) Wait and see what God will do for you. Tamper not with his dealings. "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." (Ps. xxviii. 11.) Things often begin to mend when they are at the worst. If your difficulties are ever so distressing, wait at once upon God, call to mind his promises, his former loving-kindnesses; there will be no time lost in prayer. "My soul, wait thou only before God; for my expectation is from him." "From him cometh my salvation." (Ps. lxii. 1, 5.)

THE DIVINE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

A SERMON,
BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED AT JEWRY STREET CHAPEL, ALDGATE,

On Monday Evening, December 29th, 1862.

BEING THE EIGHTH AND CONCLUDING DISCOURSE AT THAT PLACE,
ON THE MYSTICAL UNION BETWIXT CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”—JOHN XX. 17.

OF all the circumstances connected with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is none more important and interesting to the church of God, than the one connected with our text. “He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.” (Mark xvi. 9.)

There is something very precious in the thought, that though there were no earthly witnesses to the glorious triumph of our Lord over the power of death and the grave, yet how graciously and how tenderly he discovered himself; first to Mary Magdalene, she “who loved much,” then to the other women; and afterwards to his disciples, and to his disciples only; for the resurrection glories of the Redeemer are revealed only to his church. He himself is the indubitable witness of the truth that “he rose again according to the scriptures,” but he will rather have this truth to be the object of our faith than for it to be demonstrated by our carnal senses.

With respect to Mary Magdalene, we cannot but perceive she was much confused and perplexed when at the sepulchre; it was partly from the excitement and

surprise on finding the body of Jesus had been removed, as she supposed, and partly from the twilight haziness of the morning ; and probably her eyes were filled with tears, so that she could not readily recognise the appearance of her beloved Jesus. But when he spoke to her by her name, and in such a tone that there was no mistaking it, her ears were truer to her soul than her eyes ; at once she was filled with rapturous emotion, and falling at his feet, to embrace them in adoration and love, she would have held him to the place, regardless of everything else, so that she might indulge her expressions of love, joy, and delight in beholding once more her Lord and Saviour. Oh, how much nearer to his saints is Christ to be found than they commonly suppose ; he may be very present and near when he is not perceived by reason of our own weakness and the imperfection of our faith ; but one look from our blessed Lord, one word spoken to the heart, dispels all gloom, all fear, all ignorance, strengthens our faith, enlivens hope, and excites our love ; how soon it humbles us in the dust, lays us low at his feet, and we are ready to give him the highest honour of which he is worthy and that we are capable of giving.

But to our text. It would at first sight appear somewhat obscure ; Mary is forbidden to touch the bodily person of the Lord, apparently on the ground of his having not yet ascended to his Father, as if immortality must not be touched by that which was mortal ; while it would appear from the record in Matt. xxviii. 9, that the other women were allowed to do so, and that Thomas was desired to handle him for the purpose of identifying his crucified body. I regard, therefore, the probable sense of these words to be : " Do not stay now to embrace me for the manifestation of your feelings ; this is not the time for it ; I shall not yet ascend to my Father ; but go immediately to my disciples, my brethren, and tell them I have indeed risen from the grave, and shortly I shall ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," thereby intimating his unchangeable love to them, whatever they might feel or might remember of their inconstancy. I regard, too, the obscurity of the entire passage as internal evidence of the truth of the whole narrative and of its inspiration. We have the facts and the impressions of what was seen and heard most truthfully and exactly recorded as the women and disciples felt and believed. Those who carefully *compare*

the statements of the several Evangelists, instead of *confusing* them, will find no difficulty in *reconciling* them.

In this declaration of our risen Lord we have this delightful and blessed truth—the mystical union betwixt Christ and his church. Take his own words: “my brethren, my father, your father, my God, your God.” Here you see, is a divine relationship acknowledged; of brotherhood, the same fatherhood, the same God conjointly with Christ—a celestial relationship in all its fulness, in all its completeness, and in all its glory. It is a joint relationship with God, by virtue of our covenant union with Christ. If children of God, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. (Rom. viii. 17.) “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” (1 Cor. vi. 17.) Thus it is, that Christ’s father is our father, his God is our God.

This mystical union between Christ and his church is a theme that surpasses the wondrous intelligences of angelic spirits; it is, doubtless, one of the things they desire to look into; it is one of those wonders of redeeming love which eternity itself will never fully disclose, but will ever be unfolding more and more to the astonished view of the glorified church of God. How then can sinful mortals explain it. One feels how poor are all the attempts we have made to set it forth to you for the last two months. First we took a *general* or cursory view of the subject as a whole, from the words just quoted, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Then in six subsequent discourses, we took up six different similes or figures employed in scripture, by way of illustration, each shadowing out some peculiar feature of this blessed union; and now, taking another stand-point, we desire, under the leadings and teachings of the divine spirit, to call your attention to another view of this great subject, *the divine relationship* existing betwixt Christ and his church—a truth which, when experimentally known by the believer in Jesus, is a most delightful theme of contemplation, a most precious doctrine, wherein is milk for babes and strong meat for men.

FIRST, let us consider this union in relation to the import of the words “my brethren.” The expression itself is worthy of note. Our Lord calls those who are believers in him—united to him by faith, in love, his “brethren,” not “my friends,” as he did before his death; for since the work of redemption is finished, and the price fully paid, his people enter more into their covenant

union, they are now no longer considered merely as his friends, which does not imply any relationship whatever, but, as one of the blessed results of his resurrection which demands our admiration, here is a development of another truth-relationship. The appellation of brethren discovers to us more of the heart of Jesus; it is one of those resurrection glories known only to the believing members of his mystical body. He makes himself known to us as our brother. Christ is in very deed our brother, a brother born for adversity; it is a very near relationship; we cannot be nearer unto him than we are. "A people near unto him." (Ps. cxlviii. 14.) It is an endearing relationship; it is a most affectionate relationship; it is an unalterable relationship; come what will, if brotherhood do at all exist, it ever remains, it can never be altered. Time or distance cannot change it or diminish it. "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt," were the words of him who appeared as the great and mighty Zaphnath-paaneah before his brethren, the children of Israel. So when Jesus makes himself known to his sorrowing disciples, he tells them who he is; he tells them his name, he tells them *what* he is, he tells them he is their brother. Joseph could make known no more than that he was their brother, and that their father was his father; he could go no higher into the region of truth; but our Jesus, though on earth, though not yet ascended to his Father, makes known to us a greater truth than even this—he tells us that his Father is our Father, his God is our God. Thus we see how far superior is the union which Christ makes known as existing betwixt him and his church. The one is earthly, the other is heavenly.

This union is a joint relationship. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God is his Father. He is therefore of the same nature with his Father, as all sons and fathers are. He is of a divine nature; so are all the children of God; they are made partakers of a divine nature. (2 Peter i. 4.) "Blessed be the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter i. 3, 23.) They are born of the Spirit, and being born of the Spirit *they are the* children of God, not so by a figure of speech, but really and truly; made new creatures in Christ Jesus, by the

quickening the regenerating power of God the Holy Ghost.

This union is first realised by the soul when it is brought to believe on the name of the Son of God ; faith is implanted, then love is shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. The *experience* of the believer agrees with the *doctrine* of God's word ; " and this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment." (1 John iii. 23.) We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. (1 John iii. 14.) Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is ; such is the joint relationship of this union. Jesus is the express image of his Father, and we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Oh what a glorious union ; not only relationship, a union of nature, but a likeness of features. This truth has ever been the delight of the church of God ; true believers are ever praying that they may be more and more transformed into his image. David surveyed the glorious truth with a rapture beyond description when he abruptly closed his divine meditation with, " I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." (Ps. xvii.) The apostle Paul frequently dwells upon this heavenly truth. " For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry ABBA—Father. (Rom. viii. 14–15.) And this word Abba, be it remembered, is Syriac ; it is retained in our Bibles, because our translators could not give us the full sense of it ; it intends to convey an animated affection which no word of ours can express. The nearest approach we can have of the idea, is when we hear a child lovingly calling its father, " Father, dear," as if the mere appellation of father was insufficient, and therefore it must add a word in that kind of tone which conveys a rill of affection into the heart of the father while the child speaks. And this, dear friends, " is no wild fancy of the brain, no metaphor we speak," but is a matter of indisputable experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ. " The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God." " And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. viii. 16, 17.) This relationship, too, let me tell you, arises

out of the eternal love of God the Father; for that is the source of all the blessings of our covenant union with Christ Jesus his Son. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. i. 5, 6.)

And not only are we the sons of God by being made partakers of the divine nature, and by adoption in the eternal predestinating love of God the Father, and made heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, but we are also jointly related to Christ by virtue of his assumption of our nature. He took our nature into union with his divine nature; thus he became "the God-man, Christ Jesus." He took our nature, which is human, that we might take his nature, which is divine. He took our nature that he might take our sin, and bare it away in his own body on the tree. We have in virtue thereof, taken his nature that we might be saved through him, and dwell for ever with him, in his Father's house, where there are many mansions. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 4, 6.) Again. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same that through death, (dying in that nature,) he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. ii. 14.) Thus there is a union of natures both divine and human, essentially in the Person of Christ as related to every believing child of God.

So, by virtue of Christ having the pre-eminence in all things, he being the Eternal Son of God, the first begotten from the dead, God's first-born Son, God's only begotten Son—He is, therefore, our **ELDER BROTHER**.

Christ is our elder Brother; he is appointed heir of all things; we are joint-heirs with him. He, as our elder Brother, takes all the responsibility of the family of God; he became their Surety in that covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; and he is able to meet all the demands of divine justice, as well as to provide for all their necessities. Having taken our nature into personal union with himself, he is able to accomplish everything that the law

requires ; he brings us back safe to our heavenly Father's home, having redeemed us from all iniquity. " Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost ; but the son of perdition, he is lost, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." (Heb. ii 13 ; John xvii. 12.)

SECONDLY.—Let us consider that, by virtue of our divine relationship to Christ as our elder Brother, his Father is our Father.

Dr. Gill says, not that I quote him as an authority, but I love to be found in such good company : " God was his Father, not by creation in any way, as he is to angels and the souls of men, &c. ; nor yet as to his incarnation, for, as man, he had no father ; or with regard to his office as Mediator, for as such he was a servant, and not a son ; but he was his Father by nature, or, with regard to his divine Person, being begotten of him, and so his own proper Son, and he his own proper Father ; which hold forth the natural and eternal Sonship of Christ, his equality with him, and distinction from him ; and God was the Father of his disciples by adopting grace, in virtue of the covenant of grace made with Christ, and through their spiritual relation to him, as the natural and eternal Son of God." (*loco.*) Here is choice truth in choice words ; they are like " apples of gold in baskets of silver." And yet how far below they fall the heavenly language of the dear Redeemer himself. This union is beyond our comprehension ; hear how he expresses it, not to his disciples, but to his Father. We see the truth transcendently displayed, like the setting sun dipping into the ocean on a clear summer's evening, its glories cannot be expressed nor even conceived ; could the disciples have been capable of receiving the truth as it is in Jesus, doubtless he would have imparted it ; but they could not bear it then, and therefore they were only permitted to hear the truth declared ; never were men so divinely favoured, to hear the divine communion of Christ the eternal Son with the eternal Father, speaking of those things which related to their eternal interests, their covenant and joint relationship with him and his Father. What wondrous words of grace to proceed from his mouth : " That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them,

and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 21—23.) Oh, what vast and lofty heights we perceive in this great and mighty theme ! It is like the sun in the firmament ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it ; I feel like an infant trying to grasp the great globe in its little tiny arms ; I am standing on the shore of a vast ocean. Divine union ! eternal union ! A union so perfect, so complete, so indissoluble, so matchless, so infinite ! The church of God, one in the Father and the Son conjointly ! The church of God, loved by the Father with the same love and in the same manner as the Father has loved his own Son ! Oh, amazing grace ! " Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! " " As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Oh, how gloriously exhilarating is the thought, that if our hearts have been renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost, we have the witness within that we are the sons of God—that God is our Father—our Father by covenant love and union with Christ ; our Father by adoption and grace, arising from his everlasting love to us in the Person of Jesus Christ, our ever-living Head, and by virtue of which we are made partakers of the divine nature by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. We are, I say, divinely related to the Father and to the Son by our persons being chosen by the Father before the foundation of the world, and were given to his Son, being blessed in him with all spiritual blessings in him as the adopted sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. The apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, gives us this precious truth in his Epistle to the Ephesians: (i. 3—6 :) " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ; *having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.*" How blessedly too does the same apostle speak of God's adoption in his Epistle to the Romans. (viii.

14—21.) I need not do more than refer you to the place, having already quoted a part, and so also in Gal. iv. 1-7.

But there is one thought which may be noticed, and I think it is worthy of our consideration—in the prayer of our Lord, John xvii. 6, he speaks of having *manifested the name* of his Father to his disciples; and in the 11th verse he prays that they may kept by his Father in *the Father's own name*; and then in the 12th verse he speaks of himself having *kept them in the name of the Father*. Here is a gradual development of the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood; first, there is *the name* spoken of; this we perceive through all the teachings of our Lord while with his disciples. When he speaks of *his* Father and to them of *their* Father, it is not in special relation to that intimate union which he afterwards declared so fully to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection; first *the name* of the Father is revealed, then *the relationship* is declared—first they are indoctrinated and made familiar with the truth that God is their Father, but in what way and the manner how, this was not revealed; now, in our text, and in his prayer recorded in John xvii. we have this unfolded to them. Divine light is not dashed upon them like a thunderbolt, but is poured into their understandings in such a measure as they are able to bear it. Thus it is now with the Lord's people; they are not at first taught by the divine Spirit the deep things of God, "but first principles of the oracles of God;" being suited to such as who, like babes, "have need of milk, and not of strong meat." The light of truth is like the rising sun, it shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The manner of God's Spirit in teaching his children is in harmony with all his works; it is the same in grace as it is in creation and in providence, the law of gradual development and progress rules throughout the spiritual universe as in the universe of nature. That there are different degrees of understanding we are quite aware; some are children in understanding who ought to be men; and there have been, and are now, giants, both in natural and spiritual truths, and these have not been suffered to exist as mere curiosities or specimens of vanity; but all have their essential uses in the orbits assigned to them by the great and infinite Controller of all things. But this does not affect the truth of which we are speaking. While there is evidently a gracious provision made for the understanding to receive all truth, but not all at once, there is also a

growing in grace, a growing in knowledge, a knowledge too of the best kind, a knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So that you see there is not a truth revealed in God's word respecting Christ, his Person and work, but what is adapted to be known by all the church of God. Sooner or later, the deepest, the profoundest of God's deep things shall be taught: "All thy people shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be their peace; it is to be a matter of prayer for any believing child of God, as it was with the apostle Paul for the Ephesian saints, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he 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." Now you see what a galaxy of heavenly truths are here to be seen and understood by the church of God; the very mention of them in such a cluster seems to dazzle and confound one. They are amazing themes truly, all matters of spiritual teaching and heartfelt experience, by each and every member of the mystical body of Christ; and this is not all, for in the third chapter he prays that these Ephesians may be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to *comprehend* with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Now I hope I have not wearied you with these long quotations. The knowledge of these truths for which the apostle prayed for others to know, is or should be, the matter for our own prayer; depend upon it, my friends, whatever people may say about doctrines, contemning them as dry and insipid, the doctrines of the gospel are the solid,

spiritual food of believers, and they are only strong in Christ, strong in grace, in proportion as they know these things and live upon them as the meat and drink of their souls. This doctrine of divine relationship is the very marrow of the gospel. The assurance that Christ is our elder Brother, that his Father is our Father, in the same bond of covenant union, must be calculated, under the sweet anointings of the Spirit, to strengthen and to settle the believer in the knowledge of his divine sonship.

THIRDLY. We come now to notice, that by virtue of God being the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of our union to him by the predestinating love of God, and also the sanctification of the Spirit through the belief of the truth—**GOD IS OUR GOD.**

Our joint relationship with Christ as our elder Brother, and to his Father, leads us to the truth that God his Father is also our God in the same joint relationship. There is a proprietaryship which the believer possesses in God, arising out of it, which is of the utmost importance to all believers. If it were not, the risen Saviour would not have made it the first revealed truth after his resurrection. It is a doctrine containing the most solid comfort which the church of God can desire; it is the rock on which their sonship and brotherhood in Christ are built. Many believers in Christ are quite strangers to this assurance of their union with Christ and his Father; they are afraid to cherish a thought towards it, as if it were presumption. They go about hanging down their heads like a bulrush, looking too much within; like Mary Magdalene, they are so engrossed with their own matters of grief or speculation, that the real spring of comfort is unseen by them, though it be, as it were, close to their heels. Sincere and humble souls too often afflict themselves by searching for that within which cannot be found until it is made known to them from without. It is Christ himself that assures us of his heavenly relationship to us. It cannot be learned in any other way; it is a divine revelation, a truth applied to the heart and conscience by the power of his Spirit, and fills the soul with all joy and peace in believing; and, like the women of old, such souls will be filled with great joy, and run to bring the disciples word "what a dear Saviour they have found." If believers measure their standing in Christ by the measure of their faith, the warmth of their love, the elasticity of their hope, the bulk of their joy or of their peace, they will

soon find they are building on sand, shifting sand; and when our dear Lord sees we are making a Christ, as it were, of our faith, or of any other grace, though they may be the gracious implantings of his Spirit, he will soon withdraw his sweet influences, and make us feel we are building on too low a ground. We must take higher ground. It is Christ and his finished work that we must look to, as being wrought for us; not so much as what is done within us, as it is that which is done for us. Now when Christ finds us mourning his absence, how often he reveals himself in a manner similar to that in which he made himself known to Mary. First he spoke in an ordinary way, then specially and personally. He speaks to the heart. He will speak to thee, poor soul, as sure as thou art seeking him; he will manifest himself to you, and make such a revelation of his loving heart as will astonish you. He will reveal his brotherhood to you; he will tell you that his Father is your Father, that his God is your God. He will reveal to your wondering eyes that this divine relationship is the result of an eternal union, a bond of covenant love, which nothing can break, nothing can sever. The knowledge of this union, your interest in it, assured to you by his Spirit, will keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus. Angels cannot effect it for you; your frames and feelings cannot procure it; it is the manifestation of Christ Jesus himself.

FOURTHLY. I come now to show some of the *excellencies* of this divine relationship.

1. *There is a holy fellowship with God the Father.* There is a fellowship with Jesus Christ, and there is also a fellowship with his Father. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (1 John i. 5.) This fellowship is the soul having communion with its God; it is God speaking to the soul. This exercise does not simply consist in occasional or ejaculatory petitions, as occasions arise; this of itself, though blessed, is not soul communion. It is when the mind is stayed on divine things, holding a continuous, holy contemplation; a converse, if I might so say, with God. It is found in secret prayer; meditation on God's word; in the hearing of his word; and also with his people when we are aiming to talk of those things, concerning the things of Christ and the work of his grace.

2. *God's personal residence with his people.* Our Lord himself has declared it: "If a man love me, he will keep

my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.) He dwells in us by his Spirit; thus are we assured of his love, by the Spirit which he hath given us. (1 John iii. 24.)

3. *It is an everlasting union.* How David rejoiced in this when on his dying bed. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." How Paul rejoiced in it; he was persuaded that nothing in time, nothing in nature, nothing in the future, could "separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The brotherhood of Christ is eternally unalterable; the divine Fatherhood is eternal and unalterable; and the believer's proprietaryship in God is immutable and everlasting. Thus the union of Christ and his Father conjointly with his church is immutable, inseparable, and eternal.

4. *Heavenly communion.* There will be a communion in glory as sure as there has been in grace on earth. This communion in grace below is but the leading step to that in glory, whether it be with the Lord's people in this time state, or with God himself; it is the ladder of the soul planted on earth, but pitched in heaven. I doubt not, but that as Moses and Elias were seen talking with Jesus on the Mount of transfiguration, so we, who now dwell on earth, shall have communion with Christ in heaven.

5. *Possession of all spiritual blessings.* Nothing can be possibly wanting. All things are yours; ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. All grace is made to abound towards us from the fulness which is in Christ Jesus. He who hath not withheld his only Son, shall he not with him freely give us all things? Thus we have reconciliation by the death of Christ; we have sanctification by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; we have justification by faith in Christ; and walking after the Spirit, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

6. *Hatred to sin.* We have thereby one of the most blessed results of this union which the church of God on earth can have, that the love of sin is destroyed; not its inbeing, it is true; nor *its power* totally; but certainly *the love* of it. Oh, this is the believer's consummation of his desires, to feel the love of sin cast out, and the love of Jesus enthroned in his heart. If there is one thing more than another that would lead the believer to realise this union, it is in the fact that the body of sin is being crucified and shall be destroyed.

In conclusion, I would just add a few words as to the *evidences* of this divine relationship. The mere knowledge of this great subject will not suffice; this doctrine must be experimentally known, and its practical results shown in some such as the following evidences:

1. *The soul has been quickened from a death in sin by the work of God the Holy Ghost.* This new life is ascertained by an evidence which is peculiar and proper to itself. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." It consists in the will being renewed. There are new desires. The objects of the affections are changed, being set on things above; the image of Christ is stamped on all the faculties of the soul; the Spirit of adoption in Christ is witnessed to the heart; the love of holiness is implanted, and the fruit of holiness is produced. Beloved! do you think you have experienced such a change in your inner life?

2. *The enmity of the carnal mind to God is subdued by the power of the Holy Ghost.* The strongholds of Satan are pulled down; false and vain imaginations are cast down; self-will, self-love, self-seeking, and everything else that opposeth and exalteth itself against God will be fought against and slain. Let me ask you again, how stands this matter with you? Do you feel anything like a conflict between the new principle of grace and the old principle of sin? This enmity of the carnal mind is not known until it is opposed. If you have never felt it, I very much question if you know anything of the matter.

3. *There is mutual love.* The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. This love shed abroad is felt towards God, towards each Person in the sacred Trinity. There is love to the brethren: "By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We love God's house; we love his word; we love his commandments. If Jesus were to put the question pointedly to you, "Lovest thou me?" do you think you could reply, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?" There is very little difficulty in deciding this point.

4. *There is a mutual indwelling.* "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "The life I now live in the flesh, I live

by faith on the Son of God." "Ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Where this divine union exists, in all its fulness and power, the believer feels that God lives in him, and that he lives in God; Christ dwells in his heart by faith, and he lives by faith in Christ. Is this the life you desire to live? Does this life seem to you the only life worth having? I think so, and humbly hope I know something of it.

5. *The indwelling of the Spirit* is another evidence: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" "Even the Spirit of truth; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." This Spirit of truth is also the Spirit of love: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Then I would ask, what is the spirit we are of, and what is the spirit that we manifest both in the church and in the world? Let truth do its office, and conscience will determine.

6. There is still another evidence, and that is, *the maintenance of the spiritual life within*. This is done by the constant operations of the Holy Ghost, the supply of the Spirit of Christ: "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."

My dear friends! can you not see how blessed it is to be united to Christ? united to him by covenant love, and this made known by a true and living faith in him: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" that is, *manifested* to be so. If this be your view as the result of the Spirit's teaching, you will give God all the praise and all the glory. And O, do we not see how mean and paltry are all other unions and fellowships compared with this? There is, indeed, nothing that can be compared to it. Mere outward church union falls short of it; "but he that is joined to the Lord is of one Spirit;" "and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Whatever *evidence we have* of this divine relationship, they will be found to proceed *from the excellencies* we have adverted to; for the tree is known by its fruit. Amen.

THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST A DIVINE REVELATION.

A SERMON,
BY CHARLES GORDELIER.

PREACHED ON THE RE-OPENING OF HEPHZIBAH CHAPEL, DARLING
PLACE, CAMBRIDGE ROAD, NEAR MILE END GATE,

On Lord's Day Evening, April 26th, 1863.

“And Jesus answered, and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven.—MATT. xvi. 17.

THE occasion of these words, as most of you know, arose out of the question which our Lord put to his disciples, as to how they understood the doctrine of his person and character; it was a question of vital importance, and a correct reply based on right views was no less important.

It was a most material element in the preparation of our Lord's disciples for the public ministry of the word, that they should be well grounded in the doctrine of the divinity and eternity of Christ's sonship. It was the rock on which they were to build their own hopes of salvation, and it was the foundation of all Christian truth which they were to teach. For without right views of the person of Christ, as well as of his work, they would have been utterly incompetent to have taught “the truth as it is in Jesus;” nor could the church of God have been edified, or built upon either incorrect or imperfect views of so fundamental a doctrine. It was requisite that the disciples should correctly understand what they thought of Christ, and also that they should be able to express, in unmistakable sentiments, what they understood; hence the question, ver. 15.

Our Lord did not put the question for his own knowledge, but he put it for the use of all, and for all time. He put it for the purpose of bringing out in their own words, their own belief, so that when uttered, they could see, as in a mirror, their own faith expressed in their own words. You know the answer they gave, (verse 16,) and you know the use which the dear Redeemer made of it. He most emphatically declared, that **THE TRUTH** then confessed **WAS THE ROCK** on which he would build his church, and that the ruling powers of hell should not prevail against it.

Now, it is just as important that our minds should be equally well-grounded in the truth as the disciples, and that our views should be expressed in as clear and decided a manner as theirs were. Look at our text; let us ask the important question, "What think ye of Christ?" Can you give such an answer as Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Have you and I so learned Christ? for as Mr. Newton has very rightly put it:

"What think ye of Christ?' is the test,
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of him."

Now the doctrine taught in the text before us is, that *the true knowledge of Jesus Christ is a revelation of God the Father*. I propose, then, under divine teaching, to consider the subject thus:—I. The *nature* of this revelation. II. The *method* in which it is revealed. III. The *proofs* of this revelation; and IV. The *effects* of this revelation.

I. The *nature* of this revelation. There are two kinds of religion in the world. Notional and Revealed. Notional religion is not a substitute for revealed religion. Notional religion is superficial. It is the letter of Scripture without the spirit, and though it may embrace a belief in Christ; his person, his work, his character; it is, after all, but a *dead* faith; it is not real; there is no vitality in it, for it is without experience. It is simply the influence of the truth on the mind, and not on the heart; it is a form of godliness but without the power, for as Mr. Hart says:

"True religion is more than notion,
Something must be known and felt."

Revealed religion is *spiritual*. The revelation of Jesus

Christ from the Father is spiritual ; made to a spiritual mind. It is a shining of divine light into the renewed soul of the child of God—the believer in Jesus. The spiritually taught believer discerns the things of the Spirit, minds the things of the Spirit, and walks after the Spirit.

As God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must do so in spirit and in truth, so what God reveals to them is of a spiritual nature ; that is to say, it is not carnal, not fleshy, not earthly, not worldly, but heavenly ; partaking of the nature of God ; spiritual because he is a Spirit ; heavenly because he is heavenly. And, indeed, whatever God is in his nature, so are his revelations. They are the same to all who believe in Christ. Is he good ? so are his revelations. Is he holy ? so are his revelations. Is he love ? so are his revelations. The revelations of God, from his very nature, must be spiritual, heavenly, and pure ; diametrically opposed to all that is earthly or sensual. This revelation of the Father is of his Son Jesus Christ, both as to his eternity and his deity. Whatever God the Father is in his nature, so is the Son. This we cannot but admit, seeing that in all Creation, from human kind to the lowest form of life, the offspring is of the same nature as the parent. Do we admit the Godhead of the Father ? so we must the Godhead of the Son. Do we admit the eternity of God the Father ? so we must the eternity of the Son. All the attributes and perfections of God the Father belong equally and essentially to the Son of God. Hence, by his becoming the Mediator, and taking our nature, is derived his ableness, his fitness, his willingness, as the Saviour of his body the church.

Not only so, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God, is the foundation of all the offices and relations he sustains to and for the church of God ; for it is in his divine person and nature that every spiritual blessing is contained which the Church can possibly require, whether on earth or in heaven : “ For it hath pleased the Father that in him should ALL fulness dwell.” (Col. i. 19.). What fulness ? the fulness of the Godhead. (Col. ii. 9.) In what manner ? bodily, concentrated, incorporated in the person of the God Man, Christ Jesus, the Mediator. And what is the design of the Father in all this ? because, every believing member of the mystical body of Christ, who is brought into an experimental know-

ledge of his personal union to Christ as his ever-living head, shall be made a partaker of the divine nature; (2 Peter i. 4;) for spiritual life and nourishment can be derived in no other way than from his divine fulness; his mediatorship being the channel through which all blessings flow from God the Father to the church. Hence it is that Jesus hath said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John vi. 55-57.) Now to what can the Lord Jesus refer in this figurative language? His human nature simply, or his divine person, think ye? Certainly he could not mean his human nature, for the Jews themselves, who thought so, felt the difficulty and asked, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat;" no surely, but it means unquestionably his divine nature, and also those spiritual blessings with which the church was blessed in him before the foundation of the world; and the apostle John, in speaking of these things, (John i. 12-16,) says, "and of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." Oh, what a glorious truth we have here revealed in the Scriptures of truth; for thus it is we see that it is the divine person of Jesus that gives glory, weight, and dignity to his whole work of salvation, for he is the author and finisher of it. Every office and character which Jesus sustains as Mediator is stamped with eternal dignity and honour from his person being essentially divine, and it is this alone which gives an immutable efficacy to all his work, for he is Jesus the Christ, the immutable, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

What a delightful consideration is this fact, that Jesus is "the Son of the living God;" to be enabled under divine teaching to say, "we believe and are sure." How it fills the soul with hope, love, joy, and peace, in believing. How it leads the soul from sin, from the world, from self, from Moses, and Mount Sinai. It leads to Christ. It leads the feeblest lamb in Christ's flock to find their all in him; and they who know his name will put their trust in him.

II.—*Consider the method in which this revelation of Jesus Christ is made, by God the Father, to the renewed soul.*

By consulting the 26th verse of the 14th chapter of

John, we there find at once the method by which the Father reveals the Son ; namely by the Spirit, the third person of the ever-blessed Trinity : " But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Again, we read in John xvi. 13, 14, 15 : " 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 show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All the things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

Thus, we see that the revelation, or knowledge of Jesus Christ, is from the Father, by and through the Holy Ghost. The sacred Trinity, in the unity of the divine essence, are each engaged in unfolding the glories of the person, work, and character of Jehovah Jesus to the spiritually-enlightened soul, united to Christ by a true and living faith. And observe, too, the ministration of the Holy Ghost, that is, his illuminating operations in the mind of the believer, is in the name of Christ, by the authority of God the Father. The things of Christ are taken by the Holy Ghost, under the commission of God the Father, and are revealed to the soul ; thus it is that the knowledge of Jesus Christ is taught to the soul seeking to know and love the Saviour. Divine truth is known in no other way ; I mean that which is called a saving knowledge, an effectual knowledge ; not mere head knowledge, not a verbal knowledge of scripture truths, as we learn the sciences, but a life-giving knowledge, a spiritual knowledge, such as Jesus himself said it was : " This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and his Son Jesus Christ."

This knowledge of Jesus Christ, by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, is by virtue of his indwelling in the believer. The soul being quickened by the Holy Spirit ; born again of the Spirit ; renewed in the spirit of his mind ; made a new creature in Jesus Christ ; has now become the residence of the Spirit, making the body his temple ; and having once taken up his abode in the heart, he never leaves it. He takes of Christ and shows it to the

believer; he glorifies Christ. He exhibits and displays the glories of his person; the glories of the God-man; the glories of his work; the glories of the characters he sustains to the church of the living God, and the adaptation and suitability of his work and character to each believer by an experimental acquaintance of the truth as it is in Jesus. This is carried on from the period of the new birth till the soul is dismissed from the body, to be for "ever with the Lord."

This revelation of Jesus Christ by the Spirit is also further proved and asserted by the apostle Paul. In his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, 2nd chapter, and at the 10th verse, speaking of the knowledge of Jesus Christ being hid from the worldly wise, he says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit teacheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of man, which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

So also the apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, i. 16, speaking of himself being brought to a knowledge of the truth, says: "When it pleased God *to reveal his Son in me*;" that is, when it pleased God the Father to reveal the knowledge of Jesus Christ by the inward teaching of the Spirit.

Again, this knowledge of Jehovah Jesus is revealed as being the same in nature as a revelation of God the Father, by the same Trinity in unity. Read, pray, and ponder over what our blessed Lord said to Philip. "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show 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, Show 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 which dwelleth in me; he doeth the works." (John xiv. 8, 9, 10.)

And, again, the knowledge of Jesus Christ is revealed also to the believer by his own personal manifestation. If you turn to the 20th verse of the same chapter, you will find Jesus declaring that mysterious and wonderful union which exists between the believer and himself as being one in essence with the Father; and then he states, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and *will manifest myself* unto him." Yes, he will manifest himself in brighter, richer, fuller views of his glorious work, his immaculate person, his wonderful name, to every believing sinner in whose heart is shed abroad the love of God under the operation and influences of God the Holy Ghost.

Thus, then, we think, we have fairly proved that the method by which a saving or spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ is revealed, is from the Father by the Spirit. Divine truth can only be received and understood by those who are spiritually enlightened; the things of the Spirit are only communicated to such. The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

III.—We come now to consider some of the *proofs* of this revelation of Jesus Christ from God the Father, through the Spirit.

Here I intend to confine myself to such proofs as the believer is able to test for himself from his own experience. Sufficient doctrinal proof has perhaps been advanced while considering the second branch just disposed of.

1. The believer in Jesus is made a new creature; born again—born of the Spirit. Hence he is spiritual; spiritual in his thoughts, views, and understanding of all that relates to himself—to God—to Christ—his word. He is spiritual in his feelings, motives, aims, and desires. He is renewed in the spirit of his mind. In a word, his heart is changed; his affections are toward Christ; they are set upon things above, no longer on things of the earth, because he is regenerated entirely by God the Holy Ghost.

2. He has *a feeling sense of being a sinner* in the sight of God, for being now enlightened by the Spirit, he feels the awfulness, the bitterness of sin, far different from the common acceptance of the word; indeed, very different from thousands of those who occasionally and thought-

lessly recite: "Lord have mercy upon us miserable sinners." He feels sin to exist in all his thoughts, sayings, and doings; if he prays, reads, or hears, he feels sin is mixed with all he does. He feels it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God. He feels sin to be that hateful thing which keeps his soul in bondage. He has a feeling sense he shall be lost if not saved by Christ. My friends, real religion has to do with the feelings. Religion without feeling may suit the dead professor, but not the believer made alive in Christ.

3. Another proof is that of *prayer*. Here, I think, we shall come to the easiest test of spiritual life; for I suppose some will be saying I have not yet touched their case, or have passed them by; but, indeed, I would not lose sight of the feeblest of Christ's flock. I fain would encourage them and help them onward by every possible means in my power. Prayer is an undoubted proof of a regenerated soul. Look at Paul's case. The Lord himself urges upon Ananias, as a proof that he is no longer an enemy to truth, from the very fact of his being a praying man: "Behold, he prayeth!" I know some of you can give such an evidence as this. You may think you are not that spiritually-minded person which I have been talking about, but this you know,—you do love prayer; you cannot pray as you wish, but you do try to pray. Perhaps, you say, this is all the hope you have; you are seeking God. Well, then, be assured you shall find him. Keep on seeking the Lord in prayer: "Long as they live should Christians pray." Prayer, indeed, is not the life of the believer, but it is an evidence of life. It is not strictly correct: "For only while they pray, they live;" for if we lived no longer than we prayed, I fear few would know but little of the sense of life. Christ is the believer's life; it can never be taken away from him. Christ gives to his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish.

4. *Love* is another proof of the soul being new-born. Love is of God—God is love. We love him because he first loved us. The measure of love is not stated. We must not distress ourselves about the measure of our love; the best of us have much reason to complain. Christ is our salvation, not our love. How can we love God enough? Our love, like our knowledge, is imperfect,

and will be so in this time-state; but the smallest indication is sufficient to prove its existence. Have we love to those who love Christ? Do we love those most in whom we see the image of Christ most? Then let us rest assured that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. It is, indeed, truly blessed when we are enabled to feel the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the fire of the soul; it kindles all the other graces of the Spirit. Faith works by love, hope and joy are animated by it, and the believer becomes cheerful and blithe in all the ways of God. But when the poor soul is made to feel he is more like a bruised reed or smoking flax than a wide spreading cedar flourishing in the courts of the Lord, how it sighs and moans over its low and weak condition. Sometimes tempted to think "there is no good work began at all;" sometimes fearing your religion is all a delusion. Not a spark of love can you see or feel, a "dull and lifeless frame" is all you possess. And is this your complaint? Is it a matter of grief? Ah! indeed it is:

"My best desires are faint and few;
I fain would strive for more.
But when I cry, My strength renew,
Seem weaker than before."

Well, now, poor soul, take heart. Love is at the bottom of all this; the principle is there. "It lives under pressure and load," as Hart very truly says. I am quite sure, if you feel your burden, it is because you have life; and there is no life without love. God's work is there, and ere long he will fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power. In the mean time, be assured:

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek."

IV. Now, dear friends, let us in the fourth place, proceed to show some of the *practical effects* of this divine revelation in the person of the true believer in Jesus Christ. I say *practical effects*, because wherever there is an experimental acquaintance with the truth as it is in Jesus, there are sure to be produced such effects as will be unmistakably observed both in the church and in the world.

1. The *first* is, the believer's total separation from the world. He is not, it is true, taken out of the world as to its materiality; but he is from its spirit. He is no longer governed by its principles. He loves not the world, nor the things of it. His heart is not in it, though his body is. He feels that *he is drawn out of the world*, like as Moses was drawn out of the watery grave, and was transferred to the courts of the king's palace. So the believer is transferred from death to life. He has left the world and all its charms. He is now to be found in the courts of the Lord's house. He follows Christ in the way. He loves his house, he loves his word, he loves his laws, he loves his people. He is drawn out of his self—from self-seeking; from self-justification, and he seeks now to be justified through the imputed righteousness of Christ alone. He seeks pardon for sin from the atoning work of the Redeemer. He has joy and peace in believing that Christ is his, and he is Christ's; that he is united to him by a true and living faith. His affections are set on things above, not on things of the earth. He is dead to the world, and his life is hid with Christ in God.

2. A *second* effect is, that the true believer in Christ, while in the world, is brought to serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. His conduct in the world,—for he must needs be in it, though he is not of it,—is on the principle of the love of Christ constraining him in all things, whether they relate to his secular calling, his social or family duties. In all these things he desires to be found fearing God, working righteousness, and to be accepted of him, not after the rudiments of the world, but according to the rule of the gospel. He feels how strengthless and useless are all his unaided efforts in contending with a world that lieth in the wicked one; but he looks to the strong for strength, and his prayer is, "Hold up my goings in thy paths that my footsteps slip not." "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee." "Let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me." He feels the world is against him; he feels it hates him; he feels it is because of the truth, and he often feels that his aims, motives, and character are unrighteously aspersed. Not only is an ungodly world against him, but carnal profes-

sors of religion are bitterly against him. He is called to endure their taunts and their contradictions against himself. He is derided, ridiculed, laughed to scorn, and is bantered with all sorts of contumely; but, nevertheless, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." This is his comfort, and he remembers the words of him who said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake." But,

"Whoever frowns, if Jesus smile,
It makes amends for all."

3. Another effect produced in the believer is *humbleness of soul*. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is unlike all other knowledge, which puffeth up. This humbles the soul; it humbles the soul before God; it humbles the soul in its own estimation; and the more Jesus is revealed, the humbler it is, thus evincing the truth of the poet, who said:

"The more thy glories strike mine eye,
The humbler I shall lie."

The soul that is truly humbled before God on account of sin, on account of the holiness of God's law—its immutability, its spirituality, extending to the thoughts and intents of the hearts, feels all boasting is excluded.

"The best obedience of his hands,
Dares not appear before God's throne."

But having no hope in himself, looking for all in Christ, he lies prostrate at the foot of the Cross, humbled in the thought that sin cost the life of the Saviour.

But further, this humbleness of soul shows itself *without*, in proportion as it is felt *within*. There is a spirit of meekness engrafted in the temper and manner of the believer, indicating whose he is, and whom he serves. He is no longer vainly puffed up in his fleshly mind. He feels poor in spirit; not the poverty of misery, but that poverty which has a blessedness attached to it. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven." This poverty of spirit is wrought by the Spirit of

God. He empties the believer of all his self-sufficiency, and makes him sick of his fleshly doings and self-seeking. Where this poverty of spirit is felt, it is found to be as the poverty of a little child, which, though it be the heir of a princely estate, it really has nothing it can call its own; all he possesses is supplied him for the time being; he can do nothing with what he has of his own will. So is it with the believer. He has a feeling sense that he has nothing, spiritually, of his own; that he can do nothing of himself. All that he possesses is supplied him from the fulness which is in Christ Jesus. He can do nothing spiritually of himself; for it is God that worketh in him to do and to will of his good pleasure. 'This is the poverty of spirit the believer rejoices in, that though in and of himself he is nothing and can do nothing, yet Christ is everything to him, and does everything for him; and having Christ he possesses all things. Christ is the believer's all. This he feels most when most he feels poor in spirit. He loves this frame of soul, and earnestly desires ever to be found in it; and knowing the blessedness of it, he sets the highest value upon it. He would gladly part with all worldly advantages upon any consideration, so that he might have an abiding sense of being poor in spirit. He can fully enter into the feelings of dear Mr. Romaine, where he says, in one of his letters, "If the whole world were mine, and I could purchase what I would with it, I would give it *all* to be a scholar made poor in spirit, and to sit at Christ's feet." What a blessed state of mind for a believer in Jesus to have! It is the result of divine teaching. Such a soul has a true knowledge of Jesus, and has derived it only by a divine revelation.

4. There is also another effect produced by this divine revelation of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that is *peace*. The believer in Christ has *peace and joy in God*, through whom he has now received the atonement,—a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It is the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind by Christ Jesus; so that even in the midst of tribulation, the believer has a settled peace; and he can say, if ever so miserable in the world, yet he is happy in Christ. Happy soul! God the Father has revealed to him his unspeakable love in sending his Son to

take the sinner's place. Christ is revealed to him as the all-sufficient Saviour. His atonement is revealed as being the only propitiation for sin, and that the Father now looks complacently on every believing, returning child of God.

And what a divine assurance flows out of this peace! What a declaration is made in the Word of God by the prophet: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isa. xxxii. 17.) An assurance of God's loving-kindness, an assurance of the believer's interest in Christ; of his covenant union to him; an assurance that the only true knowledge of Jesus is by a divine revelation; for as Jesus himself hath said: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself." (John vii. 17.) God the Father will enlighten his mind, and he shall know the truth, and the truth shall make him free; free from error, free from human opinion, free from vain imagination; he shall "know the certainty of the words of truth." "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Thus it is with the believer, as it was with Peter; he can say, "We believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The true knowledge of Jesus Christ is a revelation of God the Father by the Holy Ghost; he takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto each believing member of the church of God. And he is also revealed to the believer as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead; as possessing every spiritual blessing that he can possibly want, and that his own completeness stands in the person of the ever-adorable Redeemer, to whom he is united in the bonds of an everlasting covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure.

Not only has God the Father revealed Christ in us, which is Christ in us the hope of glory, but he hath blessed us *in* him. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according

to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. i. 2-6.)

My hearers, this is something of the blessedness of those who know Jesus Christ by a divine revelation. Let me ask you, what do you know of this revelation?—how do you understand the Scriptures?—have you so learned Christ?—is Christ revealed to you as the only and all-sufficient Saviour?—do you feel lost? I appeal to your conscience. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

Before I sit down, I would just say one word in reference to my coming to this place and occupying the pulpit. I have no wish to be here as a preacher merely. I am desirous of seeing a church of Christ formed here, according to the plan of the New Testament; and if it should be the will of God to give testimony to the word of his grace as preached here by me, I shall be happy to see a church formed of baptised believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. I should indeed rejoice to see this place thronged, as in the days of old. I should not only regard it as a token of the Lord thrusting me in here by his wonder-working providence,—for I can truly say, in reference to it, "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet!"—but I should also regard it as an evident proof of his employing me in the work of the ministry; for my aim is "To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." I have come here almost alone. I am here in the midst of many discouragements, and some little opposition, as several of you know, but I believe this, that if God has given me to do a work which I never did, he will give me such grace as I never had.—Amen.
