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TO

SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION.

By REV. GEORGE MACDONNEL.



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P R E F A C E.

The want of a suitable book as an aid to intending Communicants is one that has been often felt by the Christian pastor and the earnest Church member. Much indeed has been written on the subject of the Lord's Supper, from which the followers of Jesus may derive great spiritual good. Still the desirableness of a *Compendium*, condensed yet sufficiently full, seems to exist.

To what extent the author of the following work has been successful in supplying what he believes lacking, he does not venture even to suppose. The conviction of its being required, led him, some years ago, to attempt to supply it. In doing so, he has kept in view the importance of comprehensiveness and conciseness. Circumstances have prevented him from submitting it to the Christian public till now.

As it is only the devout Communicant that can be acceptable to the Master of the sacred festival, the writer has sincerely sought to cherish in the reader a devotional spirit.

A clear, brief, and scriptural digest of the truths most important to be known, is offered in the following pages, with expository and hortatory remarks. This is associated with a series of Meditations or Discourses, based on the narrative of the Gospels.

Each chapter is preceded and closed with a Prayer conducive to the profit of Christian Communicants.

A chapter is added, treating of the institution, subjects, and mode of Baptism.

G. M.

FERGUS, C. W., March 9, 1864.

CONTENTS.

I.

PAGE

OUR LORD'S desire for the last Passover.—Impressive manifestation of His human nature.—How our nature longs for danger or encounter when such must be met before highly-prized enjoyment can be realized.—This fully experienced by "the Son of Man."—The institution of the Lord's Supper.—The time of it affecting.—The loving command to celebrate it.—The example of Israel in applying the blood of the Paschal lamb to each dwelling.—The kind feelings with which the Passover was wont to be observed, suggestive of the love that should characterize our Communion.—The transition from the Passover to the Christian festival..... 9

II.

The death of Jesus.—The accomplishment of which the Passover had typified.—The doctrine of propitiation embodied in a new and nobler ordinance.—Nature of a Sacrament.—Necessity of "sensible signs."—Judas not present at the first celebration of the Supper.—Probably the Master of the feast waited for his absence, in order to begin the solemnity.—The Apostles were communicants simply as followers of Jesus—All believers to drink of the cup, as well as to eat of the bread.—The better Covenant.—The death of Christ anticipatory and retrospective.—The transition from the Passover to "the Communion" beautiful.—Jesus would not again as at first celebrate the ordinance with His disciples.—The hymn sung after.. 22

III.

The Sacraments are *sealing ordinances*.—In the Communion the transfer of guilt and righteousness represented and sealed.—Figurative style of "the holy Scriptures."—How the devout communicant is to be exercised.—The doctrine of transubstantiation a perversion of the design of the Institution.—The obligation resting upon every Christian to obey Christ's command, and keep the feast.—The acceptable communicant must be "born again."—They who are, should not feel at liberty to be absent from the Communion.—"Babes" and "strong men,"—all who are truly Christ's, should be there.. 36

IV.

PAGE

The death of Christ the most memorable event in the annals of the universe.
 —The price paid for the redemption of sinners, and what it evinces.—In virtue of the death of the Son of God, mercy has come into operation.—This the foundation of holiness.—This is celebrated in the Sacrament of the Supper.—The teaching of the Church of Rome respecting it untruthful.—The doctrine of consubstantiation held by the Lutheran Church.—The Zuinglian view that the observance is merely commemorative.—The Calvinistic opinion scriptural.—In the feast upon the sacrifice the partakers worshipped the Deity to whom it was offered.—In the Christian feast the communicant worships, and has fellowship with Christ.—The union of the Lord and His disciples.—Christians have union and fellowship one with another in the Holy Communion.—What a powerful argument in favour of charity! 48

V.

Matthew 26, 31, 35.—The time and circumstances in which the words were spoken add to their impressiveness.—Our Lord's terrific sufferings just at hand.—Jesus was alone with the eleven faithful apostles.—Luke's account in harmony with this view.—Internal evidence of Judas not having been present.—Marvellous love of Christ to the eleven.—How attractive and endearing the solicitude displayed by him for His friends.—Unhappy self-reliance seen in Peter.—Jesus will correct this evil.—Peter's contrition and restoration.—The safety of the believer..... 60

VI.

Gethsemane's garden.—Our Lord's discourse and prayer when on the way to it.—His sufferings there.—Christian friendship.—The friendship of Jesus.—The three favourite friends of the Divine Man.—He seeks to be soothed amidst the sorrows endured by their sympathy.—The sufferer betakes himself to God His Father.—What an appalling prospect of woe was presented to His prescience!—His prayer effectual, as true prayer always is.—The revealed angel.—The regained composure of Christ.—Disappointment in the three disciples present.—Admission of Jesus that the spirit was willing.—He went again and again to His Father in devotion.—The disciples lost the precious opportunity of watching with their Master.—Lesson to all believers to guard against spiritual slumber.—In all trying circumstances wait on the Lord..... 70

VII.

Chronology of occurrences.—Pre-arranged by God that Gethsemane's agony should end ere the band led by Judas came to the place.—The words of Jesus to the leader and to the members of it.—The conduct of that leader.

vii

PAGE

—How to account for it.—The kiss of Judas.—The band that arrested Jesus, their lights and their weapons.—The tender regard evinced by Jesus for the safety of His eleven faithful apostles, and the awe with which His enemies were affected.—Their single aim.—The flight of the eleven a bitter ingredient in the cup of woe.—The lessons taught by the subject. . . . 82

VIII.

Jesus bound.—When taken to Annas, He was sent by him to Caiaphas, the acting high priest, in whose palace the Sanhedrim were convened.—They were determined to put Jesus to death by false witnesses.—Seldom wanting those who, for an adequate bribe, will perjure themselves.—The number of witnesses the smallest that was legal.—Impossibility of obtaining adequate evidence against Jesus.—The unjust and illegal method had recourse to, to induce self-crimination.—Our Lord avowed that God was His Father, which the Sanhedrim understood to be making Himself equal with God.—The insults offered Him.—His condemnation.—The reply of Christ to the high priest.—Peter's denial of Christ.—His restoration. 100

IX.

The probably brief adjournment of the Council after finding Jesus guilty of blasphemy.—The meeting at night probably illegal.—Hence the necessity of the convention in the morning.—Resolved upon the death of Jesus, then took Him in fetters to Pilot for civil condemnation.—The terrible end of Judas.—The chief priests by implication admit the innocence of Christ in allowing that he had been condemned in consequence of a bribe.—Their punctiliousness.—Pilate's demeanour to Jesus.—His conviction of the perfect innocence of the accused.—His sending Him to Herod.—Herod's dealing with Him.—Pilate's wife.—His vain device of washing his hands to excuse himself while allowing Jesus to be condemned.—The imprecations of the multitude.—Unhappiness of having wicked guides.—Infinite importance of a full surrender of the soul to Christ 120

X.

Pilate's acquaintance with the history of our Lord.—With a view to save the life of the prisoner, he proposed and administered corporal scourging.—In response to the brutal cry of "crucify him," Jesus was handed over to the soldiery.—The cohort present uncommonly ruthless, and they exhausted their cruelty upon the sufferer.—Pilate's five or seven efforts to have the life of Jesus spared.—His finally acceding to the wishes of Christ's enemies.—This was done on the day of "the preparation of the Passover."—Execution immediately after condemnation.—Golgotha.—The death of the cross.—Simon of Cyrene.—No female among the persecutors and murderers of Christ.—The address of Jesus to the kind "daughters of Jerusalem."—He declined to drink the benevolent potion offered Him.—How

much had been crowded into a few hours.—The prayer of Jesus for His enemies.—Pilate's inscription on the top of the cross.—The division of the raiment of Jesus.—The spectators of the tragedy and their demeanour.—The supernatural darkness, and the end it served.—Forsaken of God.—The peace that possessed Messiah's soul ere He died 137

XI.

Attendant miracles.—The veil of the temple rent.—The termination of the Mosaic dispensation.—The time admirable.—The ninth hour, when our Lord dismissed His Spirit.—The opening of the graves.—The saved malefactor.—The Centurion and soldiers, the women and others.—The honour done to women by the Evangelists.—The Jewish law requiring that dead bodies should not remain after night.—The Governor readily acceding, the bodies of the condemned are removed speedily, it being the second day after "the feast," and given to their friends.—A friend, Joseph of Arimathea, asks and receives the body of Jesus.—Nicodemus associated with him.—Lesson to us from their fidelity and love.—Joseph's new tomb.—The funeral procession.—The predicted rising again as it told upon friends and foes 156

XII.

The resurrection of Jesus.—The earthquake.—The angels.—The Roman guard.—The chief priests.—Mary Magdalene.—Visit of Peter and John to the empty tomb.—Appearing of Christ to Mary Magdalene.—First meeting with the other women.—The two disciples going to Emmaus.—Christ's manifestation to Peter and to the other disciples.—The absence of Thomas.—He did not dare to be absent "eight days after."—The fishing party at the lake of Galilee.—Jesus seen of five hundred brethren at once in Galilee.—Other interviews with disciples.—The ascension from the Mount of Olives 175

XIII.

Restoration of the lapsed ones.—Christ's mediatorial sway.—The influence of redemption probably not limited to this world.—We know of no order of intelligent creatures that have not been affected by sin.—Angels as well as men may be interested.—Our Lord's commission to disciples to baptize.—Headship of Christ.—Subjects and mode of baptism.—The gracious promise. 195

I N S T I T U T I O N
OF THE
SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

I.

OUR LORD'S desire for the last Passover.—Impressive manifestation of His human nature.—How our nature longs for danger or encounter when such must be met before highly prized enjoyment can be realized.—This fully experienced by "the Son of Man."—The institution of the Lord's Supper.—The time of it affecting.—The loving command to celebrate it.—The example of Israel in applying the blood of the Paschal lamb to each dwelling.—The kind feelings with which the Passover was wont to be observed, suggestive of the love that should characterize our Communion.—The transition from the Passover to the Christian festival.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, we desire to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Thou art the God of salvation. Give us to know Thee as the God of our salvation. Blessed be Thy name, Thou hast revealed Thyself in Christ Jesus, Thy beloved Son, as not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn unto Thee, and live. Thou hast "set forth" Thine anointed One, to be "a propitiation through faith in his blood" for the sins of every contrite sinner. In the spirit of godly contrition would we now draw nigh unto Thee, confessing our guilt, and supplicating grace to enable us to depart from all iniquity. We look to Jesus alone as the ground of our hope and confidence before Thee. O may we be accepted in the Beloved; and may the Spirit of the risen Saviour dwell in us, that we may be holy as our Father in heaven is holy.

Glorious Head of the Body, Thy Church, may we be true members of it. May we be partakers of Divine life in rich abundance. May faith be vigorous and love intense in our souls. Bless, for this purpose, our reading and remembrance

of the truths to which we are about to direct our attention. May the solemn subject of Thy death, as commemorated in the Holy Communion, in our consideration of it, prove salutary and sanctifying to our souls. May the blissful operations of thy Spirit be largely experienced by us. May this little book which we are about to read be rendered conducive to our edification. May it instrumentally aid us in examining ourselves, and so eating of that bread and drinking of that cup, by which are represented thy broken body and shed blood, in a manner well pleasing in Thy sight. Prepare us, good Lord, so that our sacramental communion may be with the Father, and with the King of Zion. May Thy banner of love overspread us.

And now, O Lord, what wait we for? Our hope is in Thee. Deal bountifully with us. May we be increasingly devout, humbled, and advanced in all goodness. Fill us with peace and joy in believing. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be all the praise, world without end. Amen.

“With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer, for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”* Such was the solemnizing assurance of the blessed Redeemer to his disciples, when seated at the last Paschal supper. With most earnest and intensely longing desire, had He anticipated and waited for this august occasion. The Passover had now fulfilled the purpose of its institution. This was its last,—its final celebration. The true lamb, “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world,” was about to be actually slain. The conclusive observance of the typical ordinance was to be also rendered transitional,—ushering in a new and more exalted ordinance, *commemorative* of the *completion* of that transcendantly glorious event to which the antecedent solemnity had pointed.

* Luke 22 : 15, 16.

“With desire,” said the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, “have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” There is something most attractive and impressive in this manifestation of the holy human nature of the man Christ Jesus. It furnishes one of the many evidences presented to us in His life of the truth of the inspired statement:—“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”*

Nothing can be more natural than to wish for the accomplishment of any perilous or painful undertaking. The object which we have long sought to attain, for which many an anxious sigh has been breathed, and many an arduous effort expended, becomes more and more interesting and inviting as we approximate to its achievement. The result which can only be arrived at after much pain-staking, patient and persevering toil, is sought for with incalculably greater eagerness and ardour, in proportion as the expectant comes nearer the looked-for reality. And if, immediately before conclusive victory, there should interpose some dread obstruction or enemy, more alarming than any with which we have hitherto contended, upon that chiefly will the mind rest, thither it will constantly desire to arrive, in order that it may be encountered and overcome. The traveller who has undertaken a hazardous and protracted journey, that he may behold and embrace those who are dearest on earth to him, feels a deepening solicitude as he draws nigh the place of their habitation. He may have to pass some dangerous strait, some boisterous channel, some rocky shore with its reefs and its breakers, ere his eye can rest upon the loved locality, and the aspiration of his heart can be gratified. How frequently and how intensely will the thoughts pass on to the day of his arrival there! What a glow of satisfaction overspreads his cheek! how the eye brightens with hope, and the whole soul thrills with delight,

* Hebrews 2: 17.

when the scenery is being neared, or is beheld even in the distance! True, he knows the danger to which he is now to be exposed; but he knows, too, that until that danger is met, his hopes cannot be fulfilled. Hence his irresistible craving to witness the terrible sight. For beyond that stormy sea and that threatening coast, lies the spot where already he is in affection and imagination. Thus, with irrepressible emotion, does he welcome, that he may triumph over the remaining obstacle.

These well-known workings and associations of human nature may aid us in understanding and appreciating the feelings of "the man of sorrow," as he uttered the words, "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you, before I suffer." He had never for a moment lost sight of what he had undertaken,—the bringing of many sons and daughters unto glory, from among the ruined and hell-deserving children of men. In achieving such a beatific issue, the glory of the Father would be evidenced. From childhood he had ceaselessly gone about this, his Father's business. He could now say: "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word."* But He who was made "sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," knew that "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."† And now the terrific night had arrived, to be followed by its still more terrible day, when the Substitute of sinners must endure what the justice of a holy God demanded for sin. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to enter into his glory. For this hour had "the Son of man" waited, with intense interest and anxiety. The time had come to which Jesus had all along

*John 17: 5, 6.

† Hebrews 2: 10.

looked forward—that time so emphatically awful! And what was then transpiring? With Divine prescience, “the Lamb of God” clearly perceived the penalty which he must pay in Gethsemane’s garden and on Calvary’s cross, for transgression. His agony and bloody sweat; the conflict to be sustained when assailed by men and devils, with rage and malignity unparalleled; the hiding of his Father’s countenance—nay, the being “forsaken” for a season by God, *His* God;—all this, with all that it implies, were perspicuously present to the view of the holy Sufferer. What now, then, was his language? what the emotion of his spirit? We know that in the garden of his agony “he fell on his face and prayed saying, O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” And again, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done.” But does not all this most affectingly shew us two things:—First, that as a partaker of human nature, our Redeemer was terrified at the unutterable prospect now before him, and so would be shielded from it, if the grand purpose of His coming to the world could be adequately effected without his drinking to the dregs this bitter cup; and, secondly, that his resolution was immovable, to accomplish that end for which he had been manifested in the flesh? “Now,” He exclaims, “is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.” What, then, was the feeling that predominated in the breast of Him who had engaged to become our Substitute and Sin-offering? Was it that of regret at having placed Himself in the position that now drew upon Him such suffering? Verily, no. Doubtless had he desired or sought deliverance, all His prayer would have been granted by his Father. But it was not so with Him who had engaged to pay the ransom price of our redemption. For how then could the Scriptures have been fulfilled, and the gracious purposes of the God, whose love is from everlasting to everlasting, have been implemented? Listen to the accents of fervent affection and profound solemnity that flow from his lips.

They may almost be said to imply the sensation of joyfulness. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

Such were the yearnings of "Christ our Passover," when about to be "sacrificed for us." "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God," faltered not as the last trial approached. When the climax of woe, flowing from the righteous curse of a righteous God upon man's accursed transgression, presented itself to his contemplation, and began to take possession of his soul, "the Son of Man" instinctively shrank. He had not been, verily, of "the seed of Abraham," had it been otherwise. But he was too well aware of the requisition of the holy law and justice of God, and he was too cordially intent upon finishing the work given Him to do, to seek a release or deliverance. When humanity, therefore, would shrink, He recalls to mind his gracious determination in undertaking to become the Saviour of the guilty,—“but for this cause came I unto this hour.” Awful hour of most dread and dark suffering! Oh, how unparalleled! What endurings did not our Surety experience, as “the propitiation for our sins!” Yet, though “it pleased the Lord to bruise him,” and put him to grief, there was the most marked and admirable harmony subsisting between the Father and the Son. Observe that sensible interposition manifested on the part of Jehovah, when the celestial messenger is sent as a token of love and omnipotence from the throne of the Eternal, in the very midst of weakness and prostration: “And there appeared an angel unto him, strengthening him.”* Thus reanimated and nerved anew, we behold Him rising from the cold earth, and, after having provided for the safety of his disciples, deliver himself up to the ruffian band who were charged by impious authority with his apprehension.

* Luke 22: 43.

It was on "the same night in which He was betrayed" that the Great Head of the Church instituted the sacrament of the Supper. How affecting the time! Jesus had a vivid anticipation of the terrific assault of all his enemies. He knew that earth and hell were combined against Him. He was perfectly aware that even God, his Father, would pour out the vials of his Divine wrath upon Him, as bearing the sins of a guilty and ruined world. Yes, the heathen were to rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth would set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed; even the chosen and genuine disciples who had hitherto, in the face of all opposition, adhered to their beloved Master, would now, this night, prove cowardly and backsliding,—one of them, as if he were of the same spirit with the traitor Judas, denying that he knew the man, and all of them, without exception, forsaking him and fleeing; the hosts of apostate angels, with their mighty and malignant leader at their head, would, with all their combined malice, power and ingenuity, make a most desperate onslaught upon "the seed of the woman." The serpent would take care to bruise his heel, as He would bruise the serpent's head. Nor was this all. The hiding of his Father's countenance,—the being "forsaken" by Him, was now at hand. And yet, with the solemn consciousness that all this was even now at the door, He who loved his own from everlasting to everlasting, could, with all earnestness, truth and affection, say "on the same night,"—"With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."

Surely the circumstances, and the time of its institution, invest the ordinance of the Lord's Supper with especial interest, solemnity, and importance. He whose love we commemorate addresses every genuine disciple,—“this do in remembrance of me.” Let the believer devoutly ponder the blissfulness of this Sacrament. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”* Experi-

* Rev. 19 : 10. John 3 : 33.

mentally, savingly, the child of God has been taught to know the truth of the inspired seer's beautiful prediction,—“And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” “To him that hath shall be given.” To every one that receives Jesus as “the bread of life,” is provided “a feast of fat things.” Whoever has accepted of the “living water” which Immanuel supplies, is invited to participate of the “wine and milk” purchased by the incarnate Son of God. And in the communion of His body and blood, not a few of his members have realized the closest, sweetest, holiest nearness to Him, vouchsafed to them upon earth. Oh how elevating, yet humbling! how exhilarating, yet profoundly solemn, is it to be able by faith to say: “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with citrons: for I am sick of love. His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.”†

It was upon the occasion of celebrating the passover with his disciples, that our Lord instituted the Sacrament of the Supper. The Jewish festival, according to Divine appointment, was annually held to keep up the remembrance of the loving-kindness of the Lord to Israel. When he was about to effect the deliverance of His people from Egyptian bondage, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, “it came to pass that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle.‡ On the other hand, not an Israelitish family had been in the least degree injured. All had complied with the mandate of Jehovah, so that when he passed through Egypt the blood of the slain lamb was struck on the two side posts and on the upper door-posts of every dwelling of Israel. Had any

* Isaiah 32: 2.

† Solomon's Song, 2: 4.

‡ Exodus 12: 29.

disregarded or neglected the awful behest respecting the blood of the lamb, the first-born of such household would have perished; and such contempt would have deserved the righteous retribution. The impiety of the omission, and its presumption, would have merited and drawn down the vengeance of an angry God. But none incurred the terrific penalty,—all complied with the terms of safety.

How salutary and impressive is the example of Israel on that portentous night! It was the blood actually sprinkled that constituted the Divinely-appointed symbol of preservation. And what else than the blood of Jesus, appropriated by faith on the part of the sinner, doth God require to ensure the salvation of the soul? As on the night of the passover it was the blood of the lamb undoubtedly sprinkled that saved the dwellers in Goshen, so now it is the contact of the blood of Jesus, “our Passover,” with the sinful soul of the trembling believer, that infallibly saves the soul. “I can easily conceive,” says a distinguished writer, “the mingled feelings and emotions of Israel that night. I can conceive that, knowing the judgment, and having adopted the defence, some doubted that evening if even the blood would shield them, and as they doubted, their dread of the approaching night became more terrible; but I can conceive that there mingled with that dread the recollection that the God of Israel had ever been true to his promise, and the hope that He would even then be their refuge: and when morning dawned, the safety that they tasted awoke songs of gratitude and joy, such as had never been heard in Egypt before. It seems to me that we have an instructive lesson in all this. If Christ be our Passover, a Christian’s safety is not shaken by the fears, the doubts, the dismay that he sometimes feels. The fears of the inhabitant within did not make the angel cross the blood-besprinkled threshold and smite him. The safety of the Israelite rested not upon the strength of his faith, nor upon the intensity of his peace, but upon the naked fact that the blood was sprinkled on the threshold. So it is, blessed be God, with us. When you begin to fear that you will not be saved, your salvation is not shaken in the least

degree by that. When you begin to be agitated, perplexed, and alarmed, you dishonour God, and injure your own peace ; but your safety rests upon the naked, simple fact, that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”*

The memory of Israel’s great deliverance from the house of bondage was handed down from generation to generation in the recurrence of the passover,—the most impressive of the three great festivals of the chosen people. As in the feast of weeks and the feast of tabernacles, so in this, all males who possibly could, were enjoined to go up to Jerusalem from all parts of the land. The sacrificial lambs were offered at the temple by the priests. And in every house, family, domestic assemblage, there was a feast upon this sacrifice. Of an unblemished lamb, slain and roasted, all present partook, with the appropriate accompaniments. Among the vast multitudes that resorted to the city of Zion’s solemnities, benevolence, conciliation, unity and love were cherished and cultivated. Every house was in a measure open to strangers ; all felt as brethren doing homage to the same Almighty Parent. The old and the young were present,—the sprightliness of youth and the decrepitude of age.” The rich and the poor met together. The joyful and the downcast, the bridegroom and the bereaved,—all mingled together in sacred fellowship. Even “ foe encountered foe, but not to fight, mollified by common friends in the range of their kindred ; and as they looked upon the lamb, and partook of it alike, they became imbued with its spirit, as well as nourished by its substance.”†

Such was the Paschal institution which typified the more perfect solemnity of the Christian sacrament. How sublime the type ! How suitable a precedent of the New Testament Passover ! How suggestive of the views, feelings, and disposition with which the Antitype should be celebrated ! How vividly is the whole antecedent ordinance and its celebration fitted to inculcate upon the communicant the beautiful sim-

* “The Communicant’s Manual,” page 117, by Dr. Cumming.

† Dr. King on the Lord’s Supper.

plicity and saving efficacy of appropriating faith,—of that holy faith which takes hold of Christ and the everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure, as “all our desire.” And how calculated to enforce and stimulate the exercise of that “charity” without which we are “nothing.” “Little children,” says the Spirit of grace, by the disciple whom Jesus loved, “love one another.” Destitute of this sanctified affection—this sacred operation of the social element that binds Christian to Christian, and all Christians together as members of the one body of Christ—we are not even the least of those genuine “little ones who believe in Jesus.” Sympathy then, or fellow-feeling, cordial attachment, the bearing one another’s burdens, rejoicing with those that rejoice, and weeping with those who weep; that lovely spirit that enables its possessor to forgive and mantle a multitude of offences received; that lively interest in the eternal and temporal weal of our brother and of our sister, of which we have many a model specimen in the great Apostle of the Gentiles;—all these lineaments of the child of God should be apparent and increasingly sought after, in every disciple of the Master of the feast, who would worthily show forth the Lord’s death till He come again.

It was after and at the celebration of the feast of unleavened bread, that the dying Redeemer was pleased, by a kind of transition most aptly pointing out the connection, to introduce and command to be observed the Christian festival, that will perpetuate, until his second advent, the remembrance of His love, and that sacramental communion with him, which it is the blessed privilege of His friends to enjoy during the pilgrimage of this mortal life, and the existence of this present dispensation. The time and the mode of the introduction of the Supper of our Lord, the principles upon which it proceeds, and the objects which it is designed to accomplish,—all admirably set forth its harmony with the prior and preparatory ordinance. We behold in it the wise gradation by which the glorious Head of the Church adapted its observances to the different stages of its advancement. And while we mark the Divine wisdom so perspicuous in the enjoined

solemnities of the Church of God, both in its minority and in its maturity, how refreshing and edifying to contemplate *the identity* of that Church in all ages! By the common faith of all its members from the commencement to the close of the history of mankind; by their alike taking hold of the heaven-provided sacrifice for sin; by their love and devotion to the God of Israel; by the benevolence and holiness of their lives, and by that charity which is the "bond of perfectness,"—we witness in all, collectively, and in each, individually—from Abel down to the latest of believers, "the unity of the Spirit,"—that oneness with their adorable Head, and with each other as members of Him and of each other, which constitutes them "the body of Christ." How happy are all they who pertain to this spiritual fellowship! How thrice happy is each one who, by the Spirit of regeneration and adoption, is taught to call Jesus, Lord!

PRAYER.

MOST BLESSED GOD, we thank Thee that Thou hast permitted us to turn our thoughts and hearts to the solemn contemplation of the love and sacrifice of our Divine Redeemer. If we have been enabled in a truly devout spirit to engage in this exercise, to Thy name do we give all the praise. May our meditations be really edifying. Prepare us for worthily shewing forth the deathless and dying love of Him who was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, and by whose stripes we are healed. May we be his truly, with intense love, and entire consecration. Wash us in his atoning blood from all our sins. Cleanse us by his holy Spirit from all the pollutions of the flesh and spirit. May we perfect holiness in thy fear.

When we bear in mind, holy Father, that we have not been redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Thy Son, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, O may we ever feel that

no depth of gratitude can ever be adequate to express the obligations we have been laid under. And may we with sincere aspiration exclaim, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!"

Bless very abundantly all who, like ourselves, may purpose shewing forth the Lord's death in the "breaking of bread." May they be of one heart and one mind in love, truth, and holiness. May great grace be multiplied unto us all. We would likewise commend to the richest favors of our heavenly Father, all thy spiritual children throughout the world. Guide and keep them all, till they are beyond the reach of evil, and enter upon the inheritance of saints in the Paradise of our God. And the glory shall be all thine, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

II.

The death of Jesus.—The accomplishment of which the Passover had typified.—The doctrine of propitiation embodied in a new and nobler ordinance.—Nature of a Sacrament.—Necessity of “sensible signs.”—Judas not present at the first celebration of the Supper.—Probably the master of the feast waited for his absence, in order to begin the solemnity.—The Apostles were communicants simply as followers of Jesus—All believers to drink of the cup, as well as to eat of the bread.—The better Covenant.—The death of Christ anticipatory and retrospective.—The transition from the Passover to “the Communion” beautiful.—Jesus would not again as at first celebrate the ordinance with His disciples.—The hymn sung after.

PRAYER.

“LORD, THOU hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.”*

We greatly rejoice in the assurance that Thou art Jehovah, —the unchangeable God. Therefore it is that we have not been consumed in thy wrath. Therefore it is that Jesus thy beloved Son died for sinners such as we are, to bring us back to Thee. Oh! unto Thee do we now desire to come, and in the spirit of adoption to cry unto Thee,—Abba Father. May the Spirit of Jesus dwell in us. May we be able, each one of us to invoke Thee and say,—“O Lord my God, mine holy One.” Without Thee we are eternally destitute of holiness. But thine in Christ, we are holy, and all our holiness speaks exclusively to thy praise, and lays us under the deepest obligation of gratitude, love and admiration.

Heavenly Father, we are now again to be for a little time engaged in the contemplation of redeeming love,—of that love of our Saviour Christ which was manifested in his dying

* Psalm 90 : 4, 2.

“the just for the unjust.” May our exercise be truly salutary and edifying. Give us the testimony of thy Spirit witnessing with our own spirits that we are the children of God. Enable us henceforward to walk as becometh those who are wholly thine. Let sin have no dominion over us. We would ever more live under the influence of that word of thine which says to the disciples of thy Son,—“Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*

“Father of glory,” we believe in the exceeding greatness of thy power to us-ward who believe. Thou canst thoroughly renew our nature and renovate us in thy blessed image. Work in us, we beseech Thee, all the good pleasure of thy goodness and the work of faith with power, through the merit of thy only Son. Amen.

What love irrepressible and unparalleled fills the heart of “the Son of Man,” as we behold him seated at the last passover! About to institute the sacrament of the Communion, He addresses his chosen and warmly-attached followers.—“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”†

Though Jesus knew that in order to the passover being “fulfilled in the kingdom of God,” He must die the accursed death of the cross, yet did He, with most profound desire, wait for the final celebration of that ordinance which He was aware, was the certain harbinger of “his decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” For He knew also that as Christ, the anointed Messiah, He ought to suffer all the dread penalty due to the sins of those whose substitute He was. Spontaneously had He rendered himself amenable to the inflexible justice of a holy God. No man, no creature,

* Colossians 3 : 2, 3, 4

† Luke 22 : 28, 29.

no confederation could take away his life from Him. He laid it down of himself. All the more therefore did the man Christ Jesus, with holy earnestness, long for that awful crisis and consummation to which he had pledged himself—the drinking of that cup which the Father had given him to drink,—the enduring of that accursed death of the cross which was associated with the anguish of his soul as an offering for sin. To this grandest of events the Passover had ever directed the spiritual children of the Father of the faithful. To the antecedent Sacrament, they were taught to look as precursory of a brighter and better economy. They were acquainted with the great fact in the history of redemption,—that Messiah must be “cut off, but not for himself.” This marvellous consummation, long before promised, was now about to be accomplished, in the suffering and death of Jesus. Henceforth therefore the doctrine of propitiation should be embodied in another and nobler ritual. For this purpose the Head of the Church was pleased to introduce a new ordinance suited to that gospel era which had now been reached. That ordinance is the Sacrament of the Supper, wherein the death, and the love stronger than death, of our Redeemer are set forth. It pertains to the Christian Church during the whole of the dispensation, while the “glad tidings,” which are “to all people” are being heralded. It will be devoutly observed by the disciples of Christ “till He come again.” With regard to the “good news,”—the glorious gospel, with which it is connected, how well may we exclaim with Israel’s pious and philanthropic Psalmist,—“Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.”*

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for

* Psalm 89 : 15.

the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."*

"Nothing," it has been justly observed, "can be more simple in its nature and use than this sacred institution: yet nothing has ever been more obscured, perplexed, misunderstood, and perverted, than it has been."† To possess a spirit of childlike simplicity and teachableness with godly sincerity and desire, will form a good preparation for obtaining correct and scriptural views of it; and for celebrating it in a solemn, joyful, and profitable manner. Individually and collectively we should enter into the spirit of the inspired Singer's heart-stirring aspiration, — "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me into thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy."‡ Those who have been brought out of darkness into the marvellous light of Zion's King, can in faith and love say to Him,—"For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light shall we see light."||

"A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein by sensible signs, Christ and the benefit of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers" (Shorter Catechism). There are two sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Those five commonly called sacraments,—that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction,—are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have grown, partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly as a state of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God." (Article xxv. of the 39 Articles.)

* Matthew 26 : 26, &c. † Scott. ‡ Psalm 43 : 3, 4. || Psalm 36 : 9.

Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted by Christ personally. And without his personal presence and authority, no sacrament of his Church has ever been appointed. The party or the individual who has at any time assumed to ordain one, has thereby been proved to be an antichrist. He who "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God," by his doing so demonstrates that he is the representative and the impersonation of the great antichrist of scripture. He has sought and is seeking and ever will seek to put himself in the place of Christ, until he shall be consumed by the Lord "with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming." Arrogating the attributes, authority, and honor which belong alone to the Divine Head of the Church, conclusively points out the head of the great apostacy foretold in the word of truth.

The necessity of "sensible signs,"—of some ceremony ordained of God, is ascertained by a careful attention to holy Scripture, and the nature of a sacrament. Appropriate symbols were attached to both Baptism and the Lord's Supper by Jesus, their author; and their observance is enjoined by Him. A sacrament is an oath of the Lord. The word was originally employed to signify the oath and obligation of the Roman soldier to be true to his general and his country. It expresses the vows which the good soldier of Jesus Christ takes to the Captain of his salvation. Of these vows we are from time to time reminded by the recurring dispensation of the Supper; every renewed partaking of it is a renewal of them, and an additional motive "to obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among us."*

The Christian Passover was ushered in with a solemnity and a simplicity that command our admiration. To know that the time-honored Jewish festival, was now receiving its last,—its final celebration;—that an ordinance appointed by God and most hallowed in the memory of every pious Israelite was now being conclusively observed: this idea alone was

* Galatians 3 : 1.

awe-inspiring. But when we bear in mind that Jesus, with the omniscience of his Divine nature, clearly perceived all that would transpire in the course of a few hours in connection with Himself as the august Sufferer, and all the inexpressible results that should flow from his death, the impression must have been solemnizing in a degree of which we cannot adequately conceive.

It was thus that after celebrating with his disciples the typical passover, "as they were eating, Jesus took bread" (the loaf) with such peculiar solemnity and expressiveness as to indicate that He was about to consecrate it to some new, extraordinary, and significant purpose. It was probably unleavened bread that He employed. This however, was a mere circumstance and not binding in other cases, as is plain from the silence of the inspired writers concerning it.

Judas appears to have left the company of the disciples previous to the institution of the Christian Passover. Undoubtedly he participated with Jesus and the eleven in the feast of unleavened bread. Matthew says, "Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve." And it is recorded that our Lord said,—“he that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.” But that Judas had withdrawn previous to the last celebration seems established by carefully weighing the various notices of the evangelists, and especially from the account of John the beloved disciple. He tells us,—“when Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the

table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night." (John 13: 21-30.) The unhappy traitor had previously ascertained the purpose of his Lord to visit that night the favourite retreat of Gethsemane on the other side of the brook Cedron. Irritated and incensed by what he may have considered an exposure, with desperate and diabolical determination, he quitted the festivity and companionship of the Passover, in order that he might, with the least possible delay, execute his fiendish scheme. It was while he was obtaining and conducting his "band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees," that the divine Redeemer celebrated the communion of His body and blood with His chosen friends, addressed them in the solemn and tender discourse written in the chapters of John, offered for them His intercessory prayer, and endured in the garden the dreadful agony of soul, which so affected his body that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

But the departure of Judas, with all that it implied, did not impede for a moment the purposes of love and salvation upon which the Saviour of sinners was intent. So far from being allowed to retard or interfere with these, we may almost suppose that for the withdrawal of "the son of perdition," the great Master of the feast had anxiously waited, that He might with his genuine disciples, commence that most impressive solemnity which evinces the fulfilment of the Passover in the kingdom of God. Viewed in this light, how instructive is the connection observed by Matthew,— "Then Judas which betrayed him answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat, this is my body."

Thus did the King of Zion set apart by prayer and thanksgiving bread for the purpose of most solemn and holy com-

munion,—to promote intimate oneness between the Head and members of the mystical body, and consequently increased holiness. He “blessed” this sign and seal of the benefits that flow from his atoning death. What He as the Fountain of blessing could impart, his servants are privileged, in faith and love, to supplicate and receive.

Having blessed and broken the bread, Jesus gave it to the disciples, not as apostles, not even as ministers of his Word, but simply in their character of his friends and followers. He regarded them as his family. As such He had kept the Passover with them. And viewing them in the same beautiful relation, He celebrated with them the Passover of his own death. As communicants there are no clergy and no laity among the members of Christ. All partake of the significant emblems, and realize sacred fellowship in virtue of the faith that saves the hell-deserving sinner, and knits the soul to Jesus in the eternal alliance.

Having dispensed the bread which symbolically spiritually, sacramentally, was his “body,” He who was about to lay down his life a ransom for many, then “took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying. Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* The Jews were wont to designate the Paschal cup “the cup of blessing.” And we find the expressive phraseology applied to the type, appropriated by the inspired apostle for the glorious antitype,—“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ?”†

In the words “Drink ye all of it,” we observe that the loving command is not only as comprehensive and inclusive as that enjoining the eating of the bread, but even more pointed. We are thus taught that this part of the celebration must, in no case be omitted. Did the Author of the Sacrament foresee that the presumptuous and impious practice of withholding the cup from the laity would obtain in the professing Church ? How significant and forcible his mandate

* Matthew 26. † I Corinthians 10 : 16.

in opposition to such antichristianism:—“Drink ye all of it.” The charge takes in every one who truly loves the Lord Jesus Christ, whether office bearer, or private Christian in his Church. It speaks alike to pastors and people, with a love that passeth all understanding, and an authority which none may disregard with impunity.—“Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament (or covenant) which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

By the blood of Christ sin is pardoned and all the blessings of salvation are bequeathed to the saved sinner, as by the testament of the dying Redeemer and Mediator of the new covenant. The covenant of redemption implies a testament, and a testament implies the death of the testator. By the shedding of our Testator's blood “for the remission of sins,” the covenant of mercy and salvation was finally and for ever confirmed, and the right of every believer to all its benefits fully established. In “the remission of sins,” we behold the precursor and the pledge of all other spiritual and heavenly blessings in the soul. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” All whom God justifies, He also sanctifies and glorifies. Every Israelite indeed, may say unto the Lord with the Psalmist, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.” (Psalm 73 : 24.)

Such is the “new covenant” through the blood of Emmanuel. How obviously is it the “better covenant established upon better promises”! For by the first or old covenant which God made with Adam, all mankind were ruined along with their first federal head. But by the covenant of sovereign love and grace, all the followers of the Lamb are saved from sin and all its necessary wretchedness, have the Divine Image reinstated in their souls, and are made meet for glory, honor, and immortality. This gracious covenant of God's everlasting favor had been revealed immediately after man's fall. We have it in the prediction that “the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;” *

* Gen. 3 : 15.

and successively, as time rolled on, and dispensation followed dispensation—downwards through the patriarchal and Mosaic economies,—in the prophecies, institutions, and promises of “the holy Scriptures,” the “good news” of the covenant of redemption, became increasingly clear, explicit, and, full, until the beatific day arrived of Messiah’s advent and Messiah’s death.

The grand event of the consummation of the death of Christ has both an anticipatory and a retrospective influence upon the children of God. To those who lived anterior to the Saviour’s day, His death was *prefigured* by the blood of animals slain in sacrifice. Through the medium of these, the enlightened believer beheld and relied upon that great sacrifice for sin, which the promised Redeemer should offer up of himself once for all. Those who live subsequently to the death of Him who is “the propitiation for our sins,” commemorate it, in the communion of bread and the blood of the grape. In “the cup of blessing,” faith beholds the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for “the remission of sins.”

How admirable is the relationship of the Passover and the Supper of the Lord! And how beautiful the transition from the darker to the more perspicuous Sacrament. They remind us of and aptly symbolise the gradual advancement and full development of the plan of redeeming love. The one shadows forth the accomplishment of redemption; the other contemplates and celebrates it as finished. The former consists in “waiting for the kingdom of God,” — “desiring the days of the Son of Man”; the latter comports with that brighter and happier state for which kings and prophets and righteous men had waited and longed when “the kingdom of God” is come.

After the blessed Emmanuel had given to his chosen and endeared disciples “the cup,” accompanying it with words unfolding its solemn import, He added, “but I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” Of the meaning of this intimation there have been various expositions. Dr. Hammond paraphrases it,—“It is not long

that I shall abide with you, nor shall I again celebrate this or any other like feast among you, till we meet in heaven, and partake of those joys, which are wont to be figuratively expressed by new wine." Certainly the language implies that Jesus would never again observe the Jewish Passover, that its last celebration by Him with his followers, had now been completed. But the allusion to "this fruit of the vine," immediately after its being used in the Christian Sacrament, conclusively shews that the latter ordinance was especially intended. The glorious Master of the festival may then be understood as telling his loved friends, that they would never, during the present dispensation, enjoy in the same manner as they had just done, his bodily presence with them in this holy communion. Henceforward He would be present by his Spirit outpoured, his members would realize Him by faith. But the Head of the Church also teaches his body to count upon a renewal of personal intercourse and communion in this holy festival,—to anticipate a time when all believers "shall see Him as He is," and not merely by faith,—to look forward to a bright, blessed, beatific day when "He shall come again,"—to "the day when He would drink the fruit of the vine" new with them in his Father's kingdom. Thus does Jesus seem to refer to a period antecedent to "the end when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."* He probably points to the "millennial reign," which has been graciously foretold in the sacred oracles.

To "the coming of the day of God," for the revelation revealed from heaven of the Lord Jesus, every Christian communicant is most impressively and lovingly taught in this most solemn ordinance to look. So iterates the inspired apostle of the Gentiles,—“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”† How suitable, how salutary the exhortation written by that honored apostle of the circumcision, who was one of the

* I Cor. 15 : 24.

† I Cor. 11 : 26.

first communicants, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."*

After this "communion of saints," of genuine disciples with each other and with their Lord, and His communion with them, the service was concluded by singing a hymn of praise. That hymn we may well suppose was the great hallelujah comprising from the 113th to the end of the 118th Psalm. It had usually terminated the observances of the Passover. And no termination could have been so well adapted and so edifying as the giving praise to Jehovah in the solemn strains of the spirit-guided Psalmist of the Church of God. O what a singing to the praise of God was the singing of that hymn! Let us only reflect upon the Master and his disciples. What singers, what glory to God have we here! There never ascended to the throne of the Eternal such music as that which proceeded alike from the heart and the lips of Jesus and the eleven. Verily the Father was glorified by this offering of praise. To reflect upon it is thrilling. Its associations and suggestions we cannot express. Let the meditative and devout communicant dwell upon the theme, and rejoice in the Lord with thanksgiving and prayer. Let us with spirituality and fervour cultivate the holy exercise of singing to the Lord. Such music even Jesus practised, and we doubt not his holy human soul and frail human frame, were nerved, soothed, and elevated by it.

When "the Son of Man" had thus glorified God his Father, by the appropriate termination of the sacred institution, He with his disciples, proceeded to the scene of his agony, and of his betrayal and apprehension. "And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives." Let us learn, after piously, with solemnity and joy, obeying the dying command of our Lord, and doing what He has enjoined in remembrance of Him, to go forth to duty and suffering. Let the influence of this and every sacred ordinance be to render us increasingly devoted to God. In this way we shall imitate the example and be ani-

* II Peter 3 : 11.

mated by the spirit of Him who is in all things the example of holiness and the guide to life everlasting. "Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

PRAYER.

BLESSED GOD, with devout reverence would we again draw nigh the footstool of thy throne. We praise and adore Thee that through our exalted Surety, the Son of thy love, we have boldness to come even into thy presence. Give us O Lord the faith that is strong in Jesus, and glorifies Thee. What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be the adopted, regenerated, sanctified, and glorified children of God! Deepen, heavenly Father, our humility; may we realize growing gratitude to the God of our salvation and the Redeemer of our souls; may our love be more intense as we behold "Christ our Passover" crucified for us. May righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost in all their vitality reign in our souls. May our life be hid with Christ in God. "And when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

Bless, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the whole Church. May all who are Christ's by faith walk as becometh saints. May they steadfastly maintain their unity with their Head and with each other as members of his body. May they do so in the communion of his body and blood, and may they live more under the influence of his second coming. Keep them from or amidst temptation. May they be ever sober, and watch unto prayer. May they evince, while in the world, that they are not of the world. May they love one another with a pure heart fervently.

* Jude 24: 25.

And may they be ready and disposed for every good word and work, not only to Christians, but to the unbelieving and enemies.

Have mercy, we beseech Thee, upon multitudes now ready to perish. Pluck them as brands from the burning, and make them, in the sovereignty of thy grace, partakers of the great redemption. Bless the labours of every Christian missionary. Sustain and encourage all faithful ministers of the glorious gospel. Give success to every consecrated laborer for the good of souls.

We commend unto Thee, holy Father, thy afflicted ones. May they be profited, and not faint when they are tried. Reveal Thyself to them as the wise, the compassionate, the tender and the loving Parent, even when Thou afflictest or scourgest. May the mourning seed of Jacob rejoice to remember that they shall not seek thy face in vain, and that when Thou bringest them into the furnace, it is as a Refiner and Purifier.

We now leave us in thy loving and wise keeping. May the words of our mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

III.

The Sacraments are *sealing ordinances*.—In the Communion the transfer of guilt and righteousness represented and sealed.—Figurative style of “the holy Scriptures.”—How the devout communicant is to be exercised.—The doctrine of transubstantiation a perversion of the design of the Institution.—The obligation resting upon every Christian to obey Christ’s command, and keep the feast.—The acceptable communicant must be “born again.”—They who are, should not feel at liberty to be absent from the Communion.—“Babes” and “strong men,”—all who are truly Christ’s, should be there.

PRAAYER.

MOST GRACIOUS GOD AND FATHER, we come unto Thee with reverence and love that we may worship at thy footstool. We are assured that it is good for us, thy dependent and sinful creatures, thus to wait upon Thee. Thou art our God and we will praise Thee; Thou art our God and we will exalt thy name together. We adore Thee that Thou hast been pleased to put a new song into our mouth because of thy redeeming love. What shall we render to the Lord for all his goodness, most especially for the unspeakable gift of his own dear Son that He might ransom and save us from all our sins?

We bless thy name O God that in this Redeemer we have righteousness and strength, pardon, reconciliation with Thee our offended Father, and life eternal. We rejoice in the free and full access that we have to Thee through Him. We have humble and believing boldness to come even into thy presence through our blessed advocate who is “the way, the truth and the life.” Now Lord do we intreat thy rich blessing to be upon us as we proceed again to meditate upon the “unsearchable riches of Christ” in his dying love, and as set forth in the communion of his body and blood. May “our heart burn within us” as he reveals to us his love

and opens to us the Scriptures by his Spirit. May we advance in knowledge and every grace of the Christian character. May "the very God of peace sanctify us wholly; and our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We pray holy Father that it may please Thee "shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect." From the East, West, North, and South, may many be ingathered into the fold of the good Shepherd who giveth his life for the sheep. Send thy light and thy truth to every land. May the people praise Thee, O Lord, may all the people praise Thee. All that we ask is in our Redeemer's name. Amen.

The sacraments of the Church of God are *sealing ordinances*. Appointed by the authority of the Divine Head of the Church, they are designed to form sensible tokens of the communication of the blessings of the covenant of redemption to believers. Hence, "Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised."* The same language is applicable to the believing recipient of either of the sacraments of the Christian dispensation. This is eminently the case as respects the Supper of our Lord, wherein the love of God to His ransomed children, sealed to them by the death of his Son, is most expressively set forth by the symbol of Christ's broken body and shed blood.

In the reception of a sacrament, the disciples of Jesus signify their acceptance of the covenant of grace upon the terms proposed in the word of God. Among men a solemn compact is frequently concluded by some significant action and interchange. So in the giving and receiving that obtain in the Christian solemnity, the covenant of salvation is decisively avowed on the part of the gracious Saviour and his ransomed people. It is an outward and ostensible sacramental ratification of the engagements entered into between the

* Romans 4: 11.

glorious Ransomer and his blood-bought ones. Thus, "a sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his Church, to signify zeal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace, the benefits of his mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith, and all other graces; to oblige them to obedience; to testify and cherish their love and communion one with another; and to distinguish them from those that are without."* "For as many of you," say the apostle, "as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."†

In the sacrament of the communion, the transfer of the sinner's guilt to his Substitute, and of that Substitute's righteousness to the sinner, is most impressively represented and sealed. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"‡ "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."§

What can be conceived more simple, more solemn, more sublime, than the method in the Lord's Supper for celebrating the mystery of Divine love! How befitting and edifying the commemoration and the communion of this New Testament Passover! How spiritually beautiful and salutary in its design and operation!

The figurative style in which this holy ordinance is spoken of will not occasion much difficulty to the devout and intelligent student of "the holy Scriptures." Every attentive and candid reader of the Bible is aware how frequently truth there assumes the dress of metaphor. It was the mode of writing prevalent at the period and among the people to whom primarily "the oracles of God" were committed. That it still characterizes Eastern nations is well known. And who does not perceive that even we, with our frigid and prosaic temperament, realize a much greater amount of benefit from the mode employed by the inspired teachers than

* Larger Catechism.

† Galatians 3: 27.

‡ I Corinthians 10: 16.

§ II Corinthians 5: 21

otherwise we could have done? Instinctively we apply to ourselves the character imagined in the parable. And the well chosen figure conveys to our mind the idea into which with double force and double beauty. Our Lord himself very habitually had recourse to this method of instruction. How natural is it to hear even the Great Master of Israel exclaiming,—“Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?” With what admirable energy and iteration does the Divine Husbandman employ this style within the compass of a single chapter or a few verses? * The veriest child in intellect can understand the exquisite skill and aptitude of the allegorical vision of the mighty monarch of the then mightiest monarchy upon earth, as interpreted by the lips of the pious stranger “who was separated from his brethren,”—“The good kine are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.” † Who does not intuitively discern the drift of the awe inspiring Isaiah as we read, “The voice said cry, and he said, what shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.” ‡ What Israelite needed to have explained to him the propriety of applying to the Paschal lamb such words as, “it is the Lord’s Passover.” || And what spiritual Israelite instructed by such frequent use of figurative language in the word of God can fail of discovering the obvious meaning of the Son of God who gave himself to be “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” when as the dying Redeemer He says to his followers, “take, eat this is my body;” or having taken the cup, “Drink, ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins?” How manifestly and necessarily symbolical the glorious asseverations! Every unsophisticated and undeluded mind at once apprehends the

* See Matthew 13.

† Genesis 41: 26.

‡ Isaiah 40: 6.

|| Ex. 12: 11.

significancy of what was thus spoken by the good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep.

In the observance of this sacred celebration let the devout communicant contemplate in the bread,—that most useful and nourishing of all food, by which the natural life is sustained,—the emblem of the body of Him who is “the Bread of life” to the soul,—of life spiritual and eternal,—of “the bread of God which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.”* Of this living “bread,” every “quickeneth” communicant by faith participates. How elevating, felicitous, honorable! For “he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”† Believing communicant, let the pouring out of “wine that maketh glad the heart of man” in the holy ordinance of the supper most solemnly point you to the blood which, cleansing you from all sin, enables you to rejoice that being justified by faith, “you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And as you with loving fealty obey the mandate of “the Master” of the feast, and drink, from the very depth of the soul aspire after fuller and more experimental acquaintance with the efficacy of that blood to cleanse you from all your sin. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”‡ And the same infinitely gracious Saviour exclaims, “I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”||

How suited is this ordinance, with its lively emblems, to awaken in the soul most devoted, holy, and joyful gratitude! Let it do so in the ransomed and renovated sinner, looking by faith through the sign to the thing signified; and feel the disposition to unite with every other renewed sinner in appropriating the song of praise, which the enraptured disciple, whom Jesus loved, was enabled to record as the sentiment of the true church of Christ: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us

* John 6: 33.

† John 6: 58.

‡ Matthew 5.

|| John 6: 35.

kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."*

How worthy of everlasting remembrance is the sacrificial death of our Redeemer ! It calls, by considerations the most weighty, and associations the most solemn, for ceaseless homage, adoring love, entire devotedness. How grand the termination of the work which the Father had entrusted to the Son ! How capable of calling up, under the operation of the Spirit of grace, with ever increasing ardour and depth, the full tide of the fresh and flowing emotions of the soul ! The love celebrated in the Christian Passover will be vividly remembered by the followers of the Lamb until their Lord shall come again. For this second coming their renewed communion at his holy table, calls upon them to watch. For it, their aspirations after perfect holiness and felicity, as well as the promises of scripture, teach them to long and pray. Meanwhile, faith hears the absent Saviour saying — " I am the way, the truth, and the life." Hope rejoices in the anticipation of the beatific period, when we shall see " face to face," and be like unto Jesus. And adoring love is delighted to hear the voice of Emmanuel—" I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord ; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." How salutary and appropriate is the exhortation of the apostle to every intending communicant, conveyed also in the oriental dress, to which reference has been made : " Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened ; for even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us : therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." †

What a perversion of the design of this holy and beautiful institution, and of the necessary and obvious meaning of the statements of the Word of God in connection with it, is the doctrine of transubstantiation ! The truths respecting the

* Revelation 1 : 5, 6. † I Corinthians 5 : 7, 8.

commemoration and communion of the body and blood of Christ, are by the inspired writers unfolded with perspicuous simplicity. Yet does this anti-christian theory assert that in the sacrament "there is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of wine into the blood." According to this teaching, after the consecration of the elements, there are "only the accidents of bread and wine remaining." Not only is this dogma anti-scriptural, it is opposed to the best intelligence of our rational faculties, and sentient perceptions. It "affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament, and gives the lie to our senses." Let it also be remembered that the alleged change is at the option of the officiating priest, who may have no spiritual discernment of the true kingdom of Messiah, and who is little likely to be a spiritually-minded man. How frequently may it happen that "the Host" which the church of Rome regards as a proper object of adoration, has not been duly dedicated; in which case the church regards all as a nullity!

The ordinance of the Supper and its proper celebration are far otherwise. The apostle of the Gentiles, in recording its appointment and obligations, employs language most clearly figurative and incapable of a literal construction. *Three times*, after narrating the solemn setting apart of the bread and of the wine by the Divine Author of the sacrament, does this inspired writer designate the constituent elements by their primary, true, and literal appellations. Surely no humble enquirer after truth would ever for a moment fancy that the following words, so solemnly impressive, indicated any transubstantiation: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."* What upright and

* I Corinthians 11 : 26-28.

devout reader need be at a loss as to the interpretation of this symbolical writing? Doubtless it is the blessed privilege of every such one to rejoice in the new covenant communion, so felicitously presented by St. Paul.

While the Christian and the philanthropist will mourn the pernicious influence of the Christ-dishonoring invention of transubstantiation, an extensive knowledge of human nature will prevent our being surprised at its adoption and inculcation. We are called upon to labor for its ejection by prayerfulness, "holding forth the word of life," with the meekness of heavenly wisdom, and zealous exertions prompted by true love to mankind. Such a spirit our Master delights to honor. Such was the spirit that characterized that most noble servant of Christ, who could say—"by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."*

In the ordinance of the Supper, believers receive a seal of the remission of their sins for the sake of the atonement made by their Surety; and in the remission of sin they have the pledge and the precursor of all the blessings purchased for them by their Redeemer. By faith they feed upon the Lamb that was slain for them, and rejoice in their increasing oneness with Him. They experience also holy fellowship and union with each other, as members of the same mystical body. They mutually animate and invigorate one another when participating of the emblems of his body broken and blood shed; and we may appeal to them and say: "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

The obligation resting upon every real Christian to obey the kingly and loving mandate of the Lord Jesus to keep the feast, is undoubted. Surely it ought ever to be felt as a pleasing and solemn obligation resting upon every disciple of the Master of the festival, to "do this in remembrance of Him." Duty, privilege, honor, affection — all concur in

* II Corinthians 4 : 2.

inducing the followers of the Lamb to obey readily, lovingly, devotionally, the dying injunction of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them. We naturally regard the last request of a departed friend as sacredly binding. With what grateful recollection then, what supreme esteem, what profound reverence, what renewed and lively fidelity, shall the ransomed friends of the adorable Saviour accede to his injunction, and "show forth his death till He come again." While it is the most solemn of all celebrations upon earth, it is also the most joyful; so that we may appropriate on such an occasion, as by anticipation, the millennial lay of the lofty seer, and say: "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord for He hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."*

The nature and design of the Sacrament of the Supper require that it shall be observed by all who love the Lord Jesus Christ. All in whom this love is the ruling principle of their conduct, and the all-pervading feeling of the heart, should, in this ordinance, commemorate the love stronger than death of Him who bought them with his blood. Here they can seek and find communion with their living Head, and His mystical body. All, on the other hand, in whom this love is *not* the profoundest affection of the soul, and the motive-spring of action, the paramount incentive to exertion, and the prevailing habit of the inner man, *should not* participate in this holy ordinance. Let such first ponder and comply with the terms required by the Divine Author of the covenant: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." † If we

* Isaiah 12: 2-6. † Matthew 16: 24.

have not so come, we are yet carnal, lying under the guilt and influence of sin unremitted. We have not broken off our sins by repentance, and are in a state of unregeneracy. We are still unbelievers. But without faith we cannot “discern the Lord’s body.” They who go to the table of the Lord without this fruit of the spirit, may profess themselves Christians, but the profession is *untrue*. And how must the God of truth detest falsehood in such an unwarranted avowal!

To all then who have not turned from sin unto God, there is an implied prohibition in the words and purposes of the institution. It is for those of a character essentially different from that by which they are distinguished. Before they can acceptably communicate, it is indispensable that they be “born again,” and evince the obedience of saving faith. At present, the invitations of the gospel are tendered to them. And oh, how ample, free, and pressing are these! They are iterated by the word, the Spirit, and the Church of God; by prophets, evangelists, and apostles—yea, by Immanuel himself. They proclaim—“Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.”* Was the sublime prophet inspired to herald so noble a call? Listen, also, to a greater than the prophet—“there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none besides me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: I am God and there is none else.”† How affecting are the words of pressing urgency which are found in the conclusion of the canon of Scripture! “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”‡

They who have responded to this glorious gospel call are not only at liberty to be present at “the communion,” but they should not feel themselves at liberty to be absent. Like the good boatmen-disciples, who, when unwilling to cross

* Isaiah 55 : 1.

† Isaiah 45 : 21.

‡ Revelation 22 : 17.

Galilee's portentous lake, were "constrained" by the love they cherished to their Master to comply with His wishes; so should any disciple, who may be sluggish or indisposed, feel *constrained* by the indwelling love of Jesus to "do this" for His sake. Let every such one in this way wait on the Lord frequently, regularly, conscientiously. All whim, waywardness, unnecessary omission and careless irregularity are sins against Christ and His members, as well as injurious to the individual, and all who are influenced by such remissness. Be it our aim to prize highly and enjoy with avidity sacramental communion and fellowship with the Father, and His Son Christ Jesus, and with all who are one with Him by living faith.

The feeble and the strong, the young and the old, the joyful and the downcast, were alike required to keep the Passover. In like manner at the Lord's Supper; "Babes in Christ" should be there with "young men" and "little children," as well as "fathers," and most mature in the faith. The weak and the strong will severally find the ordinance suitable to their state. Only let them be truly Christ's, in the regeneration of His Spirit, and they are not only welcome; they are enjoined to be there. It is not the absolutely perfect to whom the invitation is addressed. Such cannot be found upon earth. Could we attain to such meetness for the heavenly temple, we would be at once transferred to it. But there is none such in the Church below. Such were not the eleven first communicants. They were genuine men, they were saved sinners, they were Christ's by faith; but they were still sinful dust and ashes; they had still to advance, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. And all who, like them, follow Jesus, are required, with child-like love and docility, to act upon His charge—"This do in remembrance of me."

PRAYER.

WE praise and adore Thee, Thou once crucified but now risen Lord, for that "new covenant" which was sealed in the

shedding of thy most precious blood. With thankful and contrite spirit, we rejoice to recollect that love of thine evinced in the institution of the Sacrament of the Supper. Enable us with humble worthiness, accepted graciously for the sake of what Thou hast done and suffered for us, to partake of the sealing emblems of thy body and blood. When we do so, may it ever be under the sealing influence of thy sanctifying Spirit. May our communion contribute, through His indwelling and operations, to an advancement in all those graces which we receive from thy infinite fulness. O may we know, in our happy experience, how hallowing and blessed it is to commune with Thee in the "breaking of bread."

Glorious Redeemer, we beseech Thee to purify and elevate all the branches of thy Church upon earth. O that all thy faithful followers may walk as the ransomed of the Lord. When they avow themselves thine at thy holy table, impart vigor to all thy work in their souls, and enable them to advance towards perfection. While we supplicate that unwarranted professors may be deterred from profaning thine ordinance, and so more imperilling their own souls, we beseech Thee to give all thy flock, alike the feeble and the strong, to realize their felicity, so that, walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they may be prepared for thy second coming. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be all the praise and the glory, world without end. Amen.

IV.

The death of Christ the most memorable event in the annals of the universe.—The price paid for the redemption of sinners, and what it evinces.—In virtue of the death of the Son of God mercy has come into operation.—This the foundation of holiness.—This is celebrated in the Sacrament of the Supper.—The teaching of the Church of Rome respecting it untruthful.—The doctrine of consubstantiation held by the Lutheran Church.—The Zuinglian view that the observance is merely commemorative.—The Calvinistic opinion scriptural.—In the feast upon the sacrifice the partakers worshipped the Deity to whom it was offered.—In the Christian feast the communicant worships, and has fellowship with Christ.—The union of the Lord and His disciples.—Christians have union and fellowship one with another in the Holy Communion.—What a powerful argument in favour of charity!

PRAAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would now with deepest humility and reverence worship at the footstool of thy throne. Praised be thy holy name, that in and through thy beloved Son we are permitted and graciously invited to know Thee as our reconciled God and Father. May the Spirit enable us, with a grateful sense of our adoption, to cry unto Thee, O Abba Father. We know from thine own word that those who honor Thee, Thou wilt honor. We desire, individually, Lord, in simplicity and godly sincerity, to obey Thy wise injunction, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*

We are again, O glorious Originator of the wondrous plan of Redemption, about to direct our thoughts to that most solemn and most sublime of all subjects. Enable us to consider, understand, and feel the truths that are set before us in the institution of the sacred Supper.

Bless our meditations. May we attain unto a clearer, juster, more impressive view of the nature and designs of the solemn

*Proverbs 3: 6.

ordinance. Enable us to exercise that holy faith which worketh by love, and which will enable us to see Christ our Lord before our eyes, evidently crucified for us. May our feelings be affected, while our sentiments are enlarged and brought into entire conformity with thy revealed truth. May we be indeed edified.

What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits? Above all things we praise Thee for thine unspeakable Gift, —for Him who came in the name of the Lord to save us. May it be given us to know more and more that He is ours, and that we are His. Justified by faith, may we sweetly realize that peace with God which flows from pardon and acceptance. May “the very God of peace sanctify us wholly.” May our “whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* And the glory we shall ascribe to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

It has been happily said, “that this earth on which we live is the great lesson-book of the universe.”† The death of Christ forms the most amazing and memorable event recorded in its annals. It comprises the method of adjustment planned and completed by the God of justice and holiness, by which, in perfect harmony with these attributes, He pardons sin and renovates the sinner. It presents for our contemplation the gracious purpose of God being completed, with regard to His believing people. By the suffering of their Surety, they are emancipated from the bondage of Satan, obtain the remission of the curse pronounced against them as transgressors, and become partakers of the life of God in their souls.

The ransom-price paid for the redemption of sinners of mankind, evinces at once the unspeakable value of the human soul, and the extreme difficulty of its restoration. The pro-

* I Thessalonians 5 : 23.

† Dr. Cumming—“Lectures on Daniel,” p. 158.

phet thus speaks of the glorious Redeemer: "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke."* The apostle Peter exhorts Christians, "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."†

In virtue of the death of the Son of God, the attribute of mercy has come into operation, on the part of the Godhead. Because of the incarnation and sacrifice of Messiah, the justice of the Father justifies the sinner who appropriates that Saviour originated by Himself. Here, again, we find the prophet and the apostle supplying the exposition of the sacrifice of Jesus. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed."‡ "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."||

By the death of Christ, his people are not only pardoned and justified, they, moreover, attain unto that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,"—unto the character and meetness indispensable for the kingdom of glory. Now, it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, who quickens, sanctifies, and prepares the ransomed of the Lord for the inheritance of the saints in light. "It is expedient for you," said our Lord to His disciples, "that I go away: for if I go

* Isaiah 59: 16, 17.

† I Peter 1: 17-19.

‡ Isaiah 53: 5.

|| I Peter 1: 30, 31.

not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John, 16: 7. But the blessed Redeemer could not, consistently with the purpose for which He had come into this world, return to the Father and assume the sceptre of universal empire, until he should have died the accursed death of the cross, and "given his life a ransom for many," and been demonstrated the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"* After his ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, He received gifts for men that the Lord God might dwell among them." So that his death is the procuring cause of the saving and sanctifying agency of the Holy Ghost in all believers. We behold in it that the Deity is the impersonation of love: that "God is love." The Father "so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."† "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."‡

Such is the glorious event which the Author and Finisher of our faith has enjoined to be celebrated in the Sacrament of the Supper. In order acceptably and with spiritual profit, to comply with His royal mandate—"This do in remembrance of me," it is essential to hold correct, scriptural, and comprehensive views of its nature and purpose.

We have already seen that the teaching of the Church of Rome is antagonistic to the truth respecting this ordinance. Requiring us to believe that the senses bestowed by the God of truth upon man, are incapable of discerning the truth in the matter of a sensible object, she holds that the substance of bread and wine is destroyed, and that there is a change or transubstantiation of the elements into the real body and blood, soul and divinity of God's only begotten Son. Moreover all this takes place *only* should the officiating priest *will* it, for should he not in reality concur, though professedly doing so, the transubstantiation is not effected, but is a

* Luke 24: 26. † John 3: 16. ‡ II Corinthians 9: 15.

nullity. The consecrated "host" is offered by the priest as a sacrifice, he elevating it and the people doing homage to it.*

What a contrast does all this present to the doctrine taught by the word of God! "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy places every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."†

We thus perceive clearly why the Levitical priesthood has ceased. Heaven and earth we know should pass away rather than one jot or one tittle of the law of God, until all were fulfilled. As regards the ceremonial law its shadows of course ceased when their substance appeared. The typical sacrifices were accomplished in their great antitype—the Lamb of God, who "was once offered to bear the sins of many." The typical priesthood was also terminated by the priestly sacrifice of Himself, on the part of our Redeemer and by his continual intercession on behalf of all who come unto God through Him. This, for ever, excludes the possibility of any man being a priest of the Lord in any other sense than that in which all Christians are priests. The Psalmist marks out the kind of sacrifices which all should offer: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."‡ Such sacrifices from the "royal priesthood," who are so in virtue of their union with Him who is "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," are always well-pleasing in the sight of a gracious and reconciled God. "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his

* "Defects in the celebration of the Mass"

† Hebrews 9: 24-26.

‡ Psalm 51: 17.

name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."*

The idea of an intrinsic value pertaining to the elements in the Sacrament, unless destroyed by "mortal sin," as it is designated, led to their being taken to the sick and dying. But who, that has been taught by the Spirit of God, will not see that this is leading the sinner away from the only Saviour to a refuge of lies? The essence of the gospel, addressed to every child of Adam, is: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."† And again "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, not uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."‡

Another practice—that of withholding the cup from the laity—arose from the danger of accident in carrying, especially when the distance was great. The authority of Immanuel and the revelation "received of the Lord," by the apostle of the Gentiles, with his inspired comments, prove decisively that this excising is anti-christian. Beyond all doubt, no human authority may dare, without incurring the dread displeasure of the Saviour and the Judge of men, to set aside the unalterable ordinance—"Drink ye all of it."

The Lutheran Church retains the view of consubstantiation, as held by the great Reformer. This does not suppose that the person of Christ is present, but that in virtue of "the communications of properties," it may properly be affirmed that Christ is received in the bread and wine. In favor of this opinion, such scriptural expressions are referred to as—"The Son of God died;" "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins;"—although it was the man Christ Jesus who died, and the Divine equal of the Father who could forgive sins. That this doctrine is unwarranted by the oracles of God, we shall find conclusively established as we advance.

Zuinglius, and some of the reformed Churches, have held that the observance of the Lord's supper is simply *commemorative*. "The communion" spoken of by Paul is, by those

* Hebrews 13 : 15, 16. † Acts 16 : 31. ‡ Gal. 5 : 6.

who adhere to this sentiment, understood to signify merely participating of the body and blood of Jesus *symbolically*, or by their signs.

But if we correctly and comprehensively consider the subject in the light of holy Scripture, we shall discover that not only is the death of Christ *commemorated* in the supper, there is also in it *a real communion with Him and with believing fellow-communicants*. This was the conviction of Calvin; of the framers of the Articles of the Anglican Church; and of the writers of the "Confession of Faith."

On the night in which the Redeemer of man was betrayed to be crucified, when He offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of his people, after celebrating the passover, He took the paschal bread and wine, and solemnly set them apart to a new and sacred use. With blessing and thanksgiving He brake the bread, saying: "Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me: and He took the cup, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me." We here perceive the dying Saviour anticipating his own death. The intimation is also conveyed that He would rise again from the dead, and ascend to the Father's right hand, while the continuation and increase of his church to the end of the world, are clearly implied. "For as often," says the apostle to the followers of the Lamb, "as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."*

It appears that in the apostolic age, some teachers of falsehood had asserted to the Christians of Corinth that to partake with the heathen in the feasts upon the sacrifices offered in the temples of idolatry, was not idolatry in the case of persons who knew that an idol was nothing, and that there is none other God save one. Such instructors taught that it was proper to regard a festival of this nature in the light of an ordinary meal. But the great apostle of the Gentiles, upon whom came "daily the care of all the churches," shows

that in such participation there was *a worshipping of the idol* upon whose sacrifice they feasted. A feast upon a sacrifice was so intimately and inseparably connected with the sacrifice, that to join in it implied communion with the god to whom it was offered. "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" A part of the sacrifices offered in the court of the temple of Jerusalem was consumed on the altar of God, the eating of the remainder was an act of communion with God, to whom they were offered. Hence the force and drift of the subsequent reasoning of the inspired writer: "What say I then? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say that the thing which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."*

Now the sacrament of the Supper is a feast upon a sacrifice. It is the Christian festival appointed by our blessed Lord, in which his true and devoted followers shall commemorate till He comes again, his sacrificial death on their account. In its celebration, they pledge themselves to Him as his wholly and eternally. They engage to renounce every idol, and to crucify every sin. They swear allegiance to Him as their Divine Leader, and the Captain of their salvation. They render to Him supreme homage as the glorious Ransomer who bought their freedom and felicity with his own precious blood, and whose Spirit cleanseth them in its sacred fountain from all impurity. They, by faith, lay hold of him as "the bread of life,"—"the hidden manna," by which their souls live, are invigorated, and nourished unto life everlasting. In this way they are one with Jesus. They are His, and He is theirs. Every believer, as a portion of the bride, may say of the Bridegroom—"My beloved is mine, and I am his."

The union between Christ and his disciples is real, vital, and indissoluble. Yet is it mystical and inexplicable in regard

* I Corinthians 10 : 19-21.

to the human mind. His death, appropriated by faith, seals the union for all time and for all eternity. In obedience to the dying injunction of their Master, Christians unite in participating of the memorials of his deathless love. With devout supplication and thanksgiving, they take of the bread—the emblem of his body, who is “the living Head,” and of the cup—representative of the blood that was shed “for the remission of sins.” And every believing communicant participates fully in the benefits resulting from the bruising of the Saviour’s body and the shedding of his blood. At the holy table the spiritual life is invigorated, enlivened, confirmed; the renewed soul advances in all grace; faith becomes stronger and clearer; love more profound and pure; “hope that maketh not ashamed” more vigorously and joyfully embraces the promises.

• It is evident, then, that faithful communicants render in the sacrament of the Supper most loving and reverent homage to Christ as their redeeming God. Their oneness with Him is in this manner avowed and promoted. As the members of his body, they derive from the fulness of their living Head “grace for grace.” They are refreshed and consoled by the riches of his goodness and loving-kindness. How appropriate the apostolic exhortation!—“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. . . . The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”* How irresistibly should such a consideration constrain every Christian communicant to flee every idol! “How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?” For what end did Jesus die? Listen to St. Paul: “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”†

Christians have union and fellowship not only with their glorified Head and Lord, in the sacrament of the Supper, they also pro. te and avow their unity and com-

* I Corinthians 10 : 14, 16.

† Titus 2 : 14.

munion with each other, as members of his body. "For we being many are one head and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Not more certainly are the grains of wheat that go to make up a loaf of bread so incorporated as to constitute one mass, or the several parts of the human frame, with all their various ramifications and connections, one whole body, than are believers in Jesus members one of another, in virtue of their union with Him. Unitedly, when all shall have been brought by the Spirit of grace to faith and holiness, they will form "the bride,—the Lamb's wife." Meanwhile their mutual union is figuratively and most impressively expressed, when they join in the solemnities of the Communion table.

What a powerful argument does the consideration of this truth supply to the true children of God that they should love one another! Do we unite in the Church below to celebrate the feast of love? Do we hope to be one in the house of "many mansions,"—in the kingdom of heavenly glory? Do we regard the spiritual happiness that may be realized at the Lord's table as an earnest of that "fulness of joy" that will abound at the table, never to be drawn? Then let us remember that "now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three;" and that the greatest of these is not what many Christians seem practically to believe,—is *not faith*, "but the greatest of these is charity." And let us more assiduously, and with a pure heart, fervently cultivate the charity which never faileth," which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Instead of seeking to discover or expose the improprieties, faults, and sins of the brethren, let us experimentally know that "charity covereth a multitude of sins."

Such a disposition is the farthest possible from that easy and vile indifference which is satisfied to call evil good. This is strikingly taught in such passages as the following:—"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that know ye: the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the

day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting (considered by the distinguished Fleming *dancing*, as the word undoubtedly may be,) and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”*

“ The disciple whom Jesus loved ” thus concludes his first General Epistle : “ Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.” We have here a striking testimony that immature Christians especially are in danger of falling into sins that imply idolatry in the sight of God. Everything at variance with supreme love, homage, and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, is idolatrous. All unchristian principle, business, amusement, opinion, feeling and conduct, is doing homage to an idol,—to the god of this world, to self, to some other power than the God of life and salvation. Let us prayerfully, humbly, earnestly apply to ourselves the inspired exhortation, “ And be not conformed to this world : but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”†

PRAYER.

MOST GRACIOUS GOD AND FATHER, grant that our souls may be nourished and edified by the truths to which our attention has now been turned. Take away all our sins, for the sake of thy beloved Son, our Saviour. Enable us to know in our happy experience the blessedness of communion with our Lord at his table, and the blessedness of the communion of saints.”

Blessed Lord, may we advance in all goodness. Forgetting the things that are behind, and the things to which we have already attained, O may we be enabled to press daily and

* Romans 13 : 10-14. † Romans 12 : 2.

eagerly forward in our onward progress. May we be wholly thine, increasingly thine, eternally thine. May all the disciples of Jesus on earth be built up in holiness and comfort more and more. Add vastly to their number, until all thy ransomed ones are ingathered into the fold of the good Shepherd, and their meetness for glory perfected. And the praise shall be all thine, world without end. Amen.

V.

Matthew 26, 31, 35.—The time and circumstances in which the words were spoken add to their impressiveness.—Our Lord's terrific sufferings just at hand.—Jesus was alone with the eleven faithful apostles.—Luke's account in harmony with this view.—Internal evidence of Judas not having been present.—Marvellous love of Christ to the eleven.—How attractive and endearing the solicitude displayed by him for His friends.—Unhappy self-reliance seen in Peter.—Jesus will correct this evil.—Peter's contrition and restoration.—The safety of the believer.

PRAYER.

MOST BLESSED REDEEMER, send forth into our souls the gracious presence and influences of thy holy Spirit. May He render us feelingly alive to that unparalleled love displayed by thyself to us guilty sinners. Without Thee, we are sinners ready to perish. By thy interposition we are saved. Make us more and more contrite in spirit before Thee. Enable us to die daily unto sin, and to live unto God.

O Thou who art "the life" of the ransomed souls, be Thou our life. May the life that we now live in the flesh be by the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. Thou art the good Shepherd: "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Cause us to realize the full blessedness of being gathered into thy fold. Save us, good Lord, with an everlasting salvation. Perfect in us the good work of sanctification. In soul, body and spirit, may we be completely Thine. May we be strong and lively as believers. We would be ever growing in our esteem of Thee, O Thou "chiefest among ten thousand," and attaining more of the grace of self-abasement. Bless our present exercises. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be all the glory, world without end. Amen.

“Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet, will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.”—Matthew 26: 31–35.

This interesting passage records a solemn intimation, on the part of the dying Redeemer, to his disciples. In particular, Peter becomes prominent, both from his replies to the prediction of the Lord, and from the guilty part acted by him amidst the general defection here foretold. The words seem to have been spoken immediately after the little company, who had celebrated the Christian Passover for the first time, had left the upper chamber in the crowded capital in which they had met, and were proceeding through its dense mass of human beings to the solemn retreat on the farther side of the brook Cedron. “And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.” As they were proceeding, “Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night.”

The solemnity of the time and circumstances adds impressiveness to the passage. 1. *The time* was “the same night in which he was betrayed.” That awful hour for which “the Son of Man” had waited, in which Israel’s symbolical and time-honoured passover must be celebrated conclusively, and merged into the higher ordinance of the festival of the Supper, had now fully come. Indeed its terrific termination was at hand. The dark clouds, betokening the most dread of all tempests, were now thickening with rapid accumulation. The moment of arrest, subsequent upon the betrayal of our Lord, was almost come. The Saviour of sinners was now repairing to the scenes of conflict unspeakable, where He must encounter the terrific onslaught of all his combined foes.

They would attack him with all the fierceness and accumulation of rage, enmity, and desperation. Satan and all his marshalled legions; the wickedness of men; the wrath of God and the hiding of the Father's countenance—even to the forsaking of his Son—Jesus was now sensitively anticipating with Divine prescience. All was now at the door. A few steps further, and He shall have arrived at the doleful Gethsemane, where inconceivable agony of soul will induce sweat of “great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” After this is endured, intruders will break in upon his hallowed retirement; a band of armed men and soldiery, rude and ruthless, officered by appropriate leaders, guided by a traitor who had basely and perfidiously violated the obligations of fealty and friendship the most sacred, will rush into the privacy of a wonted retreat, and seize the anointed Messiah. Yet do we behold Him in this awful hour going forward,—spontaneously, resolutely forward. “And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.”* Again we read: “When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.”†

2. *The circumstances* in which the words before us were spoken were solemn in the highest degree. Judas was now separated from the eleven brethren, who were both apostles and genuine members of Christ's mystical body. He seems to have left the company while they were celebrating the feast of the passover, and not to have been present when Jesus set apart the bread and the cup as the dedicated symbols of the New Testament Passover. Consequently he did not participate in the Christian Sacrament. We read at the 20th verse of the 26th of Matthew—“Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And

* Luke 23: 39.

† John 18: 1, 2.

they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord is it I? And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man that he had not been born. Then Judas which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said;" the reply of our Lord signifying that he was the one. All this is recorded by Matthew as having occurred before the institution of the Supper. He appears to refer to the same incidents as those mentioned by the beloved disciple (John 13: 21, &c.) who writes—"When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter then beckoned him that he should ask who it should be of whom he spoke. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. . . . He then having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night."

The account by Luke of the celebration of the last passover, and of the institution of the Christian Sacrament, may appear to establish the opposite view—that Judas participated in both ordinances. Just after narrating the appointment of the Lord's Supper, the evangelist records the words of Jesus,—“But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed.”*

This certainly, at first sight, looks as if the wretched apostle had remained and been present at the last solemnity,—had

* Luke 22: 21, 22.

received the sacred memorials of his Master's death and love, from the hand of that Master. But if we compare the whole passage with the accounts of the other inspired writers, and especially if we compare what the evangelist adds, "And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing;" with the account of John, already cited, we shall probably conclude upon good grounds that Luke, having stated generally the observance of the Jewish festival and the introduction of its antitype, the Christian Communion Supper, *reverts*, at the 21st and following verses, to the conversation and incidents which occurred after Jesus and the twelve apostles took their places in the "large upper room," or "guest chamber," in Jerusalem, which had been "furnished" for them.

There seems, indeed, to be *internal* evidence, supplied by the address of Jesus to his followers, that only the eleven were present. "All ye," said He, "shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." There is here no exception made, no antagonism of character intimated. "All" are addressed without exception. "All" are regarded as true, though timid members of the fold of the good Shepherd,—genuine, though imperfect disciples. "All" belong to the elect "given" by the Father to His anointed Son. Respecting them, we have the interceding Son declaring—"those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled."* All are included in the gracious assurance of restoration and reunion with Jesus.

"All ye shall be offended, because of me this night; but after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." How marvellous is the love of Christ as here presented to our contemplation! His omniscience foresees the fall of those who hitherto had been steadfast in their attachment to him. But his almighty power and changeless affection secures their recovery. The grace and compassion are most surprising.

* John 17: 12.

Though none hated sin with such abhorrence as He, though the sin now referred to was a cruel and cowardly slighting of Himself, yet do we listen to Him while predicting their shameful defection, as if in haste, apparently, to assure them of pardon and renovation. They were now in darkness; and that darkness would soon be rendered more dismal and terrific by his crucifixion and death. He, however, intimates a period of joy as at hand, and foretells a glorious event which would afford to all his faithful followers the crowning evidence of his being the Son of God with power and the entire acceptance of his sacrifice. "And ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." "But after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee."

How attractive and endearing is this solicitude of Jesus on behalf of his friends! In Him we behold the Father of Eternity and "the Prince of Peace." How emphatically is he the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hence, the apostle says — "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins." How well does it become this glorious Advocate to plead for the repentant sinner! Does the generous benefactor take a deep and lively interest in the friend for whom he has done much and sacrificed much? O how unspeakably greater is the interest felt by our immaculate Intercessor in the welfare and salvation of each ransomed sinner! For such He veiled his divine glory; lived upon earth as a child born, and a man of sorrows; fulfilled as the representation of redeemed man, all righteousness; and died "the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." How effective and uniformly successful is our Advocate! The ablest pleader that ever argued on behalf of man may have failed, and the like may happen again, for "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be;" but our Advocate with the Father has never failed, and can never possibly fail in any instance. He pleads for every believer; and not one such will come short of life everlasting. The plea of our priestly Advocate is that He is "Jesus Christ

the righteous, the propitiation for our sins." It is urged with uniform and absolute success. Though erring and weak, each child of God will be preserved unto the end. Respecting every such one we read — "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand."* "O love the Lord all ye saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful."† "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."‡ To Israel God says — "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions; and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."§

How unhappy is self-reliance in the believer! When we are weak—when conscious of our own weakness, then are we really strong—"strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." When, on the other hand, we are strong in the confidence of our own goodness or ability, we are most truly weak and ready to stumble. So it was with Peter. He replied, when our Lord told the eleven, that they would all be offended because of him that night,—“Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” This appears to have formed the second intimation of the apostle’s fall. Before leaving the house, where the Paschal solemnities were celebrated, Jesus, in the most affectionate manner, said to his disciples — “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the Jews, whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you. Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, Whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice.”§

We may observe, in reference to Peter’s sin, that he not

* Psalm 37: 24. † Psalm 31: 23. ‡ Psalm 113: 13.

§ Isaiah 44: 22.

§ John 13: 33, &c.

only puts himself unduly forward, he does so in an egotistical manner, and without proper regard to the character and excellence of his brethren. He violates the spirit of the beautiful apostolical precept: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."* This good disciple was yet prone to elation and forgetfulness of the claims of his brethren. We see this disposition operating when he addresses his Master walking on the sea: "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." But this evil will not be tolerated by Jesus. By His providence and Spirit the apostle shall be chastened, purified, and matured in holiness, so that in none of the children of God can we discover such marked and large progress in consecration to God, as in the venerable apostle of the circumcision, when about to put off the clay tabernacle, as the Lord Jesus Christ had showed him. How suitable, then, may we perceive the words of the adorable and loving Saviour to him to have been! "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren."† How remarkably the prayer of the great Intercessor was answered, the whole of the subsequent personal and public history of the apostle strikingly shows. We see renewed and renewing grace in the deep sincerity, affection, and humbleness of Peter immediately after the resurrection of Christ. We see it in the reply to the three iterated interrogations, respecting his love to his Master: "Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."‡ Humiliation and contrition are largely associated with the beginning of the divine life in the soul; and this habit of mind must be maintained, cherished, and increased throughout all the stages of the Christian's pilgrimage. Wherever faith exists this disposition will also be seen. And though we cannot perceive it in the lapsed apostle when his faith had failed (not as life

* Philipians 2 : 4. † Luke 22 : 31. ‡ John 21 : 17.

expires when death attains the mastery, but as when through terror or weakness, faintness or utter prostration of strength and vitality may be temporarily induced), we have only to witness him after Jesus had looked upon him as he was confusedly and hastily effecting his escape from the high-priest's palace, to be satisfied that he will prove how truly he possesses "a broken heart." See him as he bitterly weeps his falsity and presumption, and see him again in his future career and consummation in this world; and seldom indeed has ever a finer specimen been beheld of man truly and fully consecrated to God, and of unselfish, genuine benevolence towards his fellow-man. Such was the result of the suppliant advocacy of the apostle and the High-priest of our profession on behalf of this noble disciple. How obviously was he wholly indebted to his Lord for his salvation, restoration, and stability! And how appropriately may all the followers of the Lamb be reminded—"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."*

In reference to the warning and prediction of Jesus, we read of the feeling of Peter and the rest on the occasion: "But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all."† And yet the event corresponded exactly with the prophecy. Here we behold the unerring certainty of the purposes of God. How little do we know ourselves! How rarely do we deal faithfully with self! The sincerity of the disciples is unquestioned. Peter had drawn the sword in defence of the Master he loved. That Master enjoined him to sheathe it. He needed not such assistance. All heaven would have come to his aid and rescue had he desired it. "But, how then," said he "shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" Yet though thus resolute in fulfilling the will of his Father, and paying the ransom-price of his people's redemption, he never, for a moment, ceased to evince the tenderest love to his disciples. He at once thought of them when the band of men and officers came upon him.

* Ephesians 2 : 8. † Mark 14 : 31.

How he overawed that brutal company who had been sent to apprehend him. How He prevented them even seeking to meddle with the eleven who, terrified—all forsook Him and fled! “If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”* Rejoice, O believer, in the safety of all who take refuge in this almighty Friend of sinners. And O let love to Him who so loved us become more intense, more holy, more nearly what it ought to be.

PRAAYER.

MOST BLESSED AND HOLY LORD GOD, make our love to Jesus to be without dissimulation. We distrust ourselves, and would place all our confidence in Thee—the Rock of Ages. May we ever rejoice in Thee as our reconciled God and Father. Bless our exercises. May the solemn truths to which our attention has been turned, be made effectual by the Spirit of thy Son in advancing thy kingdom in our souls. May the omniscience, love, and tenderness of our Immanuel never be forgotten by us;—may they attract us more closely to Him.

Omnipotent Father, ever more keep us from falling. May what has been written for our admonition be savingly beneficial to us. Increase in us true humility; strengthen our faith: deepen our love; purify our hearts; elevate our affections; seal us unto the day of redemption; and the glory shall be thine, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. World without end. Amen.

* John 18 : 8, 9.

VI.

Gethsemane's garden.—Our Lord's discourse and prayer when on the way to it.—His sufferings there.—Christian friendship.—The friendship of Jesus.—The three favourite friends of the Divine man.—He seeks to be soothed amidst the sorrows endured by their sympathy.—The sufferer betakes himself to God His Father.—What an appalling prospect of woe was presented to His prescience.—His prayer effectual, as true prayer always is.—The revealed angel.—The regained composure of Christ.—Disappointment in the three disciples present.—Admission of Jesus that the spirit was willing.—He went again and again to His Father in devotion.—The disciples lost the precious opportunity of watching with their Master.—Lesson to all believers to guard against spiritual slumber.—In all trying circumstances wait on the Lord.

PRAYER.

MOST HOLY AND ETERNAL FATHER, in the name of thy blessed Son, do we now draw nigh unto Thee. Bestow thy richest blessings upon us for his sake. In Him alone have we righteousness and strength. It is his blood alone that cleanseth us from all our sins.

We would now draw nigh, and behold this great sight,—the incarnate Saviour in the depth of agony and humiliation. O the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of that Divine love which brought to Gethsemane's garden thy beloved Son, that, as the substitute of the guilty, he might drink the cup which the Father had given Him to drink! May our contemplation of this Son of thy love, so loving us unto the death of the cross, fill our whole soul with intensest love to our suffering Saviour. May this love be ever felt as laying upon us necessity,—as constraining us to live not to ourselves, but unto Him who loved us and gave himself for us. Induce profoundest gratitude in our hearts. May reverence, esteem, and affection, in the highest degrees, pervade the inner man. May our repentance not only be genuine, but deep and ever deepening. Enable us to watch vigilantly and prayerfully against temptations.

We desire to see more correctly, O holy Lord God, in the agony endured by our adorable Redeemer, for sin, its terrific and infinitely baneful nature. And ever more may we loathe it in ourselves with increasing aversion. Cause our future lives to be holy as "He who hath called us is holy." As we meditate upon the humiliation, obedience, and suffering of Jesus, O may we grow in being "poor in spirit," in godly mourning, and doing thy will from the heart. May we feel that, because of the ransom price that has been paid, we are accepted in the Beloved. Justified freely by thy grace, cleansed from an evil conscience by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, may we be enabled to glorify Thee in all things during our mortal pilgrimage, until we shall be able to glorify Thee better in the world to come.

We rejoice, O risen and glorified Saviour, that Thou hast promised to come "the second time without sin unto salvation." For that glorious coming we desire to live, looking and waiting. We praise Thee that, till then, thy people shall commemorate thy love, stronger than death, in the communion of thy body and blood. Sanctify to us that sacred ordinance, and all the other methods appointed by thyself for the edification of thy members. And the glory we shall ever ascribe unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the

spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again : for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest : behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going : behold he is at hand that doth betray me."—Matthew 26 : 36-46.

We are now brought to the contemplation of those most solemn incidents which transpired after the blessed Saviour had left the upper chamber in Jerusalem. There he had celebrated the last Paschal Supper with his disciples, and had instituted and observed that sacred festival in which his faithful followers commemorate his dying and deathless love, and realize sacramental communion with their Lord and with one another. He was now on his way to the seclusion which was to be the place of scenes of most awful grandeur and sublimity, and of woes, to which the choicest language and the noblest imagination of man could not do justice.

Gethsemane's garden was situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Thither Jesus had been wont to repair with his attendant friends, for the purposes of retirement and devotion. To this hallowed retreat the suffering Redeemer now purposed going. The road leading from the city to this rural spot was shaded by rows of the vine,—the beautiful emblem of the relation borne by Christ to his people. In sight of the attractive image, whose multitudinous members overspread delightfully the path-way, we hear the gracious Master thus addressing his disciples : " I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."* The little company having now arrived at

* John 15: 1, 2.

the nearer side of the Cedron, Jesus, "the good shepherd," stopped, and, after a solemn pause, offered unto his Father, on behalf of the little flock now with him, and of all pertaining to the fold, that most affecting and awe-inspiring intercession recorded in the 17th chapter of John. He then, without further delay, advanced to the trials and conflict that were now at the door. The apostle writes—"When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples."* Through the busy streets of Israel's crowded capital, from its resounding din and the living masses that were now its inmates, had the adorable Messiah, with a little group of attached friends, betaken himself. Nothing could prevent his setting his face to Gethsemane. He had, previously to celebrating the New Testament Passover, declared his purpose to retire there, after the close of that solemnity, so that Judas was quite aware of the intention of his Master to visit his wonted retreat. Hence we read, "And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples."†

It was here that He who is "the propitiation for our sins" should experience an important part of that expiatory suffering which constitutes the atonement for the guilt of His people. And now that the hour was come, we behold the Son of Man with intensest earnestness proceeding to the spot. His object is ever before him. He keeps it in view without a moment's intermission. At length he arrives on the awful ground where his entire humanity will be agonized with unprecedented and unparalleled endurings.

What beautiful and striking features of the unsullied nature of man may we contemplate in Him, who is the Head and Representative of man in a state of holiness! Man's Maker and Redeemer is honoured in the noble attainments, and sympathies, and graces which we are occasionally (though, alas! rarely) privileged to witness or know, as seen in some of the children of God. Such results are not only

* John 18 : 1.

† Idem 2 : 2.

lovely and admirable ; they are most inspiring and elevating. In common with other purposes, they serve to shew what a degree of sacred affection and moral excellence renovated human nature, even on earth and amidst present imperfections, is capable of attaining. How beautiful, for instance, is the mutual play of pure and hallowed friendship among some of the members of the ransomed family ! If we study and mark this, in the leaning of Israel's high priest upon his superior and nobler brother—the leader and lawgiver of Israel—in the reciprocal attachment subsisting so beneficially between Aaron and Moses, we shall find a fine specimen of sincere esteem and love. And who can remain unthrilled when obtaining even a glimpse of the emotions that were so largely and disinterestedly felt, in the depths of each soul, on the part of the son of Saul and the future monarch of the people of God ? Will the sceptic and the sordid worldling deny the sublime and spiritual attraction between soul and soul among the nobles of the true Israel ? Let him try, if possibly he is capable of approximating to an appreciation of the refined, yet undoubted truth of a single exclamation of the inspired elegiast, when giving expression with such scenic vividness to his stirred sensibilities. Can he claim to judge of such a passage (of the son of Jesse to his departed friend) as the following ? “ I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan : very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”* We might multiply cases from the Word of God, of the existence of true and special friendship between two parties. But a simple reference to the union of heart and mind between Peter and John, and between Paul and his “ beloved son Timothy,” will be sufficient. What we now desire is to observe how the soul of Jesus, out of whose “ fulness ” all his friends have received “ even grace for grace,” was most thoroughly cast into the mould of friendship. This is seen all along in his intercourse with his disciples, whom he called, regarded, and dealt with, not as servants, but friends. And

* II Samuel 1-26.

never had his friendship been so peculiarly evinced as on this last, ever memorable night of his humiliation and sorrow. How warm was the friendship subsisting between the Lord and those disciples now present! "Ye are they," He had said, "which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

Such were the companions, the friends of the holy Saviour. We see them accompanying him to the precincts of that enclosure which was consecrated by his presence, agony, and prayers. Here let us observe another exquisite trait in the love of the suffering Messiah. When afflicted and in profound grief, friendship desires sympathy; but only that which is choicest! It seeks the society and fellowship of a few,—a very select few only. This profound feeling of man, in his best degree of goodness, is perfectly verified and illustrated in the man Christ Jesus. He loved the whole eleven. He loved them much. His love had done everything for them. Yet does He desiderate only the most intimate, the most endeared of them, in this dreadful, most terrific hour. For their presence, united prayers, and fellow-feeling, he earnestly wished. How true is this to the pure, delicate, perfect soul of man! The eleven would have been felt burdensome in the terrors of Gethsemane. The countenance and brotherly love of his three most favoured friends, He prized and sought. "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy."

What advanced member of the body of Christ does not highly value the kindly and Christian exchange of mutual sensibility? How greatly does the sweet, fraternal, and sacred glow of esteem and love, that circulates among those who know each other to be fully and profoundly Christ's,

* Luke 22: 28-30.

when realizing union and communion at the table of their common Lord, receive enhancement from the confidence that if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."* And does not the mature believer rejoice in the consolation that the presence of one greatly beloved, near and dear, can impart to the dying Christian? Consciously one in the pure, tender, and eternal love of Jesus; holy and mutual affection is capable of refreshing and invigorating the soul, when the head is reclining on the pillow of death, or the dying embrace is joyfully tendered to the faithful friend.

Influenced by such emotions, we are invited to witness, in a measure, our elder Brother earnestly asking the support and prayerful sympathy of those three brethren beloved, with whom he was on terms of closest and tenderest intimacy. He seeks that, by their society, his trials and sufferings may be soothed and alleviated. His pure human nature now desires the devout vigilance and attachment of such choicest men of God. To Peter, James and John the dying Redeemer said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." He had already begun "to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy." But the terrible enemy advanced still onwards with desperate malignity and fury. The "power of darkness" was in this hour concentrating all his forces to assail Messiah. How natural, how becoming, that the Son of God should, in such circumstances especially, betake Himself to the Father! He had sought the vigilance and the prayers of those whom he was not ashamed to call "his brethren." But he was conscious that all this would not be enough; that he needed more than all this, if, indeed, this could be vouchsafed him. It was no ordinary foe, and no ordinary occasion, that now he had to meet. The "prince of darkness," with all his combined and concentrated energies, was upon Him. And his attack upon the Substitute of sinners will be commensurate with his hatred, power, and skill. It will not only be extraordinary, but altogether

* 1 Corinthians 12 : 26.

unparalleled, unspeakable, inconceivable, so that the mind of man cannot grasp or comprehend it. To whom, then, but to God, his own God, shall the "Darling" of the Father go? To God, accordingly, he draws nigh. And oh, who can in any adequate measure estimate aright the anguish of that terrific hour, or the enduring of that suppliant spirit? He cries, "Be not far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help."* He instinctively felt, in all its force, the Psalmist's complaint—"lover and friend hast thou put far from me."†

After soliciting the three disciples to remain and watch with him, "he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." This prayer is recorded by the three evangelists who narrate the agony of the garden. It was then, apparently, that the human nature of our Saviour was most terrified at the appalling prospect immediately before Him. What a debt had He engaged to discharge! What a ransom price to pay! What a cup to drink! Who can imagine what a sight the prescience of Jesus then had of all that was to follow? Earth and hell did not exhaust the number and variety of the agents that would be permitted to attack him. Above and beyond all that these supplied, Jesus anticipated the wounding, bruising, and hiding of the countenance of his Father,—of that God whom he perfectly loved, and by whom he was perfectly loved. How could He, who was truly man, and made "in all things like unto his brethren," but be inclined to shrink from such a prospect? Had He not dreaded and sought to avoid it, if possible; we might have doubted his real participation of our nature. We certainly would have lacked the evidence which we now possess of his being "very man." Yet let the beholder note that even at this crisis, which neither the human mind can fully reach, nor human language portray,—that at this infinitely awful moment, nothing is more apparent and perspicuous in the propitiatory Sufferer

* Psalm 22 : 11.

† Psalm 88 : 18.

than resignation to the will of the Father, and unflinching determination to finish the work given Him to do. Each of the inspired historians is at pains to point out this feature. In harmony with the text, Mark says: "And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."* St. Luke says: "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done."†

Though the prayer of the agonized soul of our Surety did not, and could not, procure the passing away of the terror-freighted cup, it was, notwithstanding, an effectual prayer. Never is true prayer to the true God offered in vain. Let every member of Christ bear this ever in mind. We may not obtain the answer just in the way that we, in our frailty, may desire, yet we shall obtain it in the best way—in God's way, whose way is always the best. So it happened in the case of the man Christ Jesus, when well-nigh overwhelmed—when soul and body were alike prostrate, he cried unto Him who was ready to help, and was "heard in that he feared." To sustain and reanimate the suffering Son of God, "there appeared an angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him."‡ This ministration of the angelic spirit was attended with the best effects. Onwards from this we discover our Lord manifesting, in connection with perfect acquiescence, regained composure. Though He prayed again and again in the garden subsequently, he spoke not of the removal of the cup.

It is very observable that though Jesus was encouraged and reinvigorated by the interposition of the celestial messenger, he still desired that his three chosen friends should evince a devout and watchful sympathy with him. We read—"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep,

* Mark 14: 36. † Luke 22: 41, 42. ‡ Luke 22: 43.

and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." This expostulation was addressed generally to the three, but also to Peter in particular. That apostle cherished and had recently expressed the warmest attachment to his Lord. How unworthy were such weakness and failure! Jesus had been desirous of the presence, vigilance, and prayers of His select disciples. That they endeavoured to comply with his request we do not doubt. The apostle of the circumcision when writing many long years afterwards, and when venerable with age and ripe for glory, designates himself "an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ."* We can scarcely fail here to mark the distinguished progress of the disciple in the grace of humility, the uneffaced impression on the tablet of memory of the mournful scenes of the garden. The merciful and faithful High-priest of the household of God admits the sincere though overcome cordiality of His friends. He himself pleads their apology: "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

From the frailty and shortcoming of man, our suffering Surety turned to the wisdom and sufficiency of God. "He went away the second time and prayed, saying: O my father, if this cup may not pass away from me: except I drink it, thy will be done." Returning to his friends, "he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy) neither wist they what to answer him."† Sorrow, weariness, and, it may be, Satan, all conspired to prevent their supplying that encouragement to their Lord (especially the consolation of sympathy of man having a fellow-feeling with man) which the man Christ Jesus knew so well how to appreciate. He had already obtained a seasonable and refreshing token of His Father's love; yet did He who is "made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining unto God," most earnestly desire and seek for the countenance and support of these brethren. But

* I Peter 5: 1. † Mark 14: 40.

when again disappointed in man,—in the very best of men, he again betook himself to God. “And he left them, and went away again and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest.” The hour and the agony so dreaded had come, and had now, in a degree, gone. They were now past, and with them, the golden opportunity presented to these highly honoured men, of being, in a sense, fellow-workers and fellow-sufferers with their Redeemer. But the precious hour, that season so sacred, was lost, never to be recovered. Never again would the honour be within their reach of watching and praying with and for Jesus. They might well regret for ever their own dulness and apathy. They would mourn over their sin in having failed duly to prize the holy dignity to which they might have obtained. But they never would again have it said to them by their Master: “Tarry ye here and watch with me.” He had already, in language the most significant, intimated that the time was past: “Sleep on now and take your rest.”

How loudly and energetically does the incident, so graphically narrated, of the failure of these good men, speak to the believer? Art thou slumbering, O man of God, O follower of the Lamb, when the glory and kingdom of thy Lord require that thou shouldest be on the alert and prayerful? Certainly the rebuke conveyed to the prophet is applicable to thee: “What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God.”* Most impressively may every one who fears the Lord, here feel the obligation enjoined by the inspired wise man: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”† And urgently may all the friends of the blessed Saviour be exhorted: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”‡

What Christian may not, from meditating on this history, learn to become more vigilant, more devout, more frequent

* Jonah 1 : 6.

† Ecclesiastes 9 : 10.

‡ Ephesians 5 : 15, 16.

in communion with God, looking and waiting for the second advent of the Son of God? Let love to Jesus be grateful, active, and burning. Let us ever confide in Him as a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Be it our devotional aim that not only the spirit may be willing, but that the flesh also may be a willing ally, in conforming to the whole will of God. We cannot, during the present dispensation, be admitted to personal intercourse with Him whom our souls love, as were the disciples of whom the text speaks; we cannot, therefore, in the same literal sense enjoined upon them, watch with Jesus, but we may do it with the members, though not with the Head of the mystical body. We may bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." So will it be with us, in proportion as we realize the union and communion of saints. Alike the unregenerate, and the soul baptized with the Spirit of Jesus are called upon to contemplate for salvation the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as seen in the sorrow and anguish of Him who became a sin-offering for us. The resignation, devotedness, and hearty acquiescence of our Redeemer let all His ransomed ones copy. In the most trying circumstances let them wait upon the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and doubtless they will realize consolation, and retain and regain composure. "I beseech you," says the apostle, "be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

PRAAYER.

ETERNAL FATHER, in the name of thy ever blessed Son, our adored Redeemer, we again draw nigh to Thee. May the contemplation of His love to man, and His supreme devotion to thy will ever so influence us as to increase in our souls every sentiment and affection of thy loving and devoted children. Ever may we, as the disciples of the meek and submissive Saviour, cheerfully acquiesce in thy will.

We beseech Thee, good Lord, to impart unto us more of the Spirit of thy Son. May we love to be without dissimulation. Enable us to abhor always that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good. We would increasingly dread the defilement and the issues of sin. And increasingly may we desire and attain likeness to God. May our "whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," unto whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost be eternal praise. Amen.

VII.

Chronology of occurrences.—Pre-arranged by God that Gethsemane's agony should end ere the band led by Judas came to the place.—The words of Jesus to the leader and to the members of it.—The conduct of that leader.—How to account for it.—The kiss of Judas.—The band that arrested Jesus, their lights and their weapons.—The tender regard evinced by Jesus for the safety of his eleven faithful apostles, and the awe with which His enemies were affected.—Their single aim.—The flight of the eleven, a bitter ingredient in the cup of woe.—The lessons taught by the subject.

PRAYER.

GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, enable us now to draw nigh unto Thee in faith, love, and reverential fear. It becomes us, with holy awe and solemnity, with deepened contrition, and renewed self-abasement, to come unto Thee. We crave thy blessing for the sake of thy beloved Son. Be pleased to grant us abundantly of the outpouring of thy Spirit. Enable us to crucify anew the flesh, with its afflictions and lusts. We would abhor our sinful selves, and repent in dust and ashes.

We desire now again, Holy Father, to meditate for a brief season, upon our blessed Redeemer's sufferings, and dying love. May we yield unto Him the adoration of souls renewed by his grace. We would worship Him with intensest love and loftiest admiration. We would each go forth unto Him, saying: "My Lord and my God;" more than ever would we come under the influence of his constraining love. Henceforth may our lives be "hid with Christ in God." As crucified with Christ may we each be enabled to say: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." To us to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Deliver us, we beseech Thee, good Lord, from all sin. It was sin—it was our sin, that rendered it requisite for the Lord of glory to assume our nature, become our substitute, and submit to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies. It was our sin that caused him to be exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. Let no iniquity or evil propensity maintain the ascendancy in our souls. Let not the law of our carnal members yet again bring us into captivity to Satan. But be it ours to sing: “Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost shall be all the glory, world without end. Amen.

Matthew 26: 47–56.—“And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest’s, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.”

The divine wisdom and prescience are remarkably displayed in what may be designated *the chronology* of the occurrences

that belong to the Lord's last sufferings, apprehension, and death. Much of marvellous adaptation, so to speak, may be discovered in the preordination of the Most High, in connection with the actings of men. Jehovah, in the accomplishment of His eternal purposes, never interferes with the responsibility and spontaneous agency of the human being; yet does He so restrain and guide both his enemies and his devoted children, that alike the wrath of man and man's enlightened service, are made to praise Him. When, for instance, any of the potentates of this world is straining after the objects of personal vanity and ambition, it may be to attain an unparalleled universal empire, or any other phase of "the pride of life," how happy would it be for such an one to ponder the instruction conveyed in such passages as these: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation."* "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."† The Lord ever controls and directs the scourge, though the instrument wielding means not so, and in his heart thinks not so.

It was doubtless prearranged by the Supreme Ruler, whose minute ordination and superintendence are very conspicuous in the transactions of the last hours of the suffering Redeemer, that the period of Gethsemane's agony should just have terminated as Judas and his band came in sight. To speak seriously of chance or accident, is only to betray our own ignorance, littleness, and impious presumption. All things, alike the least and the largest, are of God; and all are contributing their part to the immense whole comprehended only by the Infinite Mind. Jesus had intimated to His three favoured disciples that their encouragement and sympathy could now be dispensed with, in respect to the hour of crisis and dreaded trial, and that they had lost the most precious honour to which men were ever invited upon earth, to bear, in

* Isaiah 10 : 5.

† John 46 : 9, 10.

a measure, the burden of the Son of Man ; to feel with Him in His time of alarm and horror ; and to aid and animate him in His sufferings. He then speaks to them words both of correction and counsel. After coming the third time, and finding them sleeping, Jesus said to them : " Why sleep ye ? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." And again : " Rise, let us be going : behold he is at hand that doth betray me." It is probable that Peter, James, and John now joined the other eight disciples in the garden, and that all were standing beside their loved Master. Judas was familiar with this hallowed retirement, and had learned that Jesus would be there at that time. He then, " having received a band of men and officers from the chief-priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons. Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye ?"*

Let us contemplate, for a moment, some of the elements of this most unseemly and ruffian-like force, sent at the dead hour of night, and during the time of Israel's most solemn festival, to arrest one whom all knew to be innocent and worthy of no molestation. They consisted of " a great multitude, with swords and staves (clubs) from the chief-priests, and the scribes, and the elders."† Present among this company were a large number of the rulers of the nation. They were excited by a diabolical fear lest, by any means, they should lose their prey. They trembled with fiendish anxiety lest Christ should escape. Luke narrates that " Jesus said unto the chief-priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves ? When I was daily with you in the temple ye stretched forth no hands against me : but this is your hour and the power of darkness."‡ Most prominent in this motley mob, is one who, alas ! has, hitherto professed to be a disciple of the Nazarene. In that capacity he had been admitted to great intimacy with his

* John 18 : 3, 4. † Mark 14 : 43. ‡ Luke 22 : 52, 53.

Master. He had received from Him much kindness and affection. How sad, then, how melancholy and distressing, to find him associated with the enemies of the Lord! Nay, to discover that he is the leader and most perfidious of them all! In the preconcerted signal, by which his victim was to be marked out, and in the salutation he addressed to Him, we have conveyed a symbol or type of demoniacal traitorousness of character, of which there is no parallel in the annals of history; and the abhorrent guilt of which no language can express. "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him." The words were those of joyful greeting, expressive of a hope of health, together with the token of endearment, purity, and love, to which the great and gracious Master had admitted his apostles. But the meek Saviour evinced his solemn condemnation of such malignity. "And Jesus said unto him, Friend, (or, O friend), wherefore art thou come?" And oh what heart can feel, what intellect can grasp, what imagination can picture, the height and depth, the length and breadth of meaning conveyed in that awful interrogation? Surely the very traitor must have writhed under its indignation, tenderness, and sarcasm. But, as if the yearning humanity of the Son of Man could not let this "son of perdition" go without an effort to recall him to serious reflection, and snatch him as a brand from the burning, we read that Jesus (doubtless with a solemnity and power inexpressibly affecting), said unto him, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"* Alas! he had not known in his day the things that belonged to his peace, and now they were hid from his eyes. His accepted time was now for ever past; and he is hurried on with the tumult of events by which he is surrounded.

When the omniscient Saviour saw the disorderly band that were just at hand, He, "knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth and said unto them, Whom seek ye?"

* Luke 22 : 45.

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said unto them, I am he. And Judas, also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way.”*

Here let us pause, and glance at the terrible character and conduct of Judas. It was through his perfidiousness that the arrest of Jesus was accomplished. Of all the specimens of man's unhappy badness, he stands before us as the most revolting. Here was the best of masters, even if we speak after the manner of men. This was acknowledged by the wretched follower himself. His Lord had ever treated him with kind attention. So deeply convinced was he of His rectitude and excellency, that when disposed and tempted to bring an accusation against his betrayed “Friend,” he could not, dared not do so. On the contrary, he declared, with a candour and courage that harrow up our feelings to the uttermost, and that cause the contemplative Christian to tremble to think of it—“I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.” What, then, could have induced the most unhappy of men to act the part he did, in the dark tragedy of the last sufferings of the Son of God? He had been, up to the last Supper, honoured and confided in by his brethren. When seated at that Paschal celebration, they hear the Master of the feast, with accents of profoundest sorrow, announce—“Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.” Each of them is filled with poignant grief, and, fearing for himself cries out, “Lord, is it I?” None of them seems to have suspected Judas. It was, therefore, no resentment or chagrin, in so far as his fellow-apostles were concerned, that decided him to the course he followed. How, then, was it with respect to the Head of the family? We read, that “from the beginning Jesus knew who should betray him.”† On one occasion He said, “Have not I chosen you

* John 18 : 4-8.

† John 6 : 64.

twelve, and one of you is a devil?"* Yet it does not appear that this, or any similar intimation, influenced the views of Judas or of the eleven. In all likelihood the words were not then understood, so that they did nothing to alienate, sour, or goad the spirit of Judas. That he acted an apparently consistent part, up to the night of our Lord's betrayal, is obvious. None of the disciples had any idea of his hostility and conspiracy. He was in reality an isolated and thoroughly selfish man, though, to appearance, an attached member of the little society of the followers of the Lamb. He had become, he was now a consummate hypocrite. But how had he arrived at such a terrible gradation in evil? A most solemn, momentous, and profitable enquiry may here be instituted. What the particular circumstances were that occasioned Judas to become, first an attendant upon Jesus, and afterwards an apostle, we are not informed. He may, in the outset, have been a promising and well-disposed person, somewhat of the stamp of the young ruler who came to Jesus earnestly enquiring, "Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" If we bear in mind the prevailing notions of the Jewish people respecting Messiah, their king, and that these prevailed in no small degree among even the apostles of Christ, we can easily understand why an ambitious, a covetous, an able and energetic worldling like Judas should attach himself to the ranks of the friends of Messiah. And we can as easily understand how he might become impatient under what might appear to him to be the needless retardation of his hopes and aspirations, in connection with the sovereignty and sway of Him in whom he believed as the king of the Jews. That he was not at one time far from the kingdom of God, we can easily suppose. Yet was he ever, and at the best, essentially deficient in that *perfection of heart*, without which none is a member of the mystical body of Christ, and which the veriest babe in Christ uniformly possesses. The apostate apostle was never truly joined unto the Lord by that living faith which

* Idem 6 : 70.

knits the soul of the sinner to the Saviour for all time, and for all eternity. He was never dissevered from his idols. His will was never subdued to the Divine will. He never, in very truth, sought the honour of God. We wonder not, then, that he fell. Alas! alas! he so fell that it was impossible for him to be renewed again unto repentance. He had been "once enlightened; had tasted of the heavenly gift; was made a partaker of the Holy Ghost; had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; yet did he crucify the Son of God, and put him to an open shame. All the excellence of Jesus, in his walk, miracles, and teaching; all the strivings of the Spirit of grace, were resolutely opposed by him. Hence he was given over to a reprobate mind, to work all iniquity with greediness. Unreined by Divine providence, which prevents the development of many a wicked man's desires, his covetousness, his hitherto disappointed ambition, and his wrathful resentment, all come into play. Satan also entered into him in an extraordinary manner. He was permitted to take possession of him as the just punishment of such resistance of good as Judas had perpetrated, out of the abuse he had made of the precious opportunities he had enjoyed.

It is certain that this "carnally-minded" man had no adequate idea of the consequences to which his treachery and co-operation with the avowed haters of the Lord would lead. Calculating, he no doubt was, in ordinary circumstances, especially in regard to pecuniary gain; but his anticipations, in this case, were probably altogether erroneous. He looked not for such an issue as actually transpired. Indeed, he was such an unbeliever, that he did not deem it possible that his Master would allow himself to be taken and disposed of, as in the result was seen. It is in the highest degree probable that, under the tremendous influence of the devil, to whom he had sold himself, actuated by the ruling passions of a worldling, and at last instigated to the very height of malignity by what occurred at the feast of the Passover, when Jesus made him feel that he was perfectly aware of his diabolical schemes, and, in a measure, unfolded

them to some of the disciples,* he rushed onwards with blind fury to the execution of his purposes. He allowed himself no time for the exercise of calm reflection. He barred his soul from the possibility of godly contrition.

Previous to this time, Judas may have sought merely to take such measures as would constrain Jesus, whom he regarded as the Messiah, to assume what he presumptuously presumed to be his proper position,—to assert his regal dignity. Selfishness instigated this daring man. He expected high preferment in that kingdom which was about to be established. His character, aims and motives were not, in this respect, dissimilar to those of the men of whom we read in the 6th chapter of John; and who, excited by the miracle of the loaves and fishes, in the beneficence of which they had participated, determined to come and take Jesus by force, and make him a king. Doubtless they also deemed that the Saviour was unduly retarding his own cause. With a like carnal, dictatorial, and impetuous spirit as that which reigned in Judas, they resolved to apply friendly coercion, in order to compel the king of the Jews to assert His royal claims. This was the wisdom of the world,—the wisdom of man, which, as demonstrated by man's history, so operated as that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Such, unvaryingly, is the tendency of self-seeking ungodliness, even when most sagaciously directed. In each of the cases adverted to, the party thought that energetic and friendly compulsoriness might carry the rights of the Redeemer of Israel to a successful issue, and that the agency would be remembered and suitably rewarded.

Such may be something like the springs of action that impelled the traitorous apostle in his terrible career. Dishonest in the things of Mammon, and the subject of the love of filthy lucre, he was also proud, bold, and wrathful. Besides all this, "after the sop, Satan entered into him," bringing all his bad passions into horrible activity. We see all this from the moment that he left the table, and "went immediately out, and it was night."

* John 13 : 23, &c.

“Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful,” said that inspired wise man, who had more acquaintance with the workings of human nature, and a wider range of observation and knowledge, than any other of the children of men. Yet of all the deceitful kisses of enemies that were ever realized, none can come nearly up to the guilt, perfidy, and baseness of the kiss of Judas. Only ponder for a moment upon the Master and the apostle. What condescension, love, and most endearing intimacy must Jesus have conferred upon the twelve! And yet one of them to act as Judas did! O ingratitude and inhumanity unequalled! O profaner of all the beautiful, sincere and pure idiosyncrasies of hallowed affection and Christian friendship, what shall we say? what can we say of thee? We shall attempt to say no more; we shall leave thee. Happily thou art, so far, single and unexampled in thy guilt! Yes, poor human nature, fallen, weak, and vile as are many of its features, is not represented by thee. Thou art not a fair, not a correct, representation of man. Thou art a devil: thy very Master said so. The meek and tender Jesus exclaimed—“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”

We return now to the assemblage, guided by such a leader, who were intent upon seizing Jesus of Nazareth. Although the season was that of the full moon, as was always the case when the passover was celebrated, this ruthless multitude came with lanterns and torches. This was, possibly, with a view to effect. They had no need of them otherwise. They might help to stimulate themselves, in case of any opposition, and they might prove injurious to a hostile party. They were also armed with swords, clubs, and other weapons. This was designed to make it appear that danger was apprehended from Jesus and his adherents.

What tender and loving regard,—what Divine care did “the Word made flesh” here manifest towards his true disciples! In his intercessory prayer to the Father, he said: “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be

fulfilled." The prescience and compassion of the Apostle and High-priest of our profession were evidenced, in a most touching manner, immediately after the institution of the New Testament Passover. He said to the first communicants: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." We behold the same ceaseless regard for these faithful men when they were exposed to the violence of an unprincipled and cruel band, ready for blood or any enormity. Repeating His question, "Whom seek ye?" they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." And so overawed were that furious mass of evil men by His power, that they attempted not to impede or touch one of the eleven. This is the more remarkable, as the disciples were quite disposed to resistance in defence of their Master. Their unfeigned attachment to Jesus is finely seen even in their error. "When they that were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" They had but two swords among them, and one of these had fallen into the hands of the chivalrous and ardent Peter. Of him we read that, with characteristic impulsiveness, and without waiting for any reply to the enquiry in which all the disciples apparently united, he proceeded to attack, not the traitor, as we might have supposed, but a poor servant of the high priest, intending to cleave his head with a deadly thrust: "And behold one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword unto its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels. But how then shall the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be."* Surely the

* Matt. 26: 51-54.

spirit of Christ at this trying moment is worthy of all admiration. It is truly touching. Remonstrating with his ardent but indiscreet friend, he says: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?" He further repaired the injury done by his disciple to Malchus. "He touched his ear and healed him." Ought not this omnipotent benevolence, thus manifested, to have softened, yea, melted, the hearts of the beholders? Should it not, together with what they had just experienced of that Divine power, which caused them to go back and fall to the ground, have convinced them of the character of Jesus? Would not the truthful and the good have felt that God was with Him? that He Himself was verily God? Unquestionably there can be but one reply to such enquiries; and that is in the affirmative. Had they been men of integrity, such would have been the effect upon their minds. But they were the slaves of Satan; they were led captive by him at his pleasure. Like Judas, they in some measure may be said to have sold themselves to him. They were in league with that arch-apostate, and his spirits of darkness, against the Prince of life; and he will war even with the Almighty.

How impressive and touching is the expostulation of the Divine Teacher, now a prisoner in the hands of his enemies! Addressing the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, Jesus said: "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." "But," he added, "this is your power and the power of darkness." Nor did he fail to intimate that, after all, whatever earth and hell might wish or intend, they were but the unconscious instruments of Jehovah, in the fulfilment of His purposes; for, as the Apostle informs us, "All this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." And "then," we learn from the same inspired writer, "all the disciples forsook him and fled." For this their Master was prepared. We have seen how he had provided for their safety. In consequence, their enemies were prevented from hurting a hair of their head. Not one of the unfortunate rabble, or of

its leaders, dared, or had power to impede or touch one of that little, unprotected, weak company. Perhaps one natural cause of this was the intent eagerness with which the multitude kept their object in view. Their single aim was to secure the person of Christ; and they cared little at this moment for any other consideration. The overruling power and love of God are, however, most conspicuous. Surely we can exclaim with the Psalmist—"How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings."*

The flight of the eleven, though foreseen and pardoned by the merciful High Priest and King of his people, was yet, doubtless, a bitter ingredient in the cup given Him to drink. On their way to Gethsemane, these disciples had expressed strong faith in their Lord. "Now are we sure," they said, "that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."† He was fully possessed with the conviction which, on a previous occasion, he had uttered—"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."‡

The forsaking of His avowed and much endeared friends, must have increased the poignancy of the grief with which the Son of Man was now filled. It reminded the august Sufferer that even this was not all; that the cup was not yet full; that the climax was still in terrific prospect. The hiding of His Father's countenance, yea, the being forsaken of Him—O how infinitely woful to His only begotten and well

* Psalm 36: 7.

† John 16: 30-32.

‡ John 10: 17, 18.

beloved Son! With the nature He wore, and the purity of soul that belonged to Him, O how unspeakably dreadful was that awful night, and the still more awful morning that was approaching. All God's waves and billows were passing over His soul.

The topics upon which we have been dwelling are rich in important suggestions. We shall glance at some of them. And first:—

We have impressively set before us not only the terribleness of the evil of sin, but also the absolute and indispensable necessity for its punishment. We see this in the exceeding sorrow and bitter endureings of the well-beloved of the Father, when, in the room of sinners, He was pouring out his soul unto death. When the Father's justice found even this Son as the Substitute of the guilty, it could not in any degree relax its demands, but poured out all its vials upon His devoted head. How obviously impossible, then, is it for any sinner to escape that is not in Christ! What madness to expect that the vile transgressor shall be spared, when the spotless Lamb of God, when a sacrifice for sin, must suffer to the uttermost, and pay the last farthing!

Secondly,—Let us derive from the contemplation of the love of the dying Saviour, new and more vigorous love to Him who loved us. It is no mere dramatic representation, with a view to effect, that we witness in the garden, and, subsequently. The whole constitutes a sad and most intensely solemn submission of the Holy One of God to the full demands of law and equity against the sinner. We behold no stoical apathy in the man Christ Jesus, but, on the contrary, the keenest and the most sensitive feeling. How affectingly do we see the veritable man actuated by the finest and most delicate sympathies of our nature, in the appeal made to his murderous enemies—"Are ye come out as against a highwayman?" The calumny and falsity of the charges brought against Him, He deeply felt, and the injustice done to His character. He sorrowed for the wickedness of His base, ungrateful, inconsistent foes. All this tended to enhance His grief. Let us evince our love to Him, who thus

gave Himself for us, by crucifying all our sins and living in all righteousness, by more thorough repentance, by undoubted union with Jesus, and by regarding His glory as our sole aim and business.

Thirdly,—Let us be warned of the danger of the heart not being right with God. “If thou wouldest be perfect, part with that idol,” is naturally the language of the only Saviour to every enquirer. The want of this perfection ruined Judas. He radically failed here. He never gave his whole heart to God. He may not have been far from the kingdom of God, but it never entered into his soul. He never, in simplicity and godly sincerity, sought unto God. He sought to serve two masters, though Jesus had taught that no man can do so. Let us beware. We must probe our hearts deeply, and experience the arrows of conviction in a way that Judas never did, or, like him, we shall be none of Christ’s. Let us resolve like Ruth, be perfect like Job, and genuine as were the eleven disciples of our Lord. In order to this, we must renounce our own wisdom. How presumptuous is man’s wisdom as opposed to that of God! We have reason to believe that this ruined Judas. Let us cry with the Psalmist, “Keep back thy servants from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.”* And let us prayerfully strain to be childlike, humble, and submissive to the will of our Father.

Fourthly,—We are taught, from the sacred narrative, to distrust ourselves, and to be ever on the alert against Satan, sin, and our own deceitful hearts. Let us trust only in the Lord. Let us not rely upon our love to Jesus. It may be real: but if we forget that we stand by grace, we shall fall like the disciples. Their error is our beacon. Sins of presumption are not the stain of God’s children, but they must beware of looking to self, or the grace that is in them, or they will lapse into sin. “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ,” should be the sentiment of every Christian’s heart.

* Psalm 19: 13.

Lastly,—Our contemplations tend to assure us of the safety for time and eternity of all believers. Christ will keep all his sealed ones. He will be able to say in his own language, when delivering up the mediatorial kingdom to the Father: “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.”* He keeps them as the apple of the eye; He hides them under the shadow of His wings; He holds His ministers in His right hand, and all the children of Zion He has graven upon the palms of His hands. His promise is: “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”†

PRAYER.

WE BESEECH THEE, HOLY LORD GOD, that our sins may be all blotted out for His name's sake who died for us. Deliver us from covetousness, hypocrisy, and wrath. And deliver us, God of all grace, from vain self-confidence and rashness. We would be strong only in the Lord and in the power of His might. While we would give glory to Thee for grace bestowed on us, oh forbid that we should ever forget our own nothingness and vileness. Our sufficiency is alone of the God of infinite compassion and love.

O God, we desire to see and to feel in a degree to which we have never yet attained, the exceeding evil of sin. In the humiliation, agony, and death of our blessed Redeemer; in the injuries and insults borne by Him, we would contemplate, and be affected by its odiousness. Verily there is no escape for us if we neglect the great salvation thus wrought out. And He who spared not His own beloved Son, will verily not spare any who can dare to reject Him. O may no sin have dominion over us. And may we ever walk as the ransomed of the Lord.

What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits?

* John 17: 12.

† Revelation 3: 5.

O thou adorable Lamb of God, who hast taken away our sins, we praise Thee for ever for thy love. Thou art our consolation. Thou hast begotten us to a good hope through grace. Thou wilt keep us as thou didst thy first disciples, so that none of us shall be lost. Thou art the Alpha and the Omega of our grace and glory. To thy Name, and to the Father, and the Holy Spirit, we ascribe ceaseless homage and praises, world without end. Amen.

VIII.

Jesus bound.—When taken to Annas He was sent by him to Caiaphas, the acting high priest, in whose palace the Sanhedrim were convened.—They were determined to put Jesus to death by false witnesses.—Seldom wanting those who, for an adequate bribe, will perjure themselves.—The number of witnesses the smallest that was legal.—Impossibility of obtaining adequate evidence against Jesus.—The unjust and illegal method had recourse to, to induce self-crimination.—Our Lord avowed that God was His Father, which the Sanhedrim understood to be making Himself equal with God.—The insults offered Him.—His condemnation.—The reply of Christ to the high priest.—Peter's denial of Christ.—His restoration.

PRAYER.

EVER BLESSED GOD, with deepened feelings of awe, reverence, and devotion, would we now draw nigh unto Thee, in the name of thy glorious Son, our adorable Redeemer. In Him, alone, we have righteousness and strength. Through Him, alone, have we pardon and peace. “By his stripes are we healed.” By His word are we cleansed; by His Spirit made alive unto Thee.

May we be enabled to continue our meditations upon the last sufferings of our dying Saviour, with great and increasing spiritual benefit. We there behold that “He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.” May we feel, more vividly and justly than ever we have yet done, the constraining power of the love of Christ. O may we evermore, while we live, live not to ourselves, but to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us: “To us to live may it be Christ, and to die unspeakable gain.”

O God, most just and holy, when we behold our Surety “bound” as a criminal, may we strive more earnestly to mortify the lust of the flesh. May pride, emulation, strife, anger, malice, and all other sins, be destroyed in us. May

we crucify the flesh with all its affections and lusts. Enable us to attain unto profounder love and more thorough consecration to our Lord. Suffer us not ever to be ashamed of Christ. We would esteem His reproach greater riches than all the treasures of earth. He thought upon us in our low and lost estate, because His love was stronger than death, and because His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting unto them that fear Him. May we be called and sanctified in Him. O how He humbled himself for us and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! May we, therefore, die unto sin and live unto God. And may our whole life, henceforth, be by the faith of the Son of God. May we live, yet not we, but may Christ live in us.

How dreadful, O God, is the wickedness of which the corrupt heart of man is capable! How vile, abominable, and degraded has sin rendered us! In the falsehood and malignity of the persecutors and murderers of our dying Redeemer, we behold what our fallen and alienated nature is capable of perpetrating. O may the blood that was shed through their instrumentality, atone for our guilt, and cleanse us from all sin. May we be washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. O our Father, we would supplicate in the language taught us by our Lord and Master: "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." We are deeply sensible of our liability to error and stumbling; to conduct and words most dishonouring to Him who has called us by His grace. From all sin "we beseech thee to deliver us, good Lord." The indwelling and influence of thy Spirit alone can sustain us. We have no confidence in ourselves; even our love to Jesus will not ensure our safety, without thy omnipotent energy. "Our sufficiency is of God."

And now, Almighty Father, our waiting eyes are towards Thee. Our hope is in Thee. May the gracious smile and the sanctifying Spirit of our now glorified High-priest be vouchsafed as we are about to be occupied. And may these, our humble and hearty prayers, be accepted and answered, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Matthew 26 : 57-75.—“ And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death ; But found none : yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, this *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing ? what *is it which* these witness against thee ? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses ? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye ? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him ; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee ? Now Peter sat without in the palace ; and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art *one* of them ; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”

We read that after Jesus had surrendered himself into the hands of the band, and the captain and the officers who arrested him, they "bound him, and led him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high-priest that same year."* What a demoniacal spirit must have actuated the enemies of Christ! How strikingly is this evidenced in offering such an insult as binding Him! However felt fear or supposed necessity may have suggested such an act to those who sent this multitude, the experience and observation of all present ought surely to have satisfied them of the absolute nullity of such an act to restrain or secure their prisoner without His own permission. If He were disposed to resist, all their malice and efforts would obviously be impotent to retain Him. On the other hand, if Jesus were willing to allow them to apprehend Him, to have recourse to such a method was totally uncalled for and gratuitous, as He would undoubtedly accompany them wherever they might desire. Yet with cruel hands and harder hearts, this savage company "took Jesus and bound him." This entered into his humiliation and suffering as the Substitute of the guilty. He was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows. He was giving his soul as an offering for sinners. And this incident entered into that cup of bitterness which He must exhaust.

From Luke 3 : 2, we learn that "Annas and Caiaphas were the high-priests" at the period when the Baptist entered on his public ministry. And they appear to have continued up to the time of the death of our Saviour, to be recognized as the high-priests. Annas seems to have held *the primacy* in the priesthood. But his son-in-law, Caiaphas was now, and had been during the procuratorship of Pilate, *the acting* high-priest. This arrangement had been effected probably at the instance, certainly with the sanction of the Roman Governor.

Though Jesus was first conducted to Annas, as the senior and superior of the priesthood, Annas did nothing farther in the business than to send Him "bound" to Caiaphas.† In

* John 18 : 12, 13.

† John 18 : 24.

the palace of him who "was the high-priest that same year," the Sanhedrim had been convened, and were now actually assembled. Up to this late hour of the night, or of the morning, they had waited, hoping that the plot of Judas might be successful, and their looked-for victim secured. At a previous meeting Caiaphas had counselled and instigated that Jesus should be put to death. The Spirit of God had caused him to predict that this "one man should die for the people," thus adding one to the other examples recorded in Scripture where God, in His sovereignty, was pleased to employ an ungodly instrument as the vehicle or medium of the prophetic Spirit.

There were present on a former occasion of the Sanhedrim assembling, some who objected to the measure proposed by Caiaphas. In this most eventful night, however, "the chief-priests, and elders, and all the council" were met, with the unanimous determination that, if possible, they would deprive the dreaded Nazarene of life. How nearly ripe for judgment were these ecclesiastical rulers of the Jewish people and the nation whom they represented, we perceive at a glance, when the evangelist states that the unblushing and well-understood object of their being at that extraordinary hour met in the palace of the high-priest, was to seek "false witness against Jesus to put him to death."*

How fiendish the spirit, how satanic the motives and purposes that actuated these men! Verily their guilt was far more grievous than that of those concerning whom the Psalmist says: "Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord."† "Alas! they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." They are most resolute and determined to accomplish their design in defiance of every law of God and man. Surely their consciences must have testified that they were the children of the devil. But they regarded not such a conviction. True to their proper character and maddened to desperation, they proceed in a

* John 18: 59.

† Psalm 14: 4.

way worthy of men who could either affect to be more righteous than others, and make long prayers for a pretence, or could, with the effrontery of the wicked one, avow their readiness for any crime that would enable them to effect their purpose. How terrible is the degradation which the fall has entailed upon man! Our corrupt nature is capable of going lengths in sin that must astonish the spirits of evil. How dreadful is the malady, to remedy which the Son of God came into the world! We here see one reason why such a divine Saviour as He, was required for the case of the sinner. If we have escaped personally from such guilt as our subject brings under our notice, let us never forget to what and to whom we are indebted for the difference. Are we partakers of sanctifying grace? To God alone be all the glory. If we are destitute of this renovating influence, we have no ground to conclude that we would not have acted as base a part as the Sanhedrim, had we been tempted as were these enemies of Christ now under our notice. Humiliation and lively gratitude to the God of all goodness ought to be enhanced in our souls by such considerations.

There are seldom wanting those who are ready, for an adequate bribe, to testify falsely and to perjure themselves for the purpose of pleasing their superiors and those in power. Such persons often pretend to be actuated by a regard for religion. The infamous Jezebel did not scruple to dictate this plea in fulfilling her murderous determination against the pious and patriotic Naboth, the Israelite. At her instigation, the elders and nobles of Israel "proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died."* Of a precisely similar character were the witnesses of the Sanhedrim. They were obtained, it is observable, with con-

* I Kings 21 : 12, 13.

siderable difficulty. “Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.”* The number of witnesses, we again observe to be the smallest admissible according to law, in order to the condemnation of an individual to death. Nor is it possible to detect either blasphemy or impiety in the alleged statement, even supposing it to have been true. But the single object of those who had suborned these wicked witnesses, was the death of Christ. Hence they required to observe and go through the forms of law. And alike the Jewish and the Roman law insisted upon the testimony of two witnesses in a case of life and death. But, as is usual with unprincipled leaders, they could mystify and mislead sufficiently to keep down any repugnance which any of the people might entertain to such a diabolical deed as the putting Jesus to death, the Messiah.

The unsatisfactory and inadequate nature of the evidence against Jesus, was felt by the whole Sanhedrim. Even those who hated Him with the blindest fury perceived this. Hence they had recourse to a method against which all law and justice protest. They sought to criminate the prisoner by means of His own confession. “The high-priest then asked Jesus of his disciples and of His doctrine.”† As to His disciples, he said nothing; as to His doctrine, He said nothing in particular, but referred Himself to those who heard Him, it being not only manifest to God, but made manifest also in their consciences. He tacitly charges His judges with illegal proceedings. The crime the Sanhedrim, by the law, was to enquire after, was clandestine spreading of dangerous doctrines, enticing secretly.‡ As to this, Christ clears Himself very fully.¶ He answered, “I spake openly to the world;

* Matt. 26 : 59-61.

† John 18 : 19.

‡ Deut. 13 : 6.

¶ Tract Society Commentary.

I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold they know what I said.”* With this exception, however, the meek and lowly Saviour saw meet to be silent. This was a sufficient protest and explanation. In regard to the conflicting charges, He sought not to interfere. The false witnesses did not “agree together,” after every attempt at consistency. All appeared to be futile and useless for criminating the prisoner. Something, however, must be done. Accordingly we read: “And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”† Hitherto He who had been “led as a lamb to the slaughter, so he opened not his mouth,” had offered neither vindication nor defence before this iniquitous tribunal; not only from perfect meekness and patience, but as our Surety, that we might have an effectual plea before the tribunal of God. The high priest, however, was resolved that the captive should not escape. He, therefore, solemnly “adjured Jesus by the living God, to declare whether he was the Christ the Son of God.” This was the method of putting men upon their oath. And the criminated or witnesses were required to answer as in the presence of God. When the matter was thus proposed, our Lord saw meet to answer. He replied that indeed Caiaphas had declared the truth; and that, notwithstanding his present despised condition, they would see Him as “the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” How august and full of meaning were the words of the rejected Saviour to these enemies! They did not believe in Him as the anointed of the Father. Their infidelity will be dispelled when He shall come in his glory, “and every eye shall see him; and they also which pierced him.” They

* John 18: 20, 21.

† Mark 14: 60, 61.

shall then behold Him as "the Son of Man," and yet as the mighty God, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

By avowing that God was His Father in the highest and most absolute sense, the Sanhedrim correctly inferred that Jesus made Himself equal with God. This conclusion was justly understood by the people in general: † and this, ultimately, was the ground upon which the Sanhedrim condemned the Son of God. His affirmation was considered as blasphemy. "Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold now ye have heard his blasphemy, what think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee." ‡ Luke says: "And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy who is it that smote thee?" || Mark's narrative is: "And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands." §

Certainly the blindfolding of our Redeemer, and then challenging Him to say who had struck Him, may be truly pronounced an instance of the greatest depravity and degeneracy possible. The Sanhedrim, with its abettors and menials, mocked Christ in his prophetic capacity. How He was mocked as a priest and a king, the subsequent history will evince. But the anticipatory words of the prophet were now fulfilled: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." ¶ Nor let us ever forget, or fail to be savingly impressed with the other words of the same wonderful pro-

* II Thessalonians 1: 7, 8. † John 5: 18. ‡ Matt. 26: 57-75.

|| Luke 22: 64.

§ Mark 14: 65. ¶ Isaiah 50: 6.

phet: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes are we healed."*

How momentous in its bearing upon every individual is the reply of Christ to the high priest! How affecting are those solemn words: "I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven!" In this announcement we are all interested. For as the beloved disciple, long after he had listened to the awe-inspiring averment of his Lord, declares: "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him."† How exciting the thought thus conveyed in the preface of the apocalyptic Seer's disclosures! O how worthy of the attention thus invited! How thrilling the sublime anticipation! Personally shall we not seek to improve it? Shall we not individually say amen,—and I too shall see Him! But how, and when? Shall it be when He cometh to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe?—when the archangel's trump shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise first?—when "the manifestation of the sons of God" is enacted, for which "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth?" Shall it be to realize the honour and felicity of the first resurrection?—that blessed consummation of which the apostle speaks: "Beloved, 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."‡ O let us be very earnest, striving, and intent, that we may attain to such blessedness. Let our life now be hid with Christ in God. To us to live let it be Christ. Then may we appropriate the precious promises penned by St. Paul: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

But, alas! there are many to whom there will be another coming of Christ than that now spoken of. For when John calls attention to the grand fact of his future coming, declaring that "every eye shall see him," he adds, "and they also

* Isaiah 53: 5.

† John 1: 7.

‡ I John 3: 2.

which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”* O then be it our prayer and aim, and ceaseless exertion, that we may not be classed with the ungodly, but with those whose names are written in “the book of the living”—in the Lamb’s book of life—that we may be found “the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” Let us not be of those who neglect the great salvation; nor of those who are represented by the foolish virgins, who, though they took their lamps, took no oil in their vessels; nor of those who crucify the Son of God afresh, putting Him to open shame. Let not Christ, in our case, be wounded in the house of his friends by our inconsistency, weakness in what is good, worldliness, or slothfulness. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”† How absorbing an interest should we feel in the beatific second advent of the Son of Man! He who once was “the man of sorrows” will then appear the glorified Immanuel. And amidst all the infinite perfection of his Divine nature, will be manifest that other nature which He delights to wear—the nature of man—the nature of those for whom He humbled himself and endured so much. It is “the Son of Man” we shall see at his coming. Just as in the visions of Patmos the highly-honoured apostle saw, “in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a lamb as it had been slain,” so will the ransomed of the Lord who come to Zion with songs and everlasting rejoicings, behold in their adored King the agonized and crucified Sufferer, who died and who lived as their Substitute and Representative, in their nature and in their stead. Let Him be all and in all to us now. Let us now walk by faith; and when He shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

Interspersed with the history of the arrest and trial of his Master, we have an account of the denial of Him, by one of His most favoured disciples. Peter was warmly attached to

* Rev. 1 : 7.

† Rom. 12 : 12.

that Master. So sincere, ardent, and undaunted was the apostle, that he felt himself not only willing to die for and with Jesus; but when the enemy approached he was forward to attack, with deadly weapon, whoever would dare to touch his revered Lord. His asseverations of attachment were thus verified. His honesty is unquestioned; but his zeal was without judgment. While he had yet to learn his own deep sinfulness and inability, he and all the other followers of the Lamb must be taught that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual." These are "mighty through God." Hence Jesus said to Peter, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword."

We have seen how astonishingly the safety of the eleven apostles had been provided for by the betrayed Messiah. But though their escape was providential, and secured by the wisdom and power of God, their conduct is not at all exculpated by this interposition. Though all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled, it is probable that they soon recovered from their tremor. In particular, we have abundant evidence of the presence, and profound interest taken by Peter and John at an early stage of the subsequent actings of the awful tragedy which we are now contemplating. After relating of the band who came upon Jesus, "Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house," Luke immediately adds—"And Peter followed afar off."* In John we read—"And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter."†

That the disciple here spoken of was John, there need be little doubt. The style of designation, "that other disciple," is precisely that of John, when speaking of himself. No

* Luke 22: 54.

† John 18: 15, 16.

other disciple can be supposed so likely to know the circumstances and feelings of Peter as John. Between the flight of the eleven, and the entrance of these two into the high priest's palace, a very short time only must have elapsed ; so short, indeed, as almost to preclude the possibility of Peter's joining and concurring with any other disciple beyond the circle of the family of the apostles. Then Peter and John present throughout one of those bright and beautiful specimens of sacred friendship, with which the Spirit of inspiration has illumined and adorned the graphic sketches of the word of life. As one of those noble instances of true and honourable union of soul with soul, which the Book of God alone furnishes in a degree unparalleled in all other writings, the friendship of the two now before us is extremely interesting. They were closest and most intimate friends. No two of the apostolic fraternity seem to have cherished such a special regard for each other as they. The one was the boldest, the other the most deeply endeared, of all the personal attendants of Jesus. Human friendship between two persons is not based upon similarity of intellectual character. On the contrary, it is rather associated with varied and even opposite tastes and features of mind. The one supplies what is lacking in the other. So with Peter and John. The disparity of their age, so far from being a barrier, seems rather to have fostered and contributed to their mutual attachment. How strikingly evident is this on the morning of the resurrection. When the devoted Mary Magdalen ran from the empty sepulchre, the historian says: " Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together ; and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet went he not in." Being younger and fleetier than his brother, he was first at the place of interment, but he had not the resolution and

courage to go in, till animated by the presence and example of the older and bolder disciple. "Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre. . . . Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed."* We observe in the history of the primitive Church, that this close and most loving fellowship was maintained between these eminent followers of the Lamb, after their Lord's ascension to the Father's right hand.

Returning to the palace of Caiaphas, we see Peter getting into trouble. It is likely that there was something in his appearance and demeanor that suggested his being a friend of the Nazarene. Sorrow and concern would be depicted on his countenance. Hence he was suspected, first by a woman who had no previous acquaintance with him, and who had not been present at Gethsemane. To her, "the damsel that kept the door," he first denied his discipleship. Again, in the hall of the high priest, when he was warming himself, and in company with the servants waiting to witness the proceedings, "they said unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. And a third time, when one of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman, whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew."† These all, however, seem to be regarded by the evangelists as substantially but one denial, being addressed to but one division of the enemies of Christ. After this, the apostle, in confusion and terror, retired from the hall where the fire was, to the porch of the palace. There he "again denied with an oath, saying, I do not know the man."‡ Afterwards he returned to the hall, perhaps from anxiety and cold. There he was in sight of Jesus. St. Luke, in reference to this last and crowning denial, says: "And about the space of one hour another confidently affirmed, saying, of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou

* John 20.

† John 18: 26, 27.

‡ John 5: 72.

sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.”*

Obviously one of the grand designs to be served, by God’s permitting the apostle to fall so terrifically, was to induce in his soul, and in the souls of all the disciples of Christ, deepened humility. It cries aloud to each of them—Trust not in man, not in thyself, not in thy Christian character, love to Christ, or in any or all of thy graces. But trust in the Lord alone always. With ever increasing earnestness, seek unto the Lord for the indwelling and sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Through his energy we can stand; without it, we are sure to fall. When we are weakest in felt inability, we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

The apostle’s fall and rising again, is an illustration of the truth of the Word of God—“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.”† How sad and alarming was the depth to which Peter fell! “Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee,” said the enemies of his Lord and Master. “Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.”‡ It may be that the mode of speech referred to, and which indicated the apostle’s relation to Jesus, was not only the Galilean or provincial dialect, but also the devout ordering aright of his words, and keeping with holy jealousy the door of his lips, that he might sin not. Alas! the poor apostle would convince them that it was otherwise with him. Ah how little dependence can we place upon pale and sinful humanity! Even the man of God “began to curse and to swear.” Is he gone then fatally, finally, for ever? No. “The Lord delivereth the poor from him that is too strong for him.”§ Well may

* Luke 22: 59–62. † Psalm 37: 23, 24. ‡ V. 73, 74. § Psalm 35: 70.

we rejoice and say to Him,—“Thou hast a mighty arm ; strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.”*

Doubtless the Evil One wished both to indulge his malice against Christ and to destroy this prominent disciple whom he had marked out for a victim, and whose total overthrow he was now intent upon effecting. “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”† The character of Peter seemed most favourable for such an object. Hasty, self-confident, immature, the old serpent assailed him by temptation, the most powerful. Evidently the selection of this disciple was most politic. John for instance would not have answered as well. For on the one hand he was much more timid than his friend, and on the other he was in advance of him in the strength of his attachment to Jesus. None of the eleven appeared so likely to run to ruin as the son of Jonas. Yet we behold nothing more perspicuously than this,—he could not be ruined. For greater was He who was for him than all his enemies united against him. The power and all-prevailing intercession of the great High Priest of the Israel of God, rescued and saved Peter. And so far was he ultimately from being destroyed, that he became a most striking monument of the mercy that is Divine and the grace that is omnipotent, to the glory of the God of his salvation. The adversary here, as in every other attack upon any of Christ’s loved ones, was baffled. The apostle was humbled, and with godly contrition, repented in dust and ashes. Subsequently he walked humbly with God. He was a better man than ever he had been. He grew in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As the child is taught experimentally by its very falls how to go more surely and safely, so the believer even by his lapses and backslidings, is effectually taught to walk more worthy of his Christian vocation.

* Psalm 89 : 13. † Luke 22 : 31-33.

Such was the result of the sifting of Peter by the enemy of souls. That arch-enemy displayed much malice and cunning. But he was vanquished by the Saviour of man when in the lowest depths of his humiliation. That Friend who "sticketh closer than a brother," repelled the foe so that instead of victory, he found that he had outwitted himself and was effectively driven back. It often happens so; when "the accuser of the brethren" would make capital of the weakness and sins of the children of God, their heavenly father pities them as His erring ones who hope in His mercy. The cunning of the crafty serpent seems perfect, yet it essentially fails to destroy the Church of God or even the least of its true members. They will all be dealt with and chastened for their sins, but none of them will be cast off. Nay, they are restored and made better by the experience through which they are led.

"And immediately while he yet spake, the cock crew."
 "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." How significant the connection! At the very moment when the sin and wretchedness of the fallen disciple were at the climax, the omniscient Master looked upon him. What a look was this! Surely it merits our liveliest interest. Let us consider it a little. And *first*. It was a look of *love*. There is nothing more transparent than the love of that look. It is a love whose height and depth pass all knowledge. The suffering Redeemer, amidst all His own sorrows during that season of unuttered anguish, yet evinced His everlasting and unchangeable affection to His ransomed followers. He looked upon Peter. *Secondly*. We may note that this look was one of *compassion*. He pitied the woes and the wounded spirit of Peter. He knows what sore temptations are. He sympathizes with those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. As a merciful and faithful High Priest over the household of God, He prayed to His Father for his loved disciple, and in consequence that disciple's faith was revived and invigorated, he was restored to his position, and vastly improved in his character as an apostle of the Lamb. *Thirdly*. The look of Jesus was a look of *pardon*. "Let

Israel hope in the Lord ; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."* How aggravated had been Peter's sin ! Not only had he been guilty of ingratitude and falsehood, he had also denied his Lord and his discipleship with oaths and curses. Profane swearing was one of the prevailing sins of the Jews of that day. One of the peculiar characteristics of Christ's disciples was then as it now is, "Swear not," and that all profaneness be not once named. Jesus had so taught, but Peter would prove that he was not a disciple by his guilty conformity to the practice of the wicked. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from the sin of breaking the third commandment so specially guarded by a jealous God. Of the breakers of this commandment we may say in general, "Their stain is not the stain of the children of God." Peter however was pardoned for this and every other sin. Jesus knew that he was now beside himself, and his precious blood was shed that the repentant sinner might be pardoned and sanctified. So it was with Peter. His profaneness was forgiven ; he sinned no more. So will it be with every one who experiences peace through the shed blood of the Saviour who died to take away sin. *Fourthly.* The look of Jesus was a look of *remonstrance*. As if it spoke such words as, "What, not know me, Peter?" O that look entered like iron into the inmost soul of the apostle. He never again denied his Lord. On the contrary, he frequently, in years following, avowed that he knew and loved Jesus. And at length he sealed his testimony by resigning his life most humbly and affectingly as a martyr for the cause of Christ. *Lastly.* The look of Jesus was one of *restoration*. Peter was fully and emphatically restored to office as an apostle of the crucified and risen Nazarene. And he was as truly restored to spiritual health and vigour. Henceforth his progress in holiness is most decided and marked. In none of the members of the Head of the Church can we discern this progress so strikingly. To be impressed with this, we have

* Psalm 130 : 7

only to compare Peter as we now have seen him, with Peter the venerable servant of Jesus Christ, and the saint ripe for the glory of his Master, as we see him in his epistles. What a beautiful spirit of love, humbleness of mind, and mature piety do such passages as the following imply! "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."* "Therefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me."† How well may all this impress upon the teaching of the word of life, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth."‡ Shall we not individually offer up the prayer: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."§

PRAAYER.

Father of mercies and God of all consolation, we praise thy glorious name for thy goodness and loving kindness. We are deeply sensible of the love of Him who ransomed us with His own blood. We see it in His every step and at every stage of His humiliation.

May the record of what took place in the palace of the High Priest on the night of the betrayal of "the Son of Man," prove highly beneficial to us through the operation of thy Spirit. We are profoundly affected by the love of "the Man of sorrows" to His fallen disciple. O thou dying Saviour, what a look was that with which Thou didst quicken the conscience of the lapsed apostle! It was followed by instant and profound contrition. We give glory to Thee, Thou tender and compassionate Friend for thy all-prevailing

* 1 Peter 5: 1. † II Peter 1: 12-14. ‡ Job 5: 17. § Psalm 51: 7

advocacy and ceaseless watching on behalf of such as cast themselves upon Thee. In every hour of conviction, in the time of perplexity, when cast down from a sense of conscious guilt, may thy love which we have been contemplating, encourage us to go from the scene of backsliding, to weep bitterly, and to return unto God against whom we have sinned. May our repentance ever be godly and deep.

Prepare us, O Thou "Son of Man" for thy second advent. Fill us even now with thy love. We would experimentally know the sensation of the bride when she exclaims, "I am sick of love!" May love to Thee ever be paramount and constraining in us. May our life be hid with Christ in God. And when He who is our life shall appear, may we also appear with Him in glory.

Holy Father, may we see and feel in the sufferings of our Surety, the odiousness and guilt of our sins. Take them away out of us. May we be made righteous, as Jesus is righteous. May He be made unto us, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. And may the time soon come when, from the rising to the going down of the sun, incense and a pure offering shall be presented unto Thee. May the beatific prediction respecting thy Son be speedily fulfilled, "Men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call him blessed." And unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be the glory for ever. Amen.

IX.

The probably brief adjournment of the Council after finding Jesus guilty of blasphemy.—The meeting at night probably illegal—Hence the necessity of the convention in the morning.—Resolved upon the death of Jesus, then took Him in fetters to Pilot for civil condemnation.—The terrible end of Judas.—The chief priests by implication admit the innocence of Christ in allowing that he had been condemned in consequence of a bribe.—Their punctiliousness.—Pilate's demeanour to Jesus.—His conviction of the perfect innocence of the accused.—His sending Him to Herod.—Herod's dealing with Him.—Pilate's wife.—His vain device of washing his hands to excuse himself while allowing Jesus to be condemned.—The imprecations of the multitude.—Unhappiness of having wicked guides.—Infinite importance of a full surrender of the soul to Christ.

PRAYER.

MOST HOLY AND BLESSED FATHER, how adorable and mysterious art Thou in giving up thine only begotten and well beloved Son to become the substitute of guilty man! He was bound and buffeted on our account. "He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities." How well does it become us to esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of this world.

O most gracious God, may thy life-giving and sanctifying Spirit enable us to yield ourselves in very truth unto Jesus, in all the depth of our affections, and in all the entireness of the whole man. O Thou dying Lamb of God, we feel that "thy love is better than wine." We will therefore say: "Draw us, we will run after Thee." Blessed Jesus, may we always be delighted to bear thy burden and to wear thy yoke. Verily thy yoke is easy, and thy burden light to us labouring and heavy-laden sinners. Enable us to covenant with Thee, that henceforth we will seek "*thy things*," O Christ, and not as if separate from Thee, "our own things." We acknowledge with deep regret that ever since we have

tasted that Thou art good and felt something of thy love, we have been often prone to be confirmed to the "all" who "seek their own things." We beseech Thee to help us, good Lord, so that we may never again, even in appearance, live to ourselves. Pardon all our guilt, and enable us henceforth to live to Thee who didst so love us and give thyself for us.

Induce in us, O God, that spirit of meekness, forbearance, and purity which we behold strikingly characterizing our great Redeemer. Like Him, may we patiently endure the wickedness of men, and cheerfully acquiesce in thy holy will. And while given to prayer may we abound in every good word and work. And O send thy light forth and thy truth so that the people and the kingdoms may be prepared for the second coming of the Lord. May the Spirit of the Lord be poured out upon all flesh. And all the glory shall be thine, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, world without end, Amen.

Mathew 27 : 1-25 :—"When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus, to put him to death : And when they had bound him, they led *him* away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us ? see thou *to that*. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, the field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value. And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus, which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate said unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to *it*. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.

It is possible that there was a brief adjournment of the Sanhedrim between the time when all present had pronounced Jesus to be "guilty of death," as a blasphemer, and that referred to by the sacred historian in the beginning of this chapter. "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death." The number present at the meeting of the Sanhedrim when our Lord was condemned was probably not great. But now, as we may infer from the words before

us, there was a full attendance. Perhaps the interval had been taken advantage of to secure the presence of many who had previously been absent. It must have been very short. We read in connection with Peter's denial of his Master, of the cock crowing; and St. John says:—"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early."*

It is likely that the assembling of the Sanhedrim at night for the purpose of judging, was illegal. Hence the necessity of the convention in the morning. We are informed by Josephus that Annas was in a measure degraded from the priesthood because the Sanhedrim over which he presided, had about a year previous to this period, condemned a person to death and had carried their sentence into effect. This had been severely censured by Pilate after it came to his knowledge. That court did not now possess the power of life and death. Its members however were most determined that Jesus should be condemned to die. And they were in extreme haste lest there should be a reaction on the part of the people, for they feared the popularity of the Nazarene. His blood-thirsty enemies could not therefore rest, until the diabolical tragedy upon which they were resolved, was accomplished.

The Jewish rulers had already pronounced sentence against Jesus. But in order to carry this into effect, they must have recourse to the Roman Governor. With desperate determination they were resolved that their Victim should suffer capital punishment. For this purpose they must allege crimes of a civil nature, as they well knew that the imperial government would take no cognizance of such a charge as blasphemy. All then were now met to settle what weighty and feasible accusations they should specify. Nor do they seem to have deliberated long or differed among themselves as to the plan to be pursued. Accordingly they again fettered the meek and acquiescent Prisoner, as when He was arrested in the garden. "And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor." (V. 2.)

Pilate usually resided at Cæserea, but came up to Jerusalem at the great feasts to administer justice and to watch over Cæsar's interests. The present festival was that of the Passover. And if this heathen ruler shall judge of the revealed and enjoined religion of Israel by the spirit and character of those who were its ministers, and the leaders of the people, can we wonder if he shall be confirmed in his scepticism or aversion to the truth. Alas! how frequently do the disposition and the conduct of those who ought to be the patterns of pure Christianity, occasion offence to the unrighteous and unregenerate, so that their natural dislike to "the truth as it is in Jesus," becomes more deeply rooted than ever! The punctiliousness of the members of the Sanhedrim, hypocritical and murderous as they were, is noted by St. John, who tells us that when they had brought Jesus "unto the hall of judgment, they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, what accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, if he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, take ye him, and judge him according to your law." Their aim and purpose then came out. "The Jews, therefore, said unto him: It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."* St. Luke states:—"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying: We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King."†

It is at this stage of the dire and doleful proceedings that the story of the terrible end of the wretched traitor is introduced by Matthew,—“Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders.”‡ Probably he had waited to see the issue up to the delivery of Jesus by Pilate for crucifixion. He had

* John 18: 28-31. † Luke 23: 1, 2. ‡ Luke 27: 3.

expected that the Divine Saviour would put forth His miraculous power, and free Himself from the hands of His enemies. But when he perceived that they had prevailed against his Master, remorse, that gloomiest of dismal passions, remorse the most poignant, and utter despair, seized his mind. The devil, to whom he had sold himself for the arrest of his Lord, now irresistibly instigated him to suicide. In his wretchedness and unbelief, he concluded that his sin was beyond the range of pardon. Under the influence of the fatal tempter, he determined that the mercy of God could not meet his case, and so rushed on to destruction.

What an attestation to the character of the injured Messiah is that furnished by the apostate apostle! "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." This testimony conscience constrained Judas to bear in favour of his now condemned Master. Assuredly had there been any guilt or crime with which that Master could be justly charged, he was not disposed to conceal or deny it. And his intimacy with the Messiah had afforded him the most ample opportunity for observation and correct knowledge. But it was with him as with "the Prince of this world," concerning whom our Lord said He "cometh but hath nothing in me."*

The reply of the chief priests and elders to the unhappy man's acknowledgement: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," is worthy of the cold-hearted and cruel selfishness which uniformly characterizes such wicked and murderous perpetrators towards their duped instrument after their purpose is served. "And they said, what is that to us? See thou to that."† O how unutterably miserable had this once promising apostle now rendered himself! He confessed his atrocious sin, yet obtained no ease from the acknowledgment, for it was impossible "to renew him again unto repentance." He looked for sympathy and comfort to those in whose service he had acted, but in vain. He made restitution of the gain of iniquity, still all was of no avail. Not a pang of accusing conscience was soothed or

* John 14: 30.

† V. 4.

assuaged by all these efforts. His day of possible salvation was past. His hour of terrific retribution had arrived. "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."* Nor was even this all. For when suspended, the suicidal material had given way, in consequence of which, additional infamy accompanied his torture; "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out."†

In the conference and council of the chief priests, respecting the bribe returned by Judas, they admit, by implication, the innocence of Jesus. They allow that his condemnation had been purchased, not obtained by lawful and proper means. They also evince the punctiliousness of hypocrites in regard to external decorum with the remorselessness of blood-stained villains. They "took the silver pieces, and said: It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood."‡ The purchase of the potter's field is characteristically noticed by Matthew, who is always particular to show the fulfilment of Scripture. The quotation though purporting to be from Jeremiah is found in Zechariah 11, 12: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value."|| The reason why Jeremiah's name is introduced is, it is thought, because his writings stand first in the "Book of the Prophets," one of the three grand divisions into which the old Testament was parcelled out, the other two being "the Book of the Law" and the "Book of Psalms."

We have a minute account of the demeanour of Pilate towards Jesus by the beloved disciple. Though in general, eminently doctrinal, and but very limitedly historical, he is yet the most circumstantial of all the evangelists in his account of the arrest, trial, sufferings, and crucifixion of his loved Lord. The Sanhedrim led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas through the street of Jerusalem unto the Pretorium,

* V. 5.

† Acts. 1: 18.

‡ V. 6.

|| V. 9.

the common hall or "Hall of Judgment," where the Governor waited to receive them. After mentioning that "it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover," he narrates, "Pilate then went forth unto them, and said: What accusation bring ye against this man?"* When in reply they clamorously intimated that the very fact of their bringing the prisoner to him, was an evidence of his felonious criminality, the Governor answered in a manner that savours of contempt: "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." Their rejoinder intimated their deeply settled desire, and also their inability to effect their purpose without the concurrence of the Roman government, to which they were now subject and tributary. They insinuated that they had already judged him according to their law, and only wanted Pilate's confirmatory sentence. "The Jews, therefore, said unto him, it is not lawful for us to put any man to death." One important end to be served by Christ's being condemned by an imperial tribunal, was that his predictions as to his being "lifted up," and "crucified" might be verified, whereas had he suffered death simply as a blasphemer sentenced by the Sanhedrim, He would have been stoned.† This, however, could not be—"That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die."‡

In reference to the charge that the prisoner asserted regal claims, John says: Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews?" There is every reason to believe that the governor knew many things respecting the Nazarene, and in all probability that He was wont to affirm His kingly dignity. But the Roman ruler had never seen reason to take any particular notice or feel any lively interest in such assertions. Now, however, when the title was forced upon

* John 18 : 29.

† See Matthew 20 : 17-19 ; John 3 : 14, 15 ; 12 : 32, 33.

‡ John 18 : 31, 32.

his notice in his judicial and public capacity, as a ground of capital charge against Jesus, he was obliged to make some investigation. Our Lord was aware that His avowal that He was a king, might be construed, and that His enemies sought that it should be, into an act of treason against the emperor. He, therefore, enquired of Pilate whether he was seeking satisfaction to his own mind, enquiring candidly as a just judge, or whether he was only going upon the calumnious and false allegations of His persecutors. He farther reminded him that no evidence against Him had been adduced.—“Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” In the reply of the official, we discover little else than a contemptuous aversion both to the Jewish nation and the business in hand. “Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?” How admirably, how conciliating, how instructive is the answer of the king of Zion! How satisfying should the explanation then furnished have been felt to be by him to whom it was primarily tendered! “Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.” Though little understanding the full force and meaning of this representation, the Governor perceived that Jesus implied most clearly His sovereignty. “Pilate, therefore, said unto him: Art thou a king then?” He was surprised that in present circumstances this mysterious person should clearly admit his royalty.

We are informed by Luke that “Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews. And he answered him, and said: Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.”* John enters more into details. From him we learn that after Pilate’s expressing astonishment to find Him adhering to his professed kingship, “Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am

* Luke 23: 3, 4.

a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, what is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.”*

Nothing is clearer than that the Governor became, from personal examination, properly satisfied as to the futility of the charge brought against Christ as grounded upon His professing to be a king. He was confident that the alleged crime and danger were alike a nullity. The King of Israel had explained to him that while He undoubtedly was a King, the nature of His kingdom was such that it sought not to interfere with the governments of this world, to raise up factions or stimulate rebellion. It is not always requisite to understand fully divine truth, in order to be impressed with it. But in the present instance Pilate understood the case so far as to see that the accusation was not only untenable, but a base and jealous fabrication. “For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.”† There is little doubt that he esteemed Jesus a fanatic in religion, but entirely innocent in a civil point of view. What a mixture of disdain and incredulity are comprised in the query contemptuously retorted,—“What is truth?” The question which, for ages and centuries, philosophy had entertained, discussed, and controverted,—the query “what is truth?” to be settled, and all its doubts dispelled and difficulties solved by a Jew, whom his countrymen and co-religionists were striving to put to death! All this appeared to the haughty and sceptical heathen highly absurd and ridiculous. Christ crucified was to him foolishness. Alas, for such a spirit! The scoffing Roman now knows, and all unbelievers shall one day feel, that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Whosoever believeth not shall be condemned before a Judge at once final, supreme and righteous. Pilate at His tribunal will remember his injustice and rejection of truth and holiness,

* John 18 : 37, 38.

† Mat. 27 : 18.

when that Incarnate God, as the suffering and dying Saviour stood before him. The Governor will then mourn, but mourn too late. How terrific will be our condemnation if we reject the only Redeemer of sinners by neglecting His great salvation!

After Pilate had declared "to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man, they were the more fierce, saying: He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who, himself, also was at Jerusalem at that time."* Wishing, if possible, to free himself of this troublesome business, the Governor seized with avidity the information that Jesus came under the cognizance of the tetrarchy of Galilee, where Herod ruled with the powers of a king. He, therefore, at once sought to hand over the accused to Herod, as belonging to his province. Probably Herod was in Jerusalem on account of the Passover. He was an Idumean proselyte. In the frame of mind in which he happened to be, the civility of Pilate quickly pleased him. This seems to have led to the restoration of friendship between these two individuals. They had, for some time previously, been at enmity with each other.

Herod had taken a considerable interest in the reports which he had heard of Jesus and His miracles. He is believed to have been a Sadducee. He was rejoiced at the opportunity of meeting with this wonderful personage, and especially was his curiosity excited to witness some of His miraculous powers. So writes St. Luke:—"And, when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him."† This was the humour and bent of that official. And with such views he entered upon an examination of Christ, interrogating Him keenly. But He, who is

* Luke 23 : 4-7.

† Luke 23 : 8.

the "wisdom" of God, would not gratify the wishes of this bad man, either by an uncalled for manifestation of His Divine ability, or by replying either to Herod's queries or the false charges vehemently urged against Him by the chief priests and scribes. He "answered nothing." He had never declined or refused the application for relief of the humbled child of sorrow, but it was proper that the wicked ruler who had put the Baptist to death, should not have his godless presumption gratified. The result was that Herod, who was a worse man than Pilate, insulted and derided "the King of the Jews." In mockery of his claims to royal dignity, Herod having supplied some of his own regal robes, "with his men of war set him at nought," and gorgeously arrayed Him. Having done so much, he then sent back Jesus to Pilate. Thus the Scripture was fulfilled: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take council together, against the Lord, and against His anointed."* How appropriately do the words of the prophetic Psalmist here apply to all their machinations and hostility: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."†

The meekness of Jesus forcibly struck the Governor. "When he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him: Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him never a word; insomuch that the Governor marvelled greatly."‡ He had manifested a contemptuous scepticism in reference to the declaration of our Lord: "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." He had sneeringly asked: "What is truth?" Yet the sacred historian significantly adds: "And when he had said this he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them: I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye, therefore, that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they

* Psalm 2: 1, 2.

† V. 4.

‡ Matthew 27: 12-14.

all again, saying: Not this man, but Barabbas. Now, Barabbas was a robber."* The Governor hoped that his wonted grace of releasing whatever prisoner the people desired, might induce them to gratify his anxiety on the present occasion to release Jesus. But he was entirely disappointed. All his influence, and all his efforts after popularity, failed to persuade the representatives of the Jewish nation to accept the holy Saviour. On the contrary, they unanimously agreed to prefer the noted criminal named by Pilate. His object in sending Jesus to Herod had also been defeated. For that tetrarch had sent Him back to Pilate. It seems that the Governor's civility in sending the case to him had greatly pleased Herod. Owing, probably, to injury or jealousy on one or both sides, those imperial functionaries had for some time previously been "at enmity between themselves." This might easily, and often, occur from conflicting interest and the sway of the angry passions of selfish and unprincipled men. But for the present this apparently conciliatory and respectful bearing of the pro-consul to the king, had led to a reconciliation.

On the return of Christ from Herod, Pilate again summoned together "the chief priests, and the rulers, and the people," and again made repeated efforts to save the prisoner. Having gone out into the judgment-hall, he said to them: "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof you accuse him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and lo! nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will, therefore chastise him and release him."†

It was at this time the incident narrated by Matthew‡ occurred to the Governor. "When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him?" Here we have

* John 18: 38-40.

† Luke 23: 14-16.

‡ Matt. 27: 19.

brought before us the only individual whose spirit and conduct tend to relieve the fiendish and vile hypocrisy, corruption, and brutality that prevail throughout our Lord's trial. Little as is here related of this amiable woman, and we know nothing more of her, the endeavour she made to prevent her husband's being accessory to the death of Jesus, has been recorded to her honour in the holy Scripture. And who of us can tell that she did not then or subsequently experience the saving power of sovereign grace? In the abounding power of that God who maketh to differ, whose Spirit certainly changed and quickened to life eternal the dying thief who was crucified with Jesus, and who probably drew to the Son of Man, when lifted up on the cross, the attendant Centurion, this distinguished Roman lady may have been made a partaker of the benefits of the life and death of the Son of God. Who can say that we have not indicated here, the beginning of discipleship to Jesus of Nazareth in the soul of the excellent wife of a wicked man? In the lowest depth of His humiliation, constraining love called forth into public avowal of attachment and devotion to the crucified Nazarene, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus—both honourable men in their worldly rank, previously only secret disciples. And we hope that the kind petitioner of our text will be found at last to have been at once a trophy of the dying Saviour's power and love, and one of the bright and beautiful group of heathen converts who, from among the Gentiles, became spiritual Israelites and true believers in Israel's suffering Messiah.

Romans, Greeks, and Jews agreed in attaching importance to dreams. And, doubtless, the Lord can, when he pleases, impart the most salutary impressions by this mode of communicating with the human spirit. "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumbering upon the bed."*

Pilate's wife dreaded that if her husband concurred in

* Job 33: 14, 15.

putting Jesus to death, he would entail upon himself and his family the curse of a holy God. She was, therefore, most anxious that he should have nothing to do with "that just man." This message, probably increased the anxiety of Pilate to release the prisoner. He enquired of the populace whether Barabbas or Christ should be released upon this occasion. He hoped that they would acquiesce in his ardent wishes. "But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus."* We have a succinct account, by Luke, of the repeated efforts made by the Governor to effect the liberation of the injured Messiah. After the intimation of the popular voice in favour of Barabbas, "Pilate, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them. But they cried, saying, crucify him, crucify him." To this tumultuous, insane demand the Governor rejoined: "And he said unto them the third time, why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go." Like all unprincipled concession to wicked clamour, Pilate's chastisement and scourging of one whom he pronounced to have done no evil, failed to satisfy the insatiable appetite of an infuriate rabble, led by the most wicked and designing of hypocrites. Hence we read: "and they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed."*

We read that "when Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it."† An empty device to quiet and exculpate conscience! Had the Governor been merely one of a company or council, whose majority could settle the decision, there would have been meaning and apt significancy in the ceremony. In that case it had formed an impressive protest against iniquity. But when we remember that, to use his own words, he had, in a measure, absolute "power to crucify Jesus, and power

* Luke 23: 23.

† V. 24.

to release him," his washing was a vain attempt to pacify an internal accuser, and to compromise his evident obligations. Every righteous human judge will pronounce him guilty. And guilty will be his sentence when the Supreme Judge, who once stood before him as a prisoner, shall pronounce his just award at that tribunal from which there is no appeal, which is final in its nature, and eternal in its consequences.

How sad and how terrific was the imprecation of the multitude in reply to the denunciation of Pilate! "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." The prayer has, indeed, been answered. How else can we read history than as a demonstration that the nation have been suffering on this account ever since? We perceive the scattering of the people among all nations, in their having for (more than) eighteen centuries been "an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word," that this dread curse has, verily, been upon them. Ingenuity may seek to evade the conclusion, or controversy call it in question, but the fact is unanswerable and the solution impossible upon any other ground than that which the text supplies. How earnestly should we supplicate the advent of that beatific day, when the gracious promise shall be fully implemented! "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* first-born."*

How most unhappy is the condition of a people when their guides in religion are such as the trial of our Lord presents! We here behold in combined operation cool villainy, the vilest hypocrisy, and an impiety that hesitates not to shed blood under the pretence of zeal for God, but in truth to gratify its own fiendish hatred for goodness. Punctilious in its regard to formality and ceremony, we see here a most perfect specimen of the utter disregard which such characters ever shew of "judgment, mercy, and faith." Alas,

* Zechariah 12 : 10.

for the commonwealth, who have such instructors and examples, in the most solemn and mighty of all business. Alas, when the prophet's words are strictly applicable,—“and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?”*

The history of the apostate apostle furnishes not only a most impressive warning to guard against hypocrisy, but farther to beware of healing our wound slightly. There is little doubt that Judas appeared once a promising learner, and was, in reality, “not far from the kingdom of heaven.” But he never yielded himself fully and truly to Jesus. He vainly strove to be Christ's, and at the same time a worldling. From such a fatal error be it our prayer: “Good Lord deliver us.” Individually let us supplicate: “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” This is the blessed experience of each one who is wholly and only Christ's. In simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God let us have our conversation in this world.

PRAYER.

Most blessed Redeemer, enable us cordially and with the whole soul to respond to thy call, “Follow me.” By thy atoning death, may all our sins be pardoned. By the renovation which thy Spirit effects in the inner man when the sinner appropriates Thee, may we die unto sin. By thy intercession, Thou ever living High Priest, may we not only be pardoned and justified, but entirely sanctified.

We adore and give glory to the God of sovereign mercy, that the efficacy of the blood of Christ to take away sin, and of His Spirit to quicken and sanctify, were seen even amidst the shame and suffering of our Saviour's deepest humiliation. Risen Redeemer, add vastly to the number of those who shall not be ashamed of Thee, and the glory shall be ascribed to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

* Jeremiah 5: 31.

X.

Pilate's acquaintance with the history of our Lord.—With a view to save the life of the prisoner, he proposed and administered corporal scourging.—In response to the brutal cry of "crucify him," Jesus was handed over to the soldiery.—The cohort present uncommonly ruthless, and they exhausted their cruelty upon the sufferer.—Pilate's five or seven efforts to have the life of Jesus spared.—His finally acceding to the wishes of Christ's enemies.—This was done on the day of "the preparation of the Passover."—Execution immediately after condemnation.—Golgotha.—The death of the cross.—Simon of Cyrene.—No female among the persecutors and murderers of Christ.—The address of Jesus to the kind "daughters of Jerusalem."—He declined to drink the benevolent potion offered him.—How much had been crowded into a few hours.—The prayer of Jesus for his enemies.—Pilate's inscription on the top of the cross.—The division of the raiment of Jesus.—The spectators of the tragedy and their demeanour.—The supernatural darkness, and the end it served.—Forsaken of God.—The peace that possessed Messiah's soul ere he died.

PRAYER.

MOST BLESSED GOD AND FATHER, give us grace at this time with one heart and one mind, to worship Thee with that true devotion which Thou wilt ever accept. May the Spirit of our Divine Master be imparted to us. And in waiting upon Thee may our souls be deeply humbled. What self-loathing should we experience,—what hatred of our own sinful conduct, when we appear in the presence of Him who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence! We would sorrow "after a godly sort" before Thee. May this state of the soul, in active operation, produce a proper cleansing of ourselves. With indignation and fear may we abhor that which is evil. With vehement desire may we cleave to that which is good, ever prosecuting it zealously. Crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts of the carnal nature, enable us to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

We feel grateful to Thee our God that we are permitted to contemplate the love of our Redeemer so steadfast, so profound,

so effectual to save. May we be rightly and deeply affected as the circumstances of this atoning death pass before our minds.

O may we be drawn to Jesus in closer, holier, tenderer affection. May we imbibe deeply of His sacred spirit. May submission and love to God be henceforth more really our characteristics. May the example of our dying Saviour amidst sufferings unparalleled, induce in us meekness, faith and patience. May we indeed learn Christian benevolence. May love to human souls be deepened in us. When reviled may we never revile in return, but seek to overcome evil with good. May we too be crucified with Christ. May we live, yet not we, but may Christ live in us. May we never again be conformed to the world, but may we be transformed in the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of thine.

Grant us largely, holy Father, of the presence and gracious influences of Thy Spirit, as we are now to be engaged for the sake of thy beloved Son. Amen.

Matthew 27 : 26-49 :—“ Then released he Barabbas unto them, and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of *soldiers*. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand : and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying Hail, King of the Jews. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify *him*. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name : him they compelled to bear his cross. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall : and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink. And

they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots ; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there ; And set up over his head his accusation written, **THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS**. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God ; let him deliver him now, if he will have him : for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, **ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI ?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, this man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.”

It is highly probable that Pilate was sufficiently acquainted with the history of our Lord to be aware of the popularity which He had hitherto enjoyed. The influence of His beneficent miracles, of His character, and of His teaching with the people at large, had tended very much to call forth the enmity and murderous purposes of the Sanhedrim against Him. Pilate “ knew that for envy they had delivered him” into the hands of the imperial government. Hoping that an appeal to the multitude in favour of Jesus would be successful, the Governor had had recourse to it. “ But when the question was put to them, the people, worked upon by their own

disappointed expectations, and by the urgencies of the Sanhedrists, clamorously gave their voices for a robber and murderer, rather than for one who had so often healed their diseases—to whose words of warning, hope, and peace, they had so often listened, and before whom their triumphant hosannas were so lately shouted.”*

Still however Pilate would not despair of saving the life of “that just person.” He proceeded therefore to expostulate alike with the instigators and their constituency. With the view of at least *saving the life* of the accused, he proposed inflicting such a degree of punishment as might satisfy them. When he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, he said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people : and behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him : No, nor yet Herod : for I sent you to him, and lo ! nothing worthy of death is done unto him ; I will therefore chastise him, and release him.”†

The brutal cry of “crucify him, crucify him” being the only response to the Proconsul’s proposal, Jesus was handed over to the soldiery. The German legion is known to have been then at Jerusalem. The Roman cohort or “band” mentioned probably consisted of some five hundred of this troop. While the soldiers of the empire were, in general, men of cruelty and blood, those now before us appear to have been most wantonly ruthless. We may observe in their whole conduct not only marks of debased vulgarity, but of the greatest inhumanity of character. To the mercies of such men Pilate abandoned for the occasion the innocent Jesus. After the lictors had inflicted the usual scourging they took Him into the Prætorium or palace of the Governor. That no bribery or other possible stimulant would be spared by the Jews to urge on these bloody men in their outrage, we may be perfectly certain. Having stripped the prisoner, they, in derision of His kingly claims, and following up the hint of

* Dr. Kitto.

† Luke 23 : 13-15.

Herod, invested Him with robes of mock-royal majesty. Having woven a crown of thorns or brambles, they placed it on His head, and put a reed in His right hand : “ and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews ! They affected to greet Him with the mode of salutation offered to the great and princely, to nobles and kings of the earth. “ And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.” The crown of thorns would lacerate the temple of Jesus. But besides, these uncommonly cruel men, seizing the reed from His hand, smote with it the crown, driving the spikes into His brows. Even the bad usually relent and evince sorrow when a condemned person is suffering the last penalty of the law. It was otherwise here. They spat upon Him!—a mark of supreme contempt then as now. Probably the homage which they in mockery offered, expressed more than a similar act of respect implies to a European sovereign at present. They may have intended to deride His profession of being the Son of God and the King of Israel !

After having allowed Jesus to suffer all this contumely and pain, Pilate again brought Him out to His accusers declaring, “ Behold I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man !”* But this appeal of the Governor, like every preceding one, to the maddened enemies of Christ was in vain. They only the more determinedly, with their rage burning the fiercer, again iterated their demand that He should be crucified. Pilate now saw that they were resolved to obtain by clamour and tumult what justice could not grant. He therefore, irritated by their demoniacal perseverance, said—“ Take ye him, and crucify him : for I find no fault in him.”† In reply the multitude alleged the crime of blasphemy, upon which charge the Sanhedrim had condemned Jesus. They stated, “ We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself

* John 19 : 4, 5.

† Idem 19, 6.

the Son of God. "This information had a different effect from that which was intended. The conscience and the fears of the Roman Governor were awakened. He knew not how much truth there might be in the assertion of Jesus, whose influence over him he could not help feeling. Even his heathen theology was not adverse to the idea of God being represented in the form of humanity. Accordingly we read, "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, whence art thou?"* But though he sought to question the dying Saviour again, He was not disposed to afford any farther explanation to this unjust judge, who had caused Him to be scourged, and maltreated by most wicked men of war, while avowing his conviction of the innocence of the Sufferer. When however Pilate angrily expressed his power to dispose of Jesus as he pleased by giving Him life and release, or by consigning Him to the most painful and shameful of deaths, the Divine Redeemer in a solemn yet compassionating manner, as if pitying the terrible struggle of the Governor's soul, and for which he was unequal, intimated that in reality he was after all, not the party, on whom the larger amount of guilt must lie. "Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."† So far is Pilate from being displeased with the intimation that he is completely controlled by God, and cannot go beyond His permission and sovereign pleasure, he became more awed, serious, and anxious that Jesus should be delivered.—"And from thenceforth," says the beloved John, "Pilate sought to release him." There was a powerful impression on his mind, altogether extraordinary. He however had yielded too much already. Had he from the beginning adhered to right principle and followed the dictates of conscience, his course had been comparatively easy and clear. But the popularity which he sought, and the dread of the Emperor, before whom he feared he would be cited, if he refused the Jews, overcame all his scruples.

* John 19 : 8, 9.

† John 19 : 11.

It is estimated that Pilate made five if not seven attempts to save the life of our Lord. But though this had been sufficiently praiseworthy, had he been only an advocate or one of a number of judges, it fails essentially to come up to that standard of rectitude and obligation which his own intelligence as well as the law of his country told him he ought to have met. What seems to have decided him against making any farther efforts in favour of Jesus, we learn from the apostle, "The Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha."*

Thus did the Roman Governor at length accede to the wishes of the diabolical enemies of Christ. He ascended the place for giving sentence which is said to have consisted of "a tessellated pavement formed of small pieces of marble and coloured stones." Though the architecture was Roman, it was known to the Hebrew people by the designation of Gabbatha—an elevated place. Having formally condemned Jesus to death, Pilate, with bitter and contemptuous scorn, said to the Jews: "Behold your King!" They however repelled the declaration, crying out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, shall I crucify your King?" This drew forth what the Governor esteemed a very important admission. "The chief priest answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified."†

The apostle remarks in connection with the perpetration of this most atrocious criminality,—“And it was the preparation of the Passover,”—a season when especially piety, humbleness of mind, brotherly-kindness, and every good feeling should have been predominant. Alas! the leaders and members of the Jewish Church are an illustration of the words of Him whose teaching astonished all His auditory, not

* John 19 : 12, 13.

† John 19 : 15, 16.

only by reason of its power, but its contrast to that of the scribes,—“ If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness ! ”

Both among Jews and Romans execution took place immediately after condemnation. Jesus had been already scourged according to the cruel severity of the Roman method, which was much more terrible than that practised among the Jews. Neither that punishment nor crucifixion was ever inflicted legally upon a Roman citizen. They were confined to slaves and strangers. The latter was the most ignominious form of capital punishment applied by that iron race. Their “ scourge was formed of thongs twisted together, and in order to increase the severity of the lash, small pieces of iron were sometimes woven into it ; and the strokes were so severe as to tear and lacerate the flesh.”*

To the cohort of Roman soldiers commanded by a centurion, the final penalty of man’s infliction was entrusted. The narrative informs us that “ after they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to (according to the requirement of both Jewish and Roman law) crucify him.”† The place of execution was always outside of the walls of towns. Golgotha was that used for condemned criminals of Jerusalem. The name may have been derived from the skulls found there as remnants of the interred, or which is more probable from the similarity of the hill to the form of the human skull. It was fitting that Jesus in giving His life as a ransom for sinners should suffer “ without the gate.”‡ The locality shown as the spot, also the place of sepulture, are within where the walls were. Hence they are obviously fictitious.

“ The cross consisted of a strong upright post, sharpened at the lower end, by which it was planted in the ground, having a short bar or stake projecting from its middle, and a larger transverse beam firmly jointed near its top. In short, it was much as usually represented, but not generally so high : In all representations the middle bar is omitted : This

* Dr. Kitto.

† V. 31.

‡ Hebrews 13 : 12.

is a serious difference, as much of the weight of the crucified person rested on this bar, on which he in some sort *sat* ; whereas, without this, the whole weight of the body would have been suspended from the spikes driven through the hands and feet. This seat, if we may so call it, rendered the death less torturing, but more lingering, and helps to account for the length of time the crucified, under ordinary conditions, remained alive upon the cross.”*

One part of the punishment of the condemned was, the carrying of the cross. But though Golgotha was not far distant from Jerusalem, our Lord, overcome by the recent suffering to which He had been subjected, was unable to carry His cross. He seems to have become so faint under the burden, that his enemies feared He would die, ere they could have the horrid gratification of seeing Him suspended on the accursed tree. In this emergency the soldiers seized an individual coming in from the country, Simon of Cyrene, in Africa, and “him they compelled to bear his cross.” Very probably his object was, in visiting Jerusalem, to attend the Passover ; and his appearance as a stranger occasioned his being coerced to perform a task which may have been thought too degrading for a native Jew. It is impossible to say whether he was then a disciple of Christ. Most likely he was not. But that he afterward became so appears evident. Mark designates him “the father of Alexander and Rufus,” persons clearly known as disciples. We may confidently conclude that alike the parent and the children complied with the terms of discipleship, denied self, took up the cross, and followed Jesus.

It has been observed that no female appears, prominently at least, among the persecutors and murderers of Christ. And it has sometimes been supposed that the whole sex of the race of Israel has ever since been distinguished for beauty. It is quite possible that He who rules in Providence, may have in this way marked His approbation of the kindness and abstinence manifested towards Him in the day of His humiliation and sorrow by the Jewess. It is certainly worthy of remark that

* Kitto.

amongst the dense crowd that followed Messiah to the scene of His last suffering, we not only witness a proportion of females who failed not to express their sympathy and commiseration, we see also the well-nigh exhausted Redeemer, in the very midst of His weakness and sorrow, paying especial attention to them, and honouring them with an address both solemn and salutary. Without noticing particularly the "great company of people" who accompanied the said procession, Jesus turned to the women who "bewailed and lamented Him," and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."* Surely a proper attention to these incidents is well fitted to suggest profitable reflections upon woman's true position, obligations, honour and excellence.

Immediately after this our Lord was at Calvary (the Latin word for Golgotha)—the place of execution. It was usual to give those who were about to suffer the lingering and most painful death of the cross, a cup of wine so medicated, as to benumb the feeling. This formed an approximation to the use of chloroform in the present day. There were not wanting kind friends who offered the suffering Saviour the benevolent potion. Mark says: "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not." He declined the alleviation that he might not be stupefied, but have a perfectly clear consciousness of all things, and endure in all its bitterness the punishment due to transgression. There were those however who, actuated by a base and fiendish hatred and cruelty, "gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall." This may have been intended by the perpetrators as a derisive insult and a contemptuous mockery of the condemned King of Israel. Yet did the calm and meek Sufferer acquiesce in even this part of the allotted penalty. He tasted it. But "when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink."† The prescience of the Spirit of inspiration was thus honoured. Many ages before David had prophetically written,—“They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave

* Luke 23 : 28.

† Matt. 27 : 34.

me vinegar for my drink.”* The prediction and meaning of the Psalmist were implemented, and illustrated.”*

All was now ready for the last infliction of the law : “ And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.”† How terrifically energetic had the rulers and people been since the previous night when Jesus had been arrested ! A double trial, repeated meetings of the Sanhedrim, Herod’s acquittal, Pilate’s attempt to save Jesus, the horrid barbarity of the soldiery, and numerous other circumstances, had all been crowded into that brief space. It was only nine in the morning when the Saviour was crucified. What indecent haste and outrageous determination must have been manifested ! Our blessed High Priest and Sacrifice was now speedily nailed to the cross, either before or after its erection. In either case, he was made to sit upon the middle bar, and his limbs having been extended and bound with cords, were finally secured with large iron spikes driven through their extremities, the hands to the transverse beam, and the feet to the upright post. The feet were usually nailed separately, but sometimes one long spike was driven through both feet. The pain was, of course, dreadful ; but the wounds were not in themselves dangerous, nor was there much loss of blood—no important artery being severed. It was at this agonizing moment that our Lord prayed, “ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.” Thus did He make “ intercession for the transgressors,” as had been foretold of Him ; and afforded a grand example of magnanimity to all his followers who might suffer for righteousness sake.‡ Nor was the prayer of the crucified Redeemer unanswered either in respect of the soldiery, who eminently “ knew not what they did,” or of many others who were more guilty in that awful transaction.

In accordance with the custom applied to crucified persons, Pilate prepared and caused to be placed at the top of the cross, an inscription indicating the offence of the con-

* Psalm 69 : 21.

† Mark 15 : 25.

‡ Kitto.

demned Jesus. He "set over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS." The Turks follow this practice in their analogous punishment of impalement. The title applied by the Roman Governor was far from being agreeable to the chief priests. Very probably it was not intended to be. Whatever motives predominated at the moment in Pilate's mind, he certainly had no wish to gratify the Jews or their leaders any farther. His mind would now be full of chagrin and revenge toward them. Hence his curt and splenetic reply to their request that the superscription might be changed,—“What I have written I have written.” This writing was in the Chaldo-Syriac or vernacular “Hebrew” of Judea, in Latin, the language of the Romans, and in Greek, the language of literature and of many parts of the Roman Empire. This tended to give the greater publicity to the crucifixion. Multitudes of strangers then in Jerusalem would read it. What a preparation do we even in this perceive for the believing of multitudes in the Nazarene when he was shortly afterwards preached as the crucified and risen Messiah. Thus did God “take the wise in their own craftiness,” and thus did most ungodly man, though he meant not so, neither did his heart think so, contribute effectually to the furtherance of that glorious gospel of salvation which he sought to crush, and to which he is most hostile. In the whole of the enactments of our Lord's last sufferings we behold, in a most remarkable manner, the Divine control and guidance, perspicuously manifested. While in the language of the apostle, the men of Israel took Jesus, and by wicked hands crucified and slew Him, He was yet “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.”*

We infer from John's account that there were *four* soldiers more particularly engaged in the dreadful business of crucifying the incarnate Son of God. After He was suspended upon the accursed tree, these grovelling and brutalized men set about the division of His humble garments. They had no

* Acts 2 : 22.

difficulty in an equal division with any of the articles save with the outer garment, or coat, which was "without seam, woven from the top throughout." Some of those good women who ministered unto Jesus had, it is likely, prepared this curious and valuable portion of His clothing. Though vile men stripped Him of that which the least regard for propriety would have induced them not to covet, though they sought to put Him to shame by leaving Him to die naked, yet they were but the unhappy instruments by which He was enabled to bear one shame and endure the curse due to our guilt. They were also made to fulfil the prophetic anticipation of this minute particular, in connection with the dress of our Saviour. They said among themselves, "Let us not rent it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be : that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things, therefore, the soldiers did."* Much that is far from profitable, true, or rational has been written and said respecting the seamless coat of Christ. Man's fancy has come in to supply the silence of God's word. Doubtless the entireness of the coat may well remind us of the actual unity of the whole Church and children of God. And we ought to be tenderly and conscientiously alive to the apostle's entreaty, walking worthy of our christian vocation, "with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."†

While the Saviour was on the cross, a spectacle of woe, the sacred writers inform us of the demeanour of the witnesses. Well may we iterate the sentiment—"Alas for human nature ! all the sympathy which that spectacle was calculated to excite was confined to his mother, whose heart the long-predicted sword had at length pierced ; to one beloved disciple, who alone ventured to be present there ; to a few women from Galilee, who had to the last been faithful and true ; and to one of the robbers who hung in torture by his

* John 19 : 24.

† Ephesians 4 ; 3.

side.”* How beautifully touching! how incomparably affecting is the scene as drawn by John, “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”† But beyond this little, most endeared circle, oh how sad and grievous is the spectacle we behold! Yes, “all the evil passions which haunt man’s nature, seemed roused to make bitter the last hours of the Redeemer. The soldiery mocked Him, the wayfarers derided him; one of the robbers upbraided him; and even chief priests, scribes, and pharisees, members of the supreme court of justice, losing every feeling of humanity, and all respect for the dignity of their rank and character, treated Him with extreme cruelty. Unmoved, however, by the taunts and insults which were cast upon Him, or by the suffering He endured, no complaints, or murmurings, or upbraidings, were heard from Him. His thought was still all for others, not for Himself. And He still, while thus hanging in torture between earth and heaven, found scope for the exercise of His benevolence, bestowing hope and charity on one of the malefactors who hung by his side; and with filial affection recommending his beloved mother to the care of his beloved disciple.”‡

“Behold the man,” said the Roman Governor, whose conscience and judgment plead for Jesus. “Behold the man!” each of us should exclaim with application to ourselves individually. “He is the Lamb of God,—the propitiation of our sins.” He is “Jesus Christ the righteous.” He is an Advocate with the Father omnipotent, ever mindful, never failing. Are we guilty? He pleads His own meekness, humility, purity, love and submission, especially amidst the ribaldry and reproach that were directed against Him in

* Kitto.

† John 19: 25, 27.

‡ Kitto.

His dying hours. What affection to the souls of men and regard to the honour of His Father do we even then behold! O let us be animated by His Spirit and strive to imitate His perfect example! There is danger of unbelief and perishing, though Christ be set forth crucified in the midst of us. What an epitome of mankind do we behold in the malefactors who were crucified with our Saviour! Though one became a most marvellous instance of a sinner saved as by fire, and a most emphatic attestation of the power and grace of Jesus to save even when in his own utmost extremity of anguish and weakness, the other reviled Him and died in impiety. And what else is the world of mankind and professing Christians doing still, but the one part crying unto the Lord and being mercifully accepted and blessed, while the other part is slighting the only Saviour, and neglecting His great salvation? Or if we would have another miniature representation of the children of man in their bearing towards Christ, we have it in the spirit and demeanour of the passers-by, in the people and the rulers of Israel on the one hand, and on the other in the little minority of good women, together with the disciple whom Jesus loved. The one party jeeringly and falsely professing their readiness to believe, if Christ would descend from the cross. The other hoping almost against hope, and strong in the love that constrained them and knit them indissolubly to the Redeemer. Viewed from the vantage-ground of this distant day, how unanimous is even man's decision as to which of the two acted the better part. But in order not to miss the benefit of the contrast, we must examine ourselves, and ascertain whether our essential character correspond with that of the friends or that of the enemies of the Messiah. If with that of the former, we shall often have occasion to prove it, by our not being ashamed of the cross of Christ, and by our risking any thing or every thing for His sake. "Behold the man!" He is Immanuel,—God with us. Ever let us worship Him as our King, obey Him as our Master, honour Him as our Lord, and love Him in His deity and humanity, in His cause upon earth, and in His followers who bear His image.

How grand and awe-inspiring is that supernatural darkness which overspread the land from the sixth to the ninth hour! Doubtless this was intended significantly to indicate the unparalleled criminality which had just been consummated. The sun, as if ashamed of man's horrible atrocity, withdrew his light from the country or the world where its perpetrators dwelt. But more than all this was intended. The three hours' darkness was sent in order to allow the Substitute of sinners to experience, unseen by mortal eye, the agony more terrific than that of the garden which yet remained to be borne by Him. He was making reconciliation for iniquity. All God's billows were passing over Him. A horror overspread His soul amidst the great darkness. This horror we cannot imagine, which the innocent victim must now have suffered in the place of the guilty. O who can depict the excruciating woe of a lost soul, ruined by sin and filled with the wrath of God! But this, and more than this, must the atoning Lamb of God have felt, ere he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Forsaken of God! Who can conceive the utter wretchedness of it! To be separated from Him who is the Fountain of life and all felicity! Yet this was realized, temporarily, by the Son of His love, when the Eternal Father was pleased to bruise Him and put Him to grief, as the atoning Sacrifice for the sins of a ransomed world. As we would escape from its everlasting infliction, let us now seek oneness with the crucified Saviour. For if God could not, in justice, spare sinners, His own most dear Son, when He found Him in the sinner's room, verily, He will not allow any hardened, impenitent, or dishonest transgressor to escape. And, oh! how certain is the ruin of those who, though warned and pressingly entreated to flee from the wrath to come, yet delay and reject the overtures of a free salvation so dearly purchased! Be it our happiness in the day of our visitation to know the things that belong to our peace. Therefore, let us be wholly and increasingly Christ's, obtaining Divine life from His death, and growing up in all things to Him who is our living Head.

Not to dwell on the character of the atrocious enemies of Christ, as seen in His seizure, trial, condemnation, and last sufferings, some of whom may have been saved by His death and made partakers of life eternal, it is of great consequence to mark the sin of the Roman Governor and its consequences. While the purposes of the Most High were being fulfilled by him, and while he was far less criminal than were the Jews, his name comes down to us as that of an unjust and wicked man. We can often sympathize with him as he gives expression to his feelings and convictions, during the trial of Jesus. But his essential error consisted in his not acting upon the light that was shining around him, and when the truth which his conscience told him ought to guide him. How poor, short-sighted and wretched is human policy, as opposed to God's revealed will! Pilate feared man and dreaded crimination before Cæsar. Under the influence of carnal and godless motives, he passed over the fear of his Maker, and sought personal safety in selfish aims. But how mistaken was he in his calculations! He lost the favour of the Emperor, was degraded, and, it is said, died a suicide's death. He appears before all succeeding generations as a time-serving, unrighteous Ruler, guilty of public wrong of the most heinous degree, and of sinning against his private sense of right. Hence his memorial is that of an enemy of Christ. If we would avoid the criminality and dishonour that attach to his conduct, we must not consult with supposed worldly interest, nor follow a multitude to do evil, but in simplicity with godly decidedness, pursue the path of integrity and heavenly wisdom.

When in the depths of His wretchedness as the atoning Sacrifice for our sins, our adorable Ransomer exclaimed: "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani.*" There were some who supposed that he was invoking the aid of the prophet. The dialect or the language was mistaken. And this occasioned a farther display of man's malignity. But the appeal to His Father and His God was successful. Immediately after, all His sufferings were forever terminated. And joy most exquisite, with perfect satisfaction and peace, took possession

of Messiah's spirit even before His dismissal of it. His faithful disciple and most devoted friend writes,—“Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”* St. Luke is very specific. He says: “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, “Father, unto thy hand I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”† Thus did the “good shepherd,” “who giveth his life for the sheep,” afford most impressive attestation of what He had Himself formerly spoken. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I laid down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”‡ So soon, then, as the beloved Son had fulfilled all scripture and finished His work, He cried aloud, commended His holy, human soul unto His Father, and dismissed His spirit.

PRAAYER.

O GOD, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would ever give Thee praise for all Thy blessings, so most especially for Him who is Thine unspeakable Gift to our guilty race. May our praise be increasingly cordial, full and spiritual.

Enable us, holy Father, to receive and cherish in imitation of our Divine Redeemer, the same spirit of meekness, long-suffering, benevolence towards man, devotedness to God, self-sacrifice and nearness to Thee, which we behold so strikingly in Him. May the same mind be in us which was also in Jesus, our Lord.

* John 19 : 28-30.

† Luke 23 : 46.

‡ John 10 : 17-18.

And O may His name be revered, and His Kingdom established among all the nations and families of the earth. Hasten, in its season, the longed-for day when all shall know and do homage to Him who died for our sins according to the scriptures. Bless, we entreat Thee, all ranks and classes among us, from the Sovereign on the throne, to the humblest subject in the realm. In prosperity teach the people to give gratitude and glory to Thee; in adversity, may they be humble, docile and contrite. Finally, may the whole flock of the Good Shepherd be ingathered and made ready for His coming again. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only true God, be glory and honour, for ever and ever. Amen.

XI.

Attendant miracles.—The veil of the temple rent.—The termination of the Mosaic dispensation.—The time admirable.—The ninth hour, when our Lord dismissed His Spirit.—The opening of the graves.—The saved malefactor.—The Centurion and soldiers, the women and others.—The honour done to women by the Evangelists.—The Jewish law requiring that dead bodies should not remain after night. The Governor readily acceding, the bodies of the condemned are removed speedily, it being the second day after "the feast," and given to their friends—A friend, Joseph of Arimathea, asks and receives the body of Jesus.—Nicodemus associated with him.—Lesson to us from their fidelity and love.—Joseph's new tomb.—The funeral procession.—The predicted rising again as it told upon friends and foes.

PRAAYER.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, we desire again, with renewed and increased interest, to have our souls occupied with this most impressive subject—"Christ crucified." We seem to hear thy call addressing us,—“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world,”—and we desire with unfeigned reverence to comply with the sacred mandate. Blessed Redeemer, “Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that we love Thee.” We would now, with our whole energies intent upon the mighty theme, see Thee “evidently set forth crucified among us.”

We rejoice in Thee—Thou dying Saviour, as “the resurrection and the life.” By thy death all thy people obtain life everlasting, and all that sleep in Thee shall yet hear thy voice, and come forth to the resurrection of glory. Lord may we truly and fully follow Thee as did those honoured disciples who did Thee homage and honour, even when Thou hadst suffered the death of ignominy which our sins brought upon Thee. Deliver us from the cowardice and heinous guilt of being ashamed of Thee. Rather may each of us be able to say: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I am crucified unto the world.”

Blessed Jesus! Thou didst die to bear the guilt and take away the sin of men. Free us, we beseech Thee, from all iniquity. Thus shalt Thou be glorified in our salvation and sanctification. By our humble and upright cleaving to Thee through good report and bad report, may we become vigorous disciples, strong in the Lord, and having "great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Most merciful Father, bless very graciously our present meditations. May the spirit of Jesus be abundantly bestowed, so that we shall henceforth walk as those who are "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all glory—World without end. Amen.

"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God. And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over the sepulchre. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation,

the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make *it* as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."—Matthew 27: 50–66.

Miracles ushered in the birth of Christ, and miracles of the most signal character accompanied His death. While the earth quaked and the rocks rent as a tribute of homage rendered by inanimate nature to her Lord, there were other still more significant tokens of the attestation of God the Father, on behalf of His beloved Son.

Concerning the vail of the temple, we have the Divine directory to Moses for its construction, in Exodus 26: 31–35: "And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and finetwined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood, overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle, toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side." What a beautiful parallelism and commentary to this is implied by the apostle writing to the Hebrews. He says: "For there was a tabernacle made; the first wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the sanctuary: And after the second vail, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all, which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot

that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory, shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost thus signifying that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was standing."*

This beautiful vail, separating between the holy place of the temple and the holy of holies, was now, with all its ornate grandeur, "rent in twain from the top to the bottom." The hour was remarkable. It was that of the offering up of the evening sacrifice. The priests who were present officiating, and others, would witness the awful spectacle. That sacred recess which had hitherto, from the day of Moses (with temporary interruptions), concealed the awful memorials of Jehovah's dealings and presence with Israel, was now completely exposed. What the high priest alone—and he only once a year—was permitted to contemplate darkly, was now laid bare, so that there was no exclusion of the vulgar gaze. Obviously then the Mosaic dispensation here ends. What an admirable moment for its termination! Jesus—for whom the illustrious lawgiver had waited, and to whom he uniformly pointed,—had now bowed His head, and given up the ghost; and at the same instant He enters "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Henceforth there will be no entering "into the holy places made with hands." The symbol, the type, the figure of the true sanctuary, with all its imposing splendour, its heaven-appointed drapery, and its august associations, has served its purpose—Christ hath entered into that unpolluted temple, where He will advocate the cause of all His people till He shall come again. There the ever-living Apostle and High priest of our profession will ever plead for us that He is "Jesus Christ the righteous,

* Hebrews 9: 3-8.

the propitiation for our sins." All this is indicated and suggested by the rending of the vail at the ninth hour, when our Lord dismissed His spirit.

Another miraculous manifestation of Jehovah's power in honour of the crucified Redeemer is stated at v. 52: "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." It seems then that the earthquake which rent the rocks, also opened the sepulchres of those sleeping disciples of Immanuel. The abodes of the dead being thus unlocked, the inmates in due time for joining Him who hath "the key of death," after His resurrection, were resuscitated by His omnipotence. It is probable that they consisted all or mainly of individuals, who, having followed Jesus in faith and love during his personal ministry, had recently died. This may be inferred from their appearing unto many in the holy city, after their resurrection, by whom, it is reasonable to suppose, they had been known when alive. They probably ascended to heaven with their Lord after He had arisen,—“the first fruits of them that slept.” While these faithful disciples and sanctified children of God were thus honoured, how evident is the supreme honour that is rendered in this miracle to Him who is “the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.” As we would participate in the blessedness of those who sleep in Jesus, when they shall arise from the grave in response to the Archangel's voice, to “meet their Lord in the air,” let us now know the voice of the good Shepherd, and follow Him all our life. Then shall we too hear His voice resounding through all the caverns of the tomb, and, if not among those who “remain unto the coming of the Lord,” shall come forth to the glorious first resurrection. How inspiring the anticipation! How fitted to comfort and encourage amidst trials! How powerful as a motive to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!

These most extraordinary instances of supernatural interposition do not exhaust all the tribute of homage that was tendered to the lowly Jesus, whose eyes were now closed in

death. During His life of humiliation, many, both of the lowly and of the more elevated in society, were not ashamed to acknowledge that Jesus was the Son of God and Israel's Messiah. Even now, in the hour of his deepest humiliation and degradation, our Lord's omnipotence to save, and the rich sovereignty of his unmerited love, were conspicuous.

“The beloved physician”—who not only views every incident with the benevolence of a philanthropist and the intelligence of a man of science, but who is also a devout believer in the Divine nature and authority of the man Christ Jesus—records with much felicity and sufficient fulness, the marvellous salvation of the dying criminal. We are aware that it has been objected on high authority that this man may have been a changed, a good man previous to his seizure and condemnation. This idea however will not comport with the narrative of the evangelist, and it is not needed to prove how fallacious in general is a death-bed repentance. One of the malefactors, St. Luke tells us, railed on Christ, “But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.”*

Here then, we take it, is one snatched at the last hour from the power of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The whole moral nature of this man is renewed by the Spirit of Jesus. He has faith in the dying Saviour—to the carnal eye, so unable to save. He prays to him for mercy—He says to him, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,” after having witnessed for Christ to his companion. He is accepted in the Beloved—“And Jesus said unto him, “Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”†

It may be that this is the only well-authenticated instance of the sinner turning to the Lord with all the heart, in a dying moment, in the annals of mankind. If so, how gloriously does it speak to the praise of that loving Redeemer

* Luke 23 : 40, 41.

† Idem v. 42, 43.

who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him! While he saved but one that none might presume, He saved one that none might despair.

Another trophy of Immanuel's grace at this most affecting time presents itself to us. This is the divine renovation of one of the centurions—a class of men always spoken of with respect in the New Testament, and several of whom, it is evident, became partakers of holy faith in Jesus.

The Author of nature, of reason, and of all the laws (with their suspension) by which the universe is governed, honours the vigilant observer desirous of ascertaining the truth. He did so in the present instance as the God of salvation and of the spirit of man. "Now when the centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."* The Roman soldier knew that the affirmation of our Lord that He was "the Son of God," was pronounced blasphemy by the Jewish Sanhedrists, but he now saw that the charge was disproved by the miracles attendant upon His decease. He knew also that Jesus had been maligned as a malefactor and seditious leader, but of the utter groundlessness of such charges he was now perfectly satisfied. So that not only, according to St. Matthew, did he express his faith in the Deity of the departed Saviour, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God;" he also, according to St. Luke, avowed his strong conviction of the perfect rectitude and sinlessness of the meek Sufferer. "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man."† Let us see to it that we too give glory to God by confessing His Son before men, as "God over all, blessed for evermore," as "Immanuel—God with us;" as the "Word made flesh;" as our Lord, to whom we are devotedly attached; and our everlasting Friend, whose image we bear, and to whom it is our supreme desire to grow in likeness.

Even during that terrific darkness during which Jesus suf-

* V. 54.

† Luke 23: 47.

ferred with the intensest excruciation—a darkness feebly symbolised by the “great horror of darkness” which fell upon Abraham, there were not wanting those who testified their concern and sympathy with their revered Teacher and Friend, by their near presence. Besides the most beloved John, there were the three Marys present. “There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.” After His death, and at the occurrence of the affecting miracles that accompanied it, the crowd of spectators became very great. Not only do we recognize amidst this throng Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and of Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s children, and Salome; we behold also many pious and excellent women who had attended the holy Saviour’s instructions in Galilee, and who delighted to minister to Him and His disciples. These had all been attracted to this most solemn and soul-stirring of all scenes—the crucifixion. There were in addition “many other women, which came up with Him unto Jerusalem.”* They could not forsake or leave Him whom their souls loved in His last sufferings; and there seems to have been a multitude besides, who had congregated to witness the awful sight. Nor does any of this throng seem to have been unmoved. Those who may still have continued hostile and unbelieving, were terrified at what they would regard as the omens of impending personal and national ruin and woe. Some, we may suppose, of those who had rejected Jesus while He lived, now were changed at His death, so that henceforth Christ would be their life; and His undoubted disciples felt their love to Him stronger in consequence of His death, than they had ever known it while He lived. Perhaps St. Luke’s account is as expressive as any: “And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.”†

In the narrative of each of the Evangelists we cannot fail

* Mark 15 : 41.

† Luke 23 : 48, 49.

o observe the honour done to woman. This is a reward in part for the honour rendered by woman to the son of Mary and to that omnipotent Person who came to allay the sorrows of the race, to redeem and elevate woman in the social scale, and to bless, in the highest degree, the whole human family. Wherever Jesus comes, and His religion is embraced, there woman especially is benefitted. She is acknowledged to be the equal and companion, the solace and the friend of man. Let woman compare her condition where Christ is acknowledged with what it is where He is unknown, and she will increasingly seek unto Him, cleave to Him, and strive to bring all under His influence and sway. This is woman's true honour, her divinely-appointed commission, and one which many of the sex have most illustriously fulfilled. What a lesson may the enlightened and Christian female derive from the ennobled women who unflinchingly adhered to Jesus! They sought no publicity; they evinced not a particle of ostentation; we hear almost nothing of what they said, and nothing of arguing, or reasoning, or controversy, respecting the Nazarene. But we perceive how, as by a Divine instinct and affection, superior to the cold play of the intellect, they saw, and felt, and knew, that Jesus was the Son of God—the true Messiah, the Saviour of the guilty, “the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely;” and it is by being followers of them as they were followers of the Lamb, that any of the sex may be allied to the sisterhood whose steady and warm love is recorded with such honour in the book of inspiration.

“It was the custom,” says Dr. Kitto, “of the Romans to leave the crucified upon the cross till they expired: and, indeed, to leave even the dead bodies upon them, for an example and a warning. But the Jewish law directed that the bodies of those who were hanged up for exposure, should be taken down and buried before sunset; whereby the land of Israel was happily exempted from those shocking spectacles which have been frequent in all lands, and which have only within living memory been banished from our own. Accordingly, in Palestine, the Romans departed from their

usual custom, and despatched those upon the cross who remained alive towards the close of the day. They almost invariably were alive then, for crucifixion was an exceedingly lingering death; and, unless under peculiar circumstances, it was rare for any one to expire in less than thirty-six hours, and many lived several days.”*

Besides the authority of that law of God, which in wisdom and benevolence required the people of Israel not to allow the bodies of those who were put to death to remain exposed after night, there is an additional reason suggested by John, the faithful chronicler of the minute incidents attendant upon the crucifixion. “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.” † The Sabbath that was now ensuing was the second day of the feast of unleavened bread, whence were reckoned the weeks to Pentecost. It was also the day for offering the sheaf of new corn—all which rendered it a treble solemnity.

The Governor seems to have readily acceded to the petition for removing the bodies. The soldiers on guard in consequence came to the two criminals on either side of Jesus whom they found alive, and put them to death by breaking their legs with a bar of iron. But when they came to Jesus they found that He was already dead; they therefore “brake not his legs.” They may have been awed by the unprecedented occurrences which they had just witnessed, so as in some measure to reverence His body. One of them, however, with cruel and impious daring, ventured to pierce the side of the Saviour with his spear, and out of the wound there proceeded blood and water. This clearly proved that Jesus was dead. Had He been in a swoon, or had life not been extinct, it was evident that the heart had been pierced, which alone was a mortal wound.

Again we are called upon to mark the pre-arranging and

* Kitto: “The Crucifixion.”

† John 19: 31.

interposing hand of God in all the details of this wonderful history. Man sought to gratify himself; but the Most High, who ruled over all, caused him to fulfil only his pleasure. The mind of the apostle appears to have been greatly struck with what he beheld. He says: "And he that saw it bore record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture might be fulfilled: A bone of him shall not be broken. And, again, another scripture saith: They shall look on him whom they pierced."

The benevolence of the Roman law provided that the bodies of deceased criminals should be given to their friends. Was there, then, any friend of Jesus who had been put to death as the worst of criminals that would have courage enough to avow fealty and friendship to Him now? The sacred narrative will show. But why should we of little faith doubt on this point? Though the multitude, and even his chosen attendants, had acted as we know, there were those who were most warmly attached to the mysterious Person who had just resigned His spirit. Shall we not confidently look for some from among this number who shall do honour to their Lord even now, when to the carnal eye entirely and forever prostrate? Doubtless we are warranted to do so. Nay more, there will be those brought forward of whom we have hitherto heard little or nothing, as attached to the Saviour who shall not fail to avow their love and respect of Him in this dark, dark hour.

Who, then, is this who stands forth most prominently as the believer in Jesus, seeking to obtain for Him an honourable burial? The very person who is eminently fitted for the business in hand comes forward. He is no mean or obscure man. He is not one upon whom even the great of this world will look with contempt. True, he has never appeared yet as the disciple of the Nazarene—no, not when the Great Teacher and Omnipotent Physician was most popular. The individual now before us is not one to be swayed by mere prevailing opinion or applause. He is one who ponders deeply and long ere he decides upon such an

infinitely momentous theme as whether Jesus is the Messiah, and the alone name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. But having been thoroughly convinced and led by the Spirit of all grace to yield himself in faith and love to Jesus, He can now know nothing but "Christ, and him crucified." All the evangelists speak of him. They tell us that he was an "honourable counsellor, who also waited for the kingdom of God," "a good man and a just," who had not consented to the counsel and deed of the Sanhedrim of which he was a member. He was also "a rich man." Such was Joseph of Arimathæa. Such was his reputed and well-known character. But this member of the spiritual Israel, who has been a pious student of the holy Scriptures, "waiting for the kingdom of God," and pondering the signs attendant upon the coming and manifestation of the Nazarene, now appears in a new light. He is proclaimed to be "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews." Will he remain an unavowed believer in Jesus? Verily no. He is a "secret disciple" no longer. He can restrain himself no more. He *must*, in this hour of trial and desolation, when the open and recognized followers of his Lord have forsaken Him, come forward. Necessity is laid upon him. The love of Christ burning in his soul constrained him. He goes boldly unto Pilate, and, declaring to the Governor that he was a friend of Him who had been crucified, besought leave to take away the body of his Lord. Nor was Pilate at all unwilling to grant the request. He "marvelled," we read, "if he were already dead." Joseph may have assured him of the death of Christ as having occurred previously to the despatching of the soldiers, to consummate the end of the three who had been crucified. The Governor, anxious and nervous on this perplexing subject, called the centurion. He was astonished to learn from Joseph that "the King of the Jews" had died in a manner so accelerated and altogether so uncommon. He was deeply interested. He was also most desirous that the case should never again come up. He would therefore take the utmost care to guard against any possible mistake. Joseph's information respecting Jesus

occasioned him surprise and great wonder. He, therefore, called the centurion who had been watching all the occurrences attendant upon the decease of this unparalleled person, and "asked him whether he had been any while dead." The searching enquiry thus instituted by Pilate is remarkable. It shows how much his own mind was impressed with what had taken place, and how undoubtedly the man Christ Jesus had died. When the Governor "knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph."

We must by no means omit to notice another distinguished disciple who was associated with Joseph in the taking down from the accursed tree, the body of the crucified Saviour. He, too, is an "honourable man" and a member of the council, "who had not consented to the counsel and deed of them." He, too, is "a good man and a just," waiting for the Kingdom of God." And he, too, "is Jesus' disciple," with scarce the secrecy of Joseph. For we find his faithful historian, with whom he is evidently a favourite character, and who could cordially sympathize with him, not only narrating his first coming to Jesus by night, and this last tribute which he paid to his revered Lord, but also his stand on His behalf in the Sanhedrim when he said: "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"—which protestation had such an effect for the time, that the measures of the enemies of the Galilean were disconcerted, "and every man went unto his own house."* Still, however, there is reason to think that, as frequently happens with the good, when in high places, Nicodemus had hitherto been too reserved in avowing his attachment to the despised and hated Nazarene. The spirit of grace in his heart now, at length, causes him to declare most unhesitatingly and openly his devotedness to his Master. The naturally timid has now, through the work going on in his soul, become bold as a lion. He may not, he dare not, hold back. Though earthly position, standing, reputation, or life itself were imperilled, it mattered not. He is quite willing to sacrifice all for Christ's sake.

* John 7: 51, 53.

Says the profoundly loving and eagerly observing John : “Joseph came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.”* Joseph had bought “fine, clean linen,” with which to honour the sacred body of his Lord. “Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”† How admirable the representation so graphically stated by the disciple whom Jesus loved ! O how doubly, how incalculably honourable were these two honourable disciples, thus honouring their Lord and Master in such circumstances ! What picture more lovely can the imagination of hallowed love suppose, than that now before us ? Two of the great,—the truly great, of the world, aye and of the Church of the living God, are here. See these two nobles of the kingdom, heretofore unknown as the disciples of Jesus, but now, when the other disciples, from timidity or inability, are nearly all absent, coming courageously forward, and having obtained the full sanction of the Roman law to remove the body, themselves taking down their lacerated, crucified, departed Redeemer. Was there ever spectacle more sublime ? Verily there is here no hireling hand or help. There is not a mean person present. But the very great are here. And their greatness is enhanced by their goodness. The intensity of their love, the fidelity of their intellect, the consecration of the whole man, are most worthy of all praise, esteem, and imitation. These righteous men “shall be held in everlasting remembrance” for what they did in the hour of their Saviour’s deepest humiliation.

How, oh how shall we be able to meet Joseph and Nicodemus, if we are ashamed of Jesus ! Will not the heroism and courage of those previously cautious and timorous followers of the Lamb rise up and condemn us in the judgment ; if we are “fearful” to follow Him whithersoever He would lead us ? Nor for a moment suppose it is ostentation we would encour-

* John 19 : 38, 39.

† V. 40.

age. There was no ostentation in the conduct or spirit of the excellent men to whom our attention has been turned. There was a yielding to the light and suggestions of the Holy Spirit. There was no "conferring with flesh and blood." There was an implicit submission to the will of God, and a lofty simplicity that led them away from man to the honour of Him, whose favour is better than life. Let us imitate them in their devout study of the word of inspiration, in our wakeful observation of the development of the purposes of Jehovah in His providence and grace, and in a cheerful surrender of ourselves to the once crucified, but now risen Redeemer. Assuredly, if like them we are His disciples, we shall, like them, be constrained by love to do all things that are honouring and well-pleasing unto Him. How certainly will He, when he comes again, not as the lowly Saviour, in humiliation, suffering, and to die, but as the risen and glorified King of Zion, as King of kings and Lord of lords, as the Judge of quick and dead, recognize all those who were actuated by these principles in their day of trial upon earth! And how terrific will be that coming to all else! How infallibly will He take vengeance upon all who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! O for that saintliness which flows from union to Jesus by faith, and which qualifies for His Kingdom and glory!

Jesus had been honoured in the persons by whom He was taken down from the cross, and the manner in which they attired his body in clean white linen, with costly spices. He was also honoured in His burial. Near Mount Calvary was a garden, belonging to Joseph, in which he had recently caused a new sepulchre to be hewn out of the rock, with a view, it is probable, to its being the place of his own interment. Into this sepulchre, this tomb of "the rich man," was Jesus carried, and lovingly and respectfully deposited. From the newness of this house of death, it is evident there could have been no other tenant; it was a "new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid;" and its being hewn out of the rock, precluded any other passage than that by the door,—facts of moment, as going to evidence the resurrection of our Lord

when the empty sepulchre conjoined with the angels in proclaiming respecting Jesus, "He is not here." In this narrow house, having made all the arrangements possible, these friends, who had so worthily responded to the call of duty, deposited "the Son of Man." There was great need for haste, as the Sabbath was just at hand, during which, as the children of God, they must rest from all unnecessary labour, even though the dearest of all friends, and the anointed Messiah, was being interred. "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

Nor were there wanting, on the solemn occasion, a funeral procession of true and affectionate mourners. The piety and becoming devotion of Joseph and Nicodemus had been witnessed, by enemies seen and unseen, we doubt not. But loving disciples on earth, as well as witnesses invisible, were deeply interested spectators. "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid." No particular mention is made of Mary, the mother of Jesus, here. It is not unlikely that "the sword had pierced her soul," so that when Jesus addressed her and John from the cross, that disciple immediately, as a son, took her to his own home. This will account for her absence now. But Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses, are specially singled out as among this group, as "sitting over against the sepulchre." All this little company, perceiving the necessarily hasty and defective swathing of the body with myrrh and aloes, resolved upon embalming, fully and properly, so soon as the Sabbath should be ended. They therefore returned with speed to the city, in order to purchase the requisite articles previous to the commencement of the hallowed day, so that there might be no delay so soon as its termination had arrived. Thus considerate, energetic, and prompt is holy love. They "prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." If there are Christians who are rather in favour of Sabbath funerals in some instances, let them reflect upon the example of these attendants upon the Lord

of the Sabbath day. Certainly there was no coldness here, and no Pharisaism. Yet there was a scrupulous and an enlightened conscientiousness regarding the holy day of rest, that is most instructive and decisive. Certainly, if we are animated by the same spirit of love and holiness, we shall, in the letter and spirit of Sabbath observance, be allied unto them.

Thus was fulfilled the prediction of Isaiah respecting Messiah: "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." The tomb, by the presence of our Redeemer, Head, and elder Brother, has been divested, in large measure, of its loneliness and loathsomeness. "Them that sleep in Jesus, God will bring with Him."

We have seen something of the Sabbath sanctification of the friends of Jesus. Now let us turn for a moment to His enemies. Though they were satisfied of His death and burial, they could not rest, not even while the day of sacredness lasted. They set aside even the appearance of sanctity; and, having convened the Sanhedrim, they repaired to the Roman Proconsul with a serious statement and solicitation. We cannot fail to be struck with the knowledge they evince of the prophetic words of the deceased Jesus. His disciples understood them not, owing to their preconceived opinions, with which they clashed. But these deadly foes understood their meaning; and fearing their reality, with consciences ill at ease, restless as the troubled sea, they come to Pilate on the Sabbath, "saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first." We can easily conceive how nauseous to the Governor were these chief priests and Pharisees. He, however, replied to them with civility and propriety. There was a detachment of soldiers in attendance at the courts of the temple. Pilate said to them, "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure." They certified

themselves that the body was there, placed their seal upon the stone that closed the entrance, so that it could not be removed without their knowledge, and set a watch. They were also probably aware of the purpose of Joseph and Nicodemus, along with other friends, to embalm the body. Had they petitioned Pilate to hinder this, they might have been refused. But they thought that they could effectually defeat these eminent men and their fellow-disciples by this method of sealing the stone, which had been comprehensively allowed them, with any other precautions they could possibly take. Unhappy men ! all will not do. " He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ; the Lord shall have them in derision."* Their craftiness and their rage shall alike go to establish the certainty of the resurrection. They could only do whatsoever the Divine hand and counsel determined before to be done. We know that Jesus is risen. O that we may die with Him to sin, and live to God, so that the life we now live in the flesh may be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Glance yet again, ere leaving this solemn scene, at " the excellent of the earth " who are present. We see clearly the centurion, the good women, and the two men of standing and worth—all disciples. Some of them, like the Roman soldier, are but beginners in the Christian race ; yet all of them are on the Lord's side. How much may we learn from each variety of them ? Integrity, love, devotedness to Christ, characterize them all. May we be all like them, quickened to newness of life. Like them, may we never be ashamed of the cross of Christ, either in His members, His holiness, or His honour. To us to live be it Christ, and to die will be gain. Verily there shall never be wanting those who shall do homage to the crucified Ransomer ; and His people shall be all willing in the day of His power. May we be among the number.

* Psalm 2 : 4.

PRAYER.

GOD, AND FATHER of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we again come unto Thee in His name to supplicate Thy blessing. By His death may we have life eternal. May we be strong in that faith which will make us victorious over the world. Enable us never to confer with flesh and blood, when thy honour and thy revealed will make it evident what we ought to do.

We praise Thee, Author of all good, for the many who have been induced to prefer Jesus and His reproach to every earthly consideration. May we too be regenerated by the Spirit of thy grace, and from day to day experience progressive sanctification. Prepare us for the coming of our Lord. His intimation is, "Behold I come quickly." May we all respond, "Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

May we be associated with the friends of Jesus as our choicest friends. May all who are specially dear to us belong to this class; and to thy name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory everlasting. World without end. Amen.

XII.

The resurrection of Jesus.—The earthquake.—The angels.—The Roman guard.—The chief priests.—Mary Magdalene.—Visit of Peter and John to the empty tomb.—Appearing of Christ to Mary Magdalene.—First meeting with the other women.—The two disciples going to Emmaus.—Christ's manifestation to Peter and to the other disciples.—The absence of Thomas.—He did not dare to be absent "eight days after."—The fishing party at the lake of Galilee.—Jesus seen of five hundred brethren at once in Galilee.—Other interviews with disciples.—The ascension from the Mount of Olives.

PRAYER.

GOD, AND FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ, with lowly and adoring reverence would we now prostrate ourselves at the footstool of Thy throne. We give glory unto Thee, O Eternal Father, for the resurrection of our blessed Redeemer. When by His meritorious death He had atoned for our sins, He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. We adore Thee for the honour done our Saviour in His resurrection. Thou didst send forth the angels of light, for the dismay of His enemies and the comfort of His followers; and in the ministrations of the heavenly messengers, as also in the great earthquake, we behold how our Ransomer was glorified by thy disposal. We can never, O God, adequately praise Thee, that thus our Substitute was proved to be the Son of God with power, and His sacrifice infinitely satisfactory. We most unfeignedly and feelingly rejoice that, through Jesus, we can call Thee Father. Being freely justified by His death, may we ever realize the blessed consequences of His resurrection, in His continual intercession on our behalf. For His sake, we beseech Thee to renew us from day to day, until we are meet for the inheritance of saints.

May our interest in Christ be undoubted. May our love to Him be supreme, intense, and ever-constraining. We would ever, Thou once crucified, but now risen Redeemer, do Thee

hearty homage. We would render Thee the full consecration of a renewed nature.

Almighty God, we supplicate Thy rich blessing upon our attentive consideration of the appearances of our Lord after He had risen from the dead. Confirm, enlarge, and strengthen our faith. Impart largely of thy Spirit, so that we may with much edification and comfort wait upon Thee. We desire to be deeply humbled, and to grow in likeness to our adored Master.

Add to the number of the disciples of Jesus, we beseech Thee, good Lord. Cause many who heretofore have been unconcerned about the grand subject of a Saviour's death and resurrection, to feel that in Him alone can they have any hope for eternity, and to yield themselves to Him as those who are alive from the dead. We entreat Thee, most merciful Father, to hear, and graciously accept of us, for the sake of Thy beloved son. Amen.

“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they

go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—Matt. 28: 1-18.

The great Redeemer had on various occasions during His ministry predicted both his own death and resurrection. We have already seen that though this foretelling of His rising again was lost sight of by His disciples, it was anxiously remembered by His enemies. On this account they had caused the sepulchre to be secured and guarded by a special watch of Roman soldiers. With what effect, the narrative upon the consideration of which we are now to enter, will show.

St. Luke, after mentioning the honourable burial of our Lord, adds—"And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how the body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment."* This account will enable us easily to understand the visit paid to the cemetery by a company of female disciples. This party seems to have comprehended Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome the mother of Zebedee's children, Joanna, and other women. Intent upon doing all possible honour to that loved Master, whose crucified body they had so lately seen deposited in

* Luke 23: 55, 56.

Joseph's tomb, they were very early at the sepulchre after the Sabbath was ended with the preparation of spices with which they were furnished, in order to embalm the body. What their ideas now were as to Jesus being the Messiah, we can only conjecture. One thing appears very evident—their love was strong, however dark their intellect, or imperfect their faith. Nor was this unreasonable, or a mere feminine weakness. It was the powerful, necessary, and constraining impression produced upon their convictions and hearts by the infinite moral excellency of Him, of whom each of them could say—"This is my beloved, and this is my friend." With Him they had been most intimately acquainted while he lived; they had faithfully waited upon His ministry, and devotedly ministered to Himself. And now, though death seemed to have blasted their hopes, their confidence, esteem and attachment were unabated, though unable to account for the sad consummation which had occurred. This at least they will do. They will render their departed Friend and Teacher all possible reverence and every mark of unabated affection. We accordingly read—"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."*

The particular time here indicated may be uncertain. It has occasioned some discussion. The Jewish Sabbath ended, as all are aware, at sunset. And it is natural to suppose that immediately after, these endeared friends of Jesus would be on the alert to accomplish their purposes with regard to Him. And the passage before us is not inconsistent with this view. It might be rendered—"The Sabbath being ended, as it began to draw nigh to the first day of the week." If, however, the women had intended to be at the burying-place sooner than the early light of the morning, they were prevented by the extraordinary and miraculous circumstances attendant on our Lord's resurrection. Anterior to their visit "there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord

* Matthew 28 : 1.

descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of Him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men."

Of the angels of light we read—"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"* Most becoming and suitable then is it that they should exercise their ministry in waiting upon Him who hath bought each member of his Church with His own blood. And most gladly do those high and holy ministers render their homage and service to Him who is Lord of the Seraphim and of men. On all occasions of special moment we are apt to discover them in their attendant capacity associated with Jesus. They announce his birth, which was foretold by an angel. They wait upon him after his temptation of forty days in the wilderness. An angel from heaven is seen sympathizing with and strengthening Him at the terrific crisis in the garden, when the human nature of Jesus was well-nigh overwhelmed. Angels formed his retinue when, as the King of Glory, the risen Redeemer entered into the temple of heaven. How much they are in requisition in the events of Providence and of the Church of Christ, the visions of the Apocalypse intimate. And, as angels accompanied our Lord in His ascension, we know that when He shall come again in His own glory, and in the glory of the Father, to judge the world, He shall be attended also by a glorious retinue of the holy angels.

How long the crucified Redeemer remained under the power of death in the sepulchre, it is impossible confidently to estimate. He was interred upon the evening of Friday before sunset, when the Jewish Sabbath began; and he arose after that Sabbath had terminated, previous to day-dawn. Whether "thirty-six hours," as Dr. Kitto computes, be the time, cannot positively be settled, and it is of little moment. He lay in the tomb on Friday night, during the Saturday succeeding, and for some part at least of the night of that day. This makes His resurrection, in Jewish phraseology, to have

* Hebrews 1: 14.

occurred on "the third day." "Three days" with the Jews did not require our complement of hours, darkness and light. "The third, the appointed day," having arrived, all the Evangelists refer to and narrate some of the circumstances associated with it.

Before the arrival of Mary Magdalene and her friends at the sepulchre, most important events had been enacted. An earthquake, more apparently terrific than that which had accompanied the decease of Christ, had transpired. It was accomplished by the agency of an angel of light, and seems to have been intended to tell primarily upon the enemies of the Saviour. The vast stone, sealed by the signet of the Sanhedrim, watched by the Roman guard, which filled the mouth of the cave constituting the sepulchre, was the occasion of much anxiety to the women as they advanced to the spot of their Master's burial. "They said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" As often happens to the children of God, their fears were more than disappointed.

The resurrection of Jesus was accomplished in a manner the most honourable to Him. A celestial messenger from the Father was sent to open the door of the prison-house where His beloved Son reposed. And while the enemies of His anointed were stationed in sight to watch and prevent any egress, they became the paralyzed and terrified witnesses of the resurrection. They were impotent as the dead to do anything to prevent the disclosing of the tomb, and the going forth of its mysterious Tenant.

In the midst of the terror caused by the appearance of this mighty angel to the soldiery keeping watch, the revived and risen Messiah came forth from the house of death. So far were the guard from seeking to manifest courage as Roman soldiers, that they fled. They acted as cowards in that strife which was then waging between the powers of darkness and the Prince of light. Yet they evinced no want of policy; for they repaired to the chief priests, and testified to "all the things that were done." These leading ecclesiastics immediately and promptly took counsel with the elders in a meeting

of the Sanhedrim, and concocted what appeared to them the most feasible story that the case would admit of. The spirit and the likelihood of it are worthy of its authors. It carries obvious refutation on the face of it.

As soon as the company of female disciples had come sufficiently nigh to the sepulchre, they perceived that the great stone was rolled away from the mouth of it. This took them by surprise, and occasioned some deliberation as to what ought to be done. Very soon it seems to have been settled that Mary Magdalene, whose zeal and love were pre-eminent, should repair to the dwelling of the apostles, and make them aware of what had taken place. In particular, she seems to have desired to confer with Peter and John. The similarity of character and beautiful sympathy between her and them will easily account for her leaning. The deeply-reflective John narrates—"Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." Very probably some or all the rest of the apostles may have been at hand. Whether there was mutual agreement among them that these two should visit the sepulchre on behalf of all, as prudence might suggest the danger of a great number repairing to it, or whether the two distinguished followers of Jesus simply acted from their own feelings and the impulse of the moment, we know not. That they readily and promptly acceded to the wishes of the Magdalene is very apparent. "Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed."*

Such is the account furnished in characteristic style by the unobtrusive, yet pointed and specific John, of the visit paid by himself and Peter to the empty tomb of Jesus. The physical capabilities and mental peculiarities of these two most endeared friends, of the older and the younger apostle, are very finely, though without effort, indicated. John, being the younger and fleetier man, first arrives at the spot. Peter, the older and bolder, is the first to enter the sepulchre. After his going in, John also gains courage and follows him. Each of them, John in particular, is struck with the careful adjustment and separation of the winding linen and napkin for the head. They feel that all this order and arrangement prove that there has been no haste, and that they are an evidence that the body has not been stolen. John says of himself that "he saw, and, believed. For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead." This language seems to intimate that what he and his friend should have known from the word of prophecy, and of Jesus, he now for the first time came, in some degree, to understand from observation. "He believed." And if we attempt to name what, we may infer it to have been that the Lord had risen from the dead.

While Mary Magdalene was absent in quest of Peter and John, to inform them of the absence of the body of Jesus, the women that remained at the sepulchre entered it. They would do this with a view to search it more thoroughly with the aid of increased light. Immediately upon their entrance they appear to have seen the angel who had caused such terror to the soldiery on guard. Very different, however, was his influence upon these good followers of the Lamb. He said to them, "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified." Mark and Luke associate another angel with this one. He might only be discovered by the women after they were completely within the sepulchre. These holy angels invited the women to "behold the place where the Lord lay," instructed them concerning the predictions of His rising from the dead, and commissioned them to go and tell His disciples and Peter to prepare to see their Master in

Galilee, as he had intimated to them before his death. Instant compliance was rendered to this authority. "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word."

John tells us that after he and Peter had seen the empty sepulchre, they "went away again unto their own home." Not so was Mary Magdalene disposed. She "stood without at the sepulchre weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." These two heavenly messengers, who had already manifested themselves to the other female friends of Jesus, are now also seen by Mary Magdalene. They are sitting at the extremities of the spot where the corpse of their Lord had lain. We are by this reminded of the absence of niches in Joseph's new tomb. The scene of the Conqueror's sleep, which no doubt was selected as the best that revering love could choose, was indicated, and His triumph heralded by the angels in this manner. Addressing Mary, they say, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She saith unto them, apparently undaunted, and in a manner in keeping with her heroic, loving, and energetic character, as a disciple of Jesus—"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Just then her attention was caught by the coming nigh of another Person, and that Person was none other than He whom her soul loved. He, too, enquired in soothing and gentle terms, "Woman, why weepest thou: whom seekest thou?" The dress in which Jesus was now attired, was different from that with which His friend had been familiar. The eyes of Mary were suffused with tears, and her mind was excited and distressed. Her thoughts were occupied with the idea that some party had removed the body of Jesus. Hence, she knew not at first her Lord; but, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." There is something most touchingly natural in her words. Though speaking to a supposed stranger, she specifies, not by name, the Master whose

mortal remains she sought. He alone was in all her thoughts, and it is of "Him" only she can speak. Everybody must know to whom she refers. Surely we cannot fail to discover in the love of this heroine of the Cross a passionate ardour, and a faithful intensity, that exceeds in degree, as well as in grandeur and sublimity, the most devoted worship ever rendered by the worldling to Mammon.

In reply to her warm and somewhat expostulatory appeal, we read that "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." O the music and melody of that voice! It was sweeter and more sacred to her ear than aught she had ever heard! It threw her into an ecstasy of delight! She turned herself, and saith unto him, "Rabboni,"—a term equivalent to the words "my dear Master." Knowing well the mental vigour and the strong faith of Mary, Jesus requested her at present to dispense with embracing Him. She was perfectly assured of His identity, and also of His resurrection, and she would have frequent opportunities of seeing Him previous to His ascension. He said to 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 to your Father; and to my God, and your God." And, like the demoniac whom Jesus restored and saved for eternity, in his obedience to his Lord, who required him to "go home to his friends, and tell them how great things the Lord had done for him," rather than be personally attendant upon his Saviour, as he had sought, so Mary cheerfully complied with the will of her adored Redeemer. She "came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these words unto her."*

Such was the first manifestation of Himself of the risen Messiah to any of His disciples after His resurrection. This is expressly declared by Mark—"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils."† Previous to His appearing to any of the apostles, or any

* John 20: 11-18.

† Mark 16: 9.

male disciple, this distinguished woman and her female associates were honoured with two separate discoveries of Himself by their Lord. Was not this a mark of special favour, and a reward of their fidelity, love, and courage, in which they far excelled any of their brethren? They were more simple in their attachment to Christ, and less ambitious of personal distinction, than any of the eleven. And simplicity of piety and lowliness of spirit in His members, the Head of the body always marks out for emphatic approbation. Here, again, woman—Christian woman—may perceive her true dignity and happiness. Let Christ Jesus be all and in all to her. In goodly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, let her have her conversation in the world.

The company of women remaining at the sepulchre when Mary Magdalene went in quest of the disciples, at once complied with the directions of the angels who appeared to them, and were running to bring the disciples word. How happy were they in their zeal for Christ, and changeless attachment to Him! For, having hastened to the city, and told the good news to such of the disciples as they found, they were returning to the sepulchre perhaps in quest of Peter, when, lo! Jesus met them, saying, "All hail!" Nor did He prevent their embracing Him, and remaining for a time to do Him homage. He had dealt otherwise with Mary Magdalene. But such differences are not uncommon in the dealings of the heavenly Sovereign with His people. And here, as in many similar cases, what to the superficial glance might seem to be a repulse, or a slight, is, in reality, a token of honour and confidence. In our Lord's various dealings with Mary, and with her Christian sisters, we can easily perceive implied, a higher estimate of her advancement as a disciple, than of that which they had attained. Yet all is of grace. The Author of the Spirit dispenses to each severally as He pleaseth, and He acts towards all according to His own wisdom and their necessity. We do not read of Magdalene's being terrified. The other women obviously were. Hence the compassionate Saviour dealt tenderly with them. They had been assured by angelic testimony that their crucified Master had risen, as He had

predicted. They were now still more highly favoured. Jesus Himself met them, and saluted them in a most gracious manner. They, too, as well as Mary, knew the beauty and sweetness of the voice that spoke. They, too, were perfectly sure that it was the voice of their "Beloved." In reply to the words of Immanuel, "They came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."*

It is evident from the narrative of Luke, that previous to the setting out for Emmaus of the two disciples, the women had arrived at their dwelling, and reported the vision of the angels, and what they had told them. In consequence, as we learn from the same writer, a deputation of disciples went to the sepulchre, and found it "even so as the women had said; but Him they saw not."† Peter, it is to be inferred, was absent when the party of women came to the lodging with the tidings from the angels. After Mary Magdalene and this party had both seen Jesus, they again visited the apostles, and declared, in addition to what they had formerly made known, that they had seen the risen Lord. But the mourning and weeping ministers of Christ "believed not" Mary Magdalene. They supposed that she was deluded. Nor did they yield to the united testimony of her and all the rest of the women. "Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

There was one among the company upon whom these solemn asseverations made a deep impression. His warm temperament, his recent history, and his enthusiastic attachment to Jesus, as well as his being singled out by name by the angels—all disposed him to think there must be something in all that had just transpired. He must, therefore, without delay, again visit the garden of Joseph. "Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass."‡

* Matt. 28: 9, 10.

† Luke 24: 24.

‡ Luke 24: 12.

The apostle saw not the angels. Their work was now completed, and farther disclosures from them were not called for. There is never, in the Divine operations, anything superfluous, while there never is anything wanting. Peter did not enter the sepulchre. He simply stooped down and beheld. He again marked what had formerly struck him—"the linen clothes laid by themselves," and the napkin carefully adjusted in a separate place. He knew not what to think. Words he uttered not. He was profoundly amazed. He communed with his own heart. The depths of his soul were stirred with emotion.

Both Luke and Paul record the appearing of the Lord to this noble apostle.* He was, of all the male disciples, honoured with the first sight of Him to whose omniscience he could appeal—"Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Most probably it was when returning bewildered from the sepulchre that Jesus manifested Himself to him. The gracious Master may have intended to reanimate and restore to comfort and confidence one who, though he had lately denied Christ, yet was truly Christ's, and designed for high usefulness in the Church of God. There was a token of forgiving love to Cephas in this appearance, and also a reward for his fervent love, and an indicated appreciation of it, on the part of the most generous of Masters.

In the afternoon of the same first day of the week, two disciples took a journey to the village of Emmaus, distant about seven miles from Jerusalem. One of these was Cleophas; the other is not named, but may have been Luke. Talking together of all that had happened, they were overtaken by a stranger on the way. His admirable discourse, his opening to them the Scriptures concerning the death and resurrection of Messiah, powerfully affected them. Their heart burned within them. But being supernaturally restrained from knowing Jesus, they perceived not that this stranger was their risen Master. They, however, entreated Him to abide with them that night, as the day was far spent. He went in, and

* Luke 24 : 34 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 5.

partook with them of their humble meal; His manner, voice, and sanctity now convinced them who he was; and very soon after this their Lord departed. They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem in haste, to communicate the joyful tidings to their brethren.

On their arrival at the house of the eleven, they found the whole assembled, with other friends of Jesus. Their ears were gladdened on entering the apartment with the intelligence: "The Lord is risen, indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Gladly did they also add their experience to the other evidence, "and they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread."* Nor need we doubt their witness strengthened the faith of many, for though we read of "the residue" that they neither believed them, nor any other of those who had seen Jesus, this scepticism was limited. That some should be culpably incredulous is not wonderful, when we consider their long cherished views, and how these had been destroyed by the death of the Nazarene. We know that some continued to doubt even after they had ocular demonstrations of their Lord's resurrection, but all this is easily understood as only the working of the weakness of human nature. The mass of the disciples believed both Simon and the other witnesses; and ultimately, we doubt not, all the upright became entirely convinced of the resurrection of the crucified Saviour.

While the two disciples were engaged in their recital to their fellow-Christians, and the evening repast was being eaten, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them. John mentions that "the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews."† The Divine Saviour, however, miraculously drew the bolts, and opened the locks. This accounts for the alarm of the disciples. "They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a

* Luke 24 : 34, 35.

† John 20 : 19.

spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.”*

Besides such astonishing condescension and kindness towards his followers, Jesus imparted much instruction to them concerning the things that were written in the Word of God, and repeatedly gave them his benediction of “peace.” He also significantly “breathed on them,” and said “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” This blessing was both present and prospective. While it implied all the future gifts of the Spirit, it conveyed new to the soul the illuminating influence of the sacred Agent. We can easily conceive what an increase of light, joy, and faith the disciples must have realized.

Such was the first shewing of Himself on the part of Jesus to “the twelve,” as Paul expresses it, or to “the eleven,” as we find it in Mark, although neither of these was the number actually present on the occasion. The most sceptical and incredulous of all the apostles was Thomas. He was absent when Christ first met and manifested Himself to the assembled disciples. Perhaps Thomas was so stumbled at what had taken place, that he was almost ready to believe that he had been all along under a delusion. When therefore his brethren told him, “We have seen the Lord,” he refused to accredit their word. He said, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

Yet this unbelieving friend did not dare to absent himself from the meeting of the disciples on the following first day of the week. Then we are told “Thomas was with them.” We know not which to admire most, the omniscience, the love, or the condescending wisdom of that infallible Teacher, who so often is seen (by John especially) giving to the subjects of His grace and compassion evidences of His Deity. They all entered into the soul of the overcome and deeply affected apostle. “Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hand; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust

it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, my Lord, and my God."* Jesus added a rebuke for his refusing to believe without such a sensible sign. "Far more blessed and precious is that faith which arises from within, than that which thus waits for a summons from without."

Our Lord had promised his sorrowing apostles on the night of the last Supper that after His resurrection He would go before them into Galilee. This intimation He renewed through the women who first were privileged to see the risen Saviour. Accordingly, they left Jerusalem soon after the termination of the Passover festival, and returned to their homes in Galilee. Both the time and place were probably appointed. We hear, indeed, of "a certain mountain." And while the apostles awaited the appointed time, they engaged in their usual occupations, most of them as fishermen. One day, as evening advanced, seven of them (including Peter, Thomas, and the sons of Zebedee) put out upon the lake with their nets in a fishing boat; but during all the night they caught nothing. At early dawn a stranger was seen upon the shore, from which they were then not far distant; and He called to them, telling them to cast their nets on the right side of the vessel. This they did, and then were not able—not all the seven of them—to draw in the net, on account of the multitude of fishes which it enclosed. Some one—perhaps John—recognized his Master in this miracle; and no sooner did Peter catch the suggestion, "It is the Lord," than, with his characteristic ardour, he leaped into the water, that he might the sooner reach the shore. When the other disciples landed they found a fire kindled, with fish broiling thereon, and bread ready there. By the direction of the stranger, they brought some of the fish they had caught, and these also being dressed, ample materials for a simple meal were provided. Of this they were invited to partake, and Jesus took his usual part as master of the little feast, distributing their portions to the disciples. All this while no explanation had passed on either

* John 20 : 27, 28.

side ; and of the disciples, “ no one asked who art thou ? knowing it was the Lord.” It was on this occasion, and after this meal, that our Lord put to Peter the touching and thrice-repeated question, Lovest thou Me ? and charged him to evince his love by feeding his Lord’s lambs and his sheep.

At the appointed time, the apostles repaired to “ the mountain ” where they were to meet their Lord. Jesus had lived longer in Galilee, and had laboured more there, than in any other part of the country, and it was here that his disciples were most numerous. This interview was perhaps, therefore, more public and solemn than any other, not only with the apostles, but with all the disciples that could be got together ; and it is probably to this occasion that St. Paul refers when he says, that our Lord was seen of five hundred brethren at once.

There were probably many other interviews which Christ held with his apostles, both before and after they had returned to Jerusalem by his direction. In Acts 1. 15, this is indeed plainly enough intimated. St. Paul (I Cor. 15 : 7) mentions one interview with James, which is not otherwise historically recorded ; and he says, that “ after that,” our Lord was seen of “ all the apostles,” probably at an appointed interview just before the Ascension. On that occasion, He renewed the promise of that baptism of the Spirit through which they would be guided into all truth, and be made the efficient instruments of its promulgation. Forty days had now elapsed since our Lord had risen from the tomb, when, during the discourse to which we have just referred, or in immediate connection with it, He conducted the disciples out to the Mount of Olives, the scene of so many interesting incidents in His career. Here he lifted up His hands and blessed them ; and while His hands remained uplifted in blessing, He was parted from them, and taken up into heaven. A cloud soon hid Him from their view ; but while they were still gazing upward, hopeful to catch one more glance of his receding form, “ two men in white apparel,” who were doubtless commissioned angels, were seen standing by, who told them that “ this same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner

as ye have seen him go into heaven." " Even so come, Lord Jesus."

PRAYER.

ETERNAL and unchangeable God, we give glory to Thee for the gracious fulfilment of those hopes and promises upon which the faith of thy chosen and renovated people from generation to generation had been based. We adore Thee for the glorious resurrection of Messiah, thy well beloved Son, after He had fully endured the penalty due to transgression. We would ever triumph in Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. Blessed be thy name, as Jesus died and rose again, so shall all those in whom sin is crucified and dying, be made partakers of the resurrection to life eternal. By our now living unto God, may we have the assurance that we shall never die eternally, and that whether we sleep or wake, we are the Lord's.

We rejoice in the love of which through grace, the redeemed soul is capable. We praise Thee that we can feel assured that it is stronger for Christ than that of the worldling for the treasures of earth. O that we too may be actuated by this surpassing affection towards Him who died for us and rose again !

Henceforth may we live as thou who art alive from the dead. May we ever seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. May we ever be advancing towards a meetness for the appearing again of our Lord, and for the inheritance of saints. Let sin have no dominion over us. Let holiness be increasingly our aim and our element. Enable us to strive ever to honour Thee.

Bless all thy children on earth. We commend to thy compassion the natural Israel and all mankind. We ask all in the name of Jesus, thy beloved Son, our only Saviour, Amen.

XIII.

Restoration of the lapsed ones.—Christ's mediatorial sway.—The influence of redemption probably not limited to this world.—We know of no order of intelligent creatures that have not been affected by sin.—Angels as well as men may be interested.—Our Lord's commission to disciples to baptize.—Headship of Christ.—Subjects and mode of baptism.—The gracious promise.

PRAAYER.

WITH deepened reverence would we now draw nigh unto Thee, O Lord our God. We bless thy holy name for the finished work of redemption. Our confidence now and ever rests upon thy beloved Son, our Divine Saviour. We rejoice that we are taught by the Spirit of grace to plead our once crucified but now risen and reigning Redeemer, hath atoned for our guilt, brought in everlasting righteousness, and on the throne intercedes as our advocate with the Father. O that we may be more profoundly impressed with the immensely important topics of His salvation, and enabled to bring forth vigorous fruits of increasing holiness. We regard it as alike our obligation, happiness, and honour to be found walking in all thy commandments and ordinances blameless. May we ever observe them as thy renewed, intelligent, and devout children.

Great King of Zion, we adore Thee as the Head and Sovereign of thy Church and of each of its true members. Thou art our God, our Ransomer, our Leader, our Model, the Alpha and the Omega of our salvation. We triumph in that supreme sway which Thou exercised over all worlds and all creatures, as the glorified and rewarded Restorer of fallen and ruined man. It is our delight to know that Thou art "Head over all things" for thy Church.

Thou hast enjoined thy followers to disciple all nations, baptizing them.

We are now about to ponder that last command of Thine, Thou Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and the nature of that Sacrament, issued and ordained by Thee after thy resurrection. We admire the wisdom and the grace which characterize the order and the design of this Sacrament of baptism, following that other commemorative of thy death, instituted by thyself on the night of thy betrayal into the hands of thy enemies. As we trust that we have earnestly sought and certainly found spiritual benefit in the consideration and celebration of that which brings to our remembrance thy death and love, so may we be enabled to realize much Christian profit in directing our attention to this which implies thy resurrection and the completion of the work given Thee to do. Multiply great grace and mercy and peace unto us. And the glory shall we ascribe to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, World without end. Amen.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.”—Matt. 28: 19, 20.

On the ever memorable night of our Lord’s betrayal into the hands of His enemies, after the termination of the first celebration of the Sacrament of the Supper, and when on the way to Gethsemane, Jesus said to the eleven,—“All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.”

We have here presented to our contemplation, a bright and beautiful illustration of the inspired Psalmist’s declaration concerning the “good man,”—“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.”* The omniscience of the suffering Saviour foretold

* Psalm 37: 24.

the sin of His followers, in their acting the coward's part, turning their back upon Him, and fleeing in the hour of His arrest. But His love which is as Divine as His omniscience, passed over the frailty and backsliding of these genuine disciples, and rather anticipated and certified their repentance and restoration. Indeed this most gracious of Masters takes occasion from the predicted failing of these loved ones, to assure them of His resurrection, and of a joyful meeting with them after that glorious event. That happy, though brief, reunion was now being realized. Hence we read—"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

The apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews (2: 8, 9) refers to the testimony of David respecting the honour conferred upon the Son by the Father. "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him; he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him: But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." This exposition, with our own knowledge of prevailing sin and rebellion in this world, will at once shew that while universal sway is the bestowed reward received by Messiah for the finishing of the work given Him to do, it does not follow, that His glory and designs require that all enemies and opposition should at once be put down. That this will ultimately and in due season be accomplished is implied. Yet many good causes may require delay, humanly speaking, in attaining the grand issue.

It is obvious that our Lord in the text speaks in His Mediatorial capacity, and as the Redeemer of man. As the Creator, Proprietor, and Upholder of all things,—as "God over all blessed for ever," He possessed an original, undervived, and unchangeable right to control and dispose of "all things." As the Saviour of His Church gathered out of the world, He is the Father's "Servant." Having paid the ransom price of their redemption, and completely fulfilled all righteousness, the Father signified His acceptance of the offering of His

beloved Son by raising Him from the dead, and then by investing Him with supreme authority over all worlds and all creatures.

Scripture is very explicit regarding the exultation and rule of the Anointed One. St. Paul says that the Father of glory, "set him at his own right hand in 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."* Again the same apostle declares that God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth."† The preface to the enlarged commission entrusted by Christ to His Church and ministers, also teaches this great truth. As if to impress upon the minds of all the children of God the infallible certainty of fullest success, felicity, and honour, "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

An objection often urged by infidelity to the truth of the Gospel, is the unreasonableness of believing that the Sovereign Disposer of the universe should have expended so much as the word of inspiration declares, for the restoration of a world so comparatively insignificant as ours is. That Eternal Son, whom the Father spared not, but delivered Him up to death for men, is there clearly unfolded as participating in Supreme Deity, even when humbling Himself to the uttermost. And for submitting to all the shame and woe requisite to restore the children of God, the grand distinction is attached to Him in His capacity of Ransomer and Ruler of His redeemed ones, of a Sovereignty unique, absolute, unlimited, boundless.

Now, the question is, Can all this be true in connection with the generations of men for whose salvation "the Word was made flesh," and who, for the reward of His humiliation,

† Ephesians 1: 21,22.

Phil. 2: 9,10.

has been highly exalted to reign over every created existence? In reply, it should be observed that the objection alleged is a mere presumption. How does the unbeliever or the sceptic know that all the expenditure of redeeming love is confined in its influence to this world? To ascertain this, the opposer must exercise omniscience, or receive a revelation from the omniscient One. But this has not been pretended. What, then, shall we think of the presumption upon which the adversary proceeds? How shall we characterize it? Undoubtedly, we see the deep malignity of the unrenewed heart at work, and the stultified shallowness of a depraved intellect. The circumstances of our own world easily enable us to understand how the events that are transpiring in some locality—intrinsically unimportant, may yet be regarded with highest interest by the enlightened of every community on earth. We are assured respecting the mysteries of redeeming love, that “the angels desire to look into them.” And thus, “as we talk of the public mind of a city, or the public mind of an empire, by the well frequented avenues of a free and ready circulation, a public mind might be formed throughout the whole extent of God’s sinless and intelligent creation; and just as we often read of the eyes of all Europe being turned to the one spot where some affair of eventful importance is going on, there might be the eyes of a whole universe turned to the one world, where rebellion against the Majesty of heaven had planted its standard, and for the readmission of which within the circle of His fellowship, God, whose justice was inflexible, but whose mercy He had, by some plan of mysterious wisdom, made to rejoice over it, was putting forth all the might, and travelling in all the greatness of the attributes which belonged to Him.”*

We are aware of no order of intelligent creatures that have not been affected by sin. Sin intruded into the ranks of the angelic host, and sin ruined the happiness of mankind. Is it so, then, that we cannot count upon the stability of any class of unfallen or restored being? Certainly not. The

* Dr. Chalmers' *Astronomical Discourses*, 4 : 96.

ransomed of the Lord from among men will be upheld to all eternity by the same grace that interposes to rescue them from present guilt and wretchedness. And there is every ground to conclude that, though for the angels that sinned, no salvation was provided, yet the beneficent influence of the ransoming and renovation of "the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood," upon the holy throng who have kept their first estate, is such, that they are delivered from the danger of ever lapsing into sin. The ceaseless, delighted, and personal interest which they evince in the accomplishment of the Divine Saviour's undertaking, is very conspicuous in the word of God. They are ever ready to attend either upon Jesus or any of His true disciples. They heralded and did honour to the birth of the Son of Mary. They ministered to Him in His weakness after His temptation in the wilderness; and in Gethsemane's direful garden, when the countenance and sympathy of earthly friends were withheld from the agonized Sufferer, at the climax and crisis of His woe, when crying out "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," we read that there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening (sympathizing with) Him. How gladly they facilitated and announced His resurrection, we have seen. They accompanied Him as His honourable attendants, when, as the King of Glory, He ascended to the right hand of the Father's throne. And when He shall come again, as foretold by Himself and angel voices, the glory of the holy angels will add to the splendour of the wondrous advent. Nor is their manifest concern in the fulfilment of the glorious plan of restoration abated, when we turn our attention to the members of Him who is the Head of the body. They deem it no unworthy occupation; but, on the contrary, feel honoured to become "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." They rejoice over one sinner that repenteth; and whether the return of the prodigal, the bringing back of the wanderer, or the aiding and comforting of the believer, be their mission, they enter into it and discharge it with joy. What more reasonable, then, than to conclude that, in addi-

tion to the benignity and benevolence of their celestial nature, predisposing them to aid in the rescue and felicity of the perishing children of Adam—their perception of the honour redounding to Jehovah, their entire consecration to that honour, and the influence of the plan of salvation upon their own everlasting good,—all combine to induce promptest and most joyful service, on their part, in the execution of the gracious purposes of God? Having no aim but the simplest and purest devotion to the glory of the Most High, they will perceive and feel how dignified and how delightful is the part assigned to them, however humble it may be, when it is in furtherance of the mighty achievement which brought the Son of the Highest from the throne of supreme Majesty to the sufferings of the cross. Well satisfied are they to imbibe the spirit of Christ, who died and endured so much to glorify His Father, and renew the image of God in the fallen children of men.

We may now direct our attention to the consequences of the Redeemer's resurrection and glory. The Christian dispensation, preliminary to that glorious future predicted by prophets, and longed for by the children of God, when the restoration of "all things" shall have been effected, was now about to be fully entered upon. Hitherto "the glad tidings" had been addressed only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Now, the commission entrusted to the followers of the Lamb takes a far wider range. Even yet the preaching of the gospel is to commence at Jerusalem. But henceforth the field of operation is the world, and the objects of call, all the human family. "All power," said Jesus to his disciples, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them," etc.

Such is the charge of the King of Zion to the ministers and members of His Church. We have here presented to our notice three topics, to which we shall, in order, turn our thoughts. First, the constituency; secondly, the mandate; thirdly, the promise.

1. The constituency comprises "all nations," or "all the nations." It is worthy of special remark that the word ren-

dered "nations," derived as it is from the Hebrew, while it may signify nations in general, indicates more particularly the heathen or gentile nations. The Jewish people are, doubtless, comprehended as within the scope of the commission. Yet it seems to be implied that the Christian dispensation and "the times of the gentiles" are an identical period of time. Still it must never be forgotten that the duty of the Church of God is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." We have it explained by the Lord Himself to His eleven—"Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*

The elements of a nation consist of old and young—those who are in the vigour of their days, and those who are weak. The words of Israel's renowned leader to his nation will afford us an excellent example of the different classes comprised in such a body.—"Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is within thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water."† It is desirable at this stage to mark that infancy and childhood are comprehended in a nation. They form a very important and numerous portion of every nation. How nationally influential they are, we may perceive by the notice taken of them by the Lord, as a consideration why mercy should be exercised to a repentant population. "And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"‡ If we only reflect for a moment upon the ideas of the men to whom the words before us were spoken, we shall still farther perceive that children are included. They were Jews, and they had no conception of excluding even infancy from the membership of the Church. Obviously,

* Luke 24 : 46, 47. † Deut. 29 : 10. ‡ Jonah 4 : 11.

then, they would understand alike the adult and the infant to be intended. Nor do we learn that they were mistaken, or had to correct this as an error.

2. With regard to this constituency, we have the mandate addressed to the friends of Jesus—"Go and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The grand instrument of christianizing mankind is the preaching of the gospel. It hath pleased God "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The ministry of reconciliation must be employed. "Now, then," says the apostle of the Gentiles, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* The special business of the minister of Christ is to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."† Mainly by means of this instrumentality does the Spirit awaken the sleeper, quicken the dead in trespasses, and turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. By instruction, by the life of holiness manifested in those "who profess and call themselves Christians," and by the dealings of Providence, does God operate upon the soul of the sinner, as well as by the public and private ordinances of the Sanctuary and the domestic circle. All these it is the obligation, honour and happiness of all who are Christ's, in their several spheres, to employ. In this way, with faithful and devout exertions, may we look for much success. And all they who go forth to scatter and sow the precious seed of saving truth, in humility and faith, may expect that they will be honoured labourers in the vineyard of the Lord.

When the hearer of the Word or the receiver of the truth becomes a follower of Jesus,—a learner of Him, obedient to His authority, and reliant upon Him alone for salvation,—

* II Cor. 5 : 20, 21.

† II Tim. 4 : 2.

such an one is being disciplined, and is here enjoined to be baptized into the thrice holy name of the Divine Trinity. How beautiful is the significant rite here instituted! How suitable! How suggestive of solemn and salutary truth! The disciples are baptized into the name of the Father, who originated, in His eternal love, the plan of salvation; of the Son, who gave Himself an offering to take away sin; and of the Holy Spirit, who applies the finished work of Christ to the sinner's soul. They are to be baptized with water, emblematic of the blood that cleanseth from all sin, and significant of the renewing and purifying of the Holy Ghost.

The Sacrament of Baptism, like that of the Supper, was appointed by our Lord in person. And for any individual, or number of individuals, to institute a sacrament, is to act the part of Antichrist, and is thereby proclaimed Antichrist, as putting himself or themselves in the place of Christ. It is "the man of sin who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."*

Though baptism was known before the coming of Christ, was practised by His forerunner, John, and by His own disciples, it was only appropriated now as a sacrament. Some have thought that Aaron and his sons were set apart to the priestly office by baptism.† But Christian baptism differs from all "divers baptism," in its being a sacrament obligatory upon all Christ's followers, and in its being grounded upon the fact of our Lord's resurrection. It was after He arose from the dead, that He ordained its celebration as a sacrament. In the sacrament of the Supper we behold the symbol of the sacrifice of the Son of God; in that of Baptism, we behold the recognition and acceptance of that sacrifice, attested by the Father's raising Him from the dead. When Paul inquired of "certain disciples" whether they had received the Holy Ghost, in His miraculous gifts, they replied that they had not. "And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye

* II Thess. 2 : 4.

† Ex. 29 : 4.

baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."* From this narrative it is evident that the gift of the Holy Ghost was associated with faith in the risen Messiah. It was not enough to believe in Him that was to come. In order to receive miraculous gifts, there must be in exercise the faith that Christ had risen. And although miracles have long ceased, the disciple of Jesus is required to believe both that Jesus died, and that He arose from the dead. The seal of the Father's acceptance of the offering, and of his being well pleased for the righteousness sake of His beloved Son, is recognized in the faith of the resurrection of the first-begotten from the dead. Thus in Christian baptism there is implied, not the faith required by the Baptist of those who received the rite at his hand,—the faith, viz., that Messiah was coming and at hand; not merely the faith of those who were baptized by the disciples of Jesus, referred to in John 4: 1, 2, which faith recognized Jesus as having truly come in his Messianic character; but the faith of Christian baptism, recognizing Christ as having suffered and risen from the dead, and as guaranteeing the resurrection to eternal life of all who are believingly His.

All, then, who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, to the saving of the soul, ought to be baptized. The repentant sinner, whether a denizen of a heathen land or of a Christian country, ought, if unbaptized, to feel the solemn and sweet obligation here imposed upon the disciple, by Him who died for us and rose again. And by the constraining love and the filial fear that ever accompany true faith, such should be impelled to yield a cordial and cheerful obedience to the sacred behest. Multitudes of such ransomed ones have, with holy joy and solemnity, avowed themselves to be the followers of the Lamb. And every right-minded partaker of the

* Acts 19: 3-5.

quickenings of the Spirit will be conscious that a necessity is imposed upon every member of the mystical body "to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

Here the enquiry may be made, are children and infants comprehended in the commission of our text? The observations already offered go far, it is hoped, to afford a satisfactory reply. Not only does childhood enter largely into the composition of the nation, but God has done great honour to childhood. Its simplicity, teachableness, and unprejudiced character; its leaning upon the parent, and its separation from personally perpetrated sins, render it an apt type of that state of heart and mind at which every one must arrive, in order to be a child of God. We know, upon the highest authority, that if we do not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, we shall not enter therein. Children, anterior to the Christian dispensation, were admitted into the Church of God by a Divinely authorized ceremonial. We know that all principles are eternal, and that Jehovah never changeth in the essential principles of His procedure, though the mode of application may vary according to the stage, circumstances, and maturity of the case. Thus when we pass from the Mosaic economy to the Christian, we find that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* Still farther, it is ascertained that more than half of the race of mankind die before arriving at such an age as can be deemed responsible,—die in infaney. Now we believe in the salvation of this vast throng, and that glory will redound to that Saviour who cleansed them from the stain of depravity of nature, and regenerated them by His grace, without any personal act of their own. How consistent, then, that such as these should be admitted to the privileges of disciples, by having the rite of baptism administered to them!

But it is alleged that it is only disciples who are to be baptized, and that infants are incapable of sustaining this

* C. I. 3: 28.

character. This assumption, however, we deny. For the children of believers are by the Providence of God disciples. Are they not learners in the school of Christ? Are they not in circumstances the most favourable that can be supposed for learning His will? Are there not absolute promises made by the covenant-keeping God, to prayerful and wise parents? Is not baptism itself a seal of the covenant which, when believingly embraced by Christian parents, affords a pledge on the part of Jehovah that His blessing will be upon their offspring? Then, if we consult the record of history, not a case can be authenticated of a child, properly dedicated to God in baptism, and piously watched over and trained subsequently, having died in impenitency. On the other hand, we find that the most excellent Christians, as well as the great majority of those who are truly Christ's, have enjoyed the benefits of this early, baptismal, believing consecration of them to Jehovah. And when we seek the light of the New Testament upon the subject, we discover, besides the comprehensive commission of our Lord, a great variety of household baptisms narrated, among which it appears certain there must have been young persons and little children.*

All this, however, is very far from warranting the application of baptism indiscriminately. On the contrary, it seems strictly to limit it to believers and their offspring, or those to whom they stand in the relation of parents. The teaching and instances of Scripture appear to authorize the digest of the Shorter Catechism, as an admirable epitome of the truth respecting this ordinance: "Baptism is not to be administered to any who are out of the visible Church till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him, but the infants of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized."

* See Acts 21 : 9. The prophesying of the evangelist's daughters, implies their baptism; whether at the same time with Philip or not, we have family baptism. See also Acts 10 : 2, 47, 48; 16 : 33; 16, 14, 15; 18 : 8; Romans 16 : 5; I Cor. 16 : 19; II Timothy 4 : 19; Romans 16 : 10, 11, 13; I Cor. 1 : 11; 1 : 16; II Timothy 1 : 16; Philemon 1 : 2; Colossians 4 : 15.

If we act upon this view, we shall avoid many difficulties and much evil. There are many disposed to seek baptism for their children who are quite unwilling to celebrate the death of Immanuel at His holy table. They fancy that the one sacrament is more solemn than the other, and that they are not so much committed by the reception of the one, as by that of the other they would be. Here is an alarming, a dangerous, and a prevailing error. So far from not being as solemn and imposing in its obligations, the avowal is the same in each of the sacraments, with the additional peculiarity in Baptism, that the vows concern more than one immortal being. The soul of both parent and child are directly connected with their fulfilment; while in the Lord's Supper, associated as it ever must be with recollections and impressions the most affecting imaginable, only one individual is personally pledged.

If we were to analyse the motives and the ideas that lead to the more general observance of baptism, we should find that superstition, conformity to the spirit of the world, and vanity, lead multitudes to apply for its administration to infants. This, however, is just a solemn mockery of the ordinance. It is dealing with it as if it were a charm. It is heathenizing the Christian sacrament. The true and scriptural rule is,—let all who love the Lord Jesus Christ observe the Christian communion of His body and blood, in remembrance of Him, and in obedience to His dying command. Then let such parents as are thus open disciples and Church members, when thus administered and received in faith and love, obtain baptism for their children. The sacramental service is then truly beautiful and edifying.

After baptism, which is the initiatory rite, the disciple must be taught all things commanded by the Divine Head of the Church. This the pastor and teacher, the minister of the word and the parent of the family, must strive to implement. "The sincere milk of the word," suitable food for advancing progress; the strong meat required for vigorous believers; the painstaking instruction of the lips, and the embodiment of living Christianity in the conduct, must all be employed

in obedience to the authority and will of that Lord and Saviour who here speaks. Nothing revealed by Him must be withheld ; nothing which He has not enjoined, must be allowed to take the place of His commands.

Much has been said respecting the Headship of Christ, and much of what has been said has been subversive of truth and calculated to perplex and obscure a very simple doctrine. Every Christian practically and savingly understands the doctrine of the Headship. Without rendering the risen Lord supreme homage, and joyfully yielding to all His known wishes and will, no man can be a true disciple of Jesus. Every saved sinner, every believer does so. The spirit of the disciple is expressed in such language as " Speak Lord for thy servant heareth." And what is true of the Christian individually, is true of all Christian societies or churches. All where members desire in simplicity and godly sincerity to obey Christ in all things, with liberty and encouragement to do so, must be regarded as verifying the obligation to hold the Head. We may not agree with our brother or our neighbour in some doubtful dispute, but he is not entitled in consequence to rail against us or violate the law of truth and charity. Or if he do, we can only answer to our own Master we stand or fall. Nay, this we are bold to promise,—shew us the honour or the word of Christ, requiring us to do or to believe—and by the love that we cherish to Him, by the faith that unites us to Him, and by the hope that we entertain of soon seeing Him, we promise you prompt and hearty acquiescence. We know that all disciples must learn " to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded."

Much controversy has been expended respecting the mode of baptism, whether it ought to be by sprinkling or pouring, or by immersion. The advocates for the last method are often exclusive, offensive, unchristian in their practice and statements. Scripture requires the application of water to the body as a sign or seal. But very little is found as to the mode. To affirm that every method save immersion is a nullity, and to administer the ordinance again to those who have been baptized with water into the sacred name of the

Divine Trinity, is to unchristianize externally, so far as the actors can do it, other professing Christians. And as is usual in such cases of presumptuous arbitrariness, there is not any ground of authority in the word of God to entitle any to proceed in this manner. While we concede that baptism by plunging under water is warrantable if convenient and preferred, there seems to be a weight of scriptural evidence in favour of sprinkling.* Certainly the descent of the Spirit which was the manifestation of the promised baptism by the Holy Ghost, is more favourable to pouring than to immersion. (Acts 2: 2, 3, 17, 18.) Baptism with water is but a type of the Spirit's higher baptism. When our Lord was baptized in the Jordan, the descent of the Spirit, like the priestly anointing of Aaron, was analogous to an outpouring. And the very name of Christian, derived as it is from Christ—the anointed One, strongly suggests the better mode.

If any desire some command more explicit whether as to the subjects or the mode of baptism, let such remember that men have ever been prone to exaggerate the importance of ritual observances, and they will see the wisdom of God in not giving this sacrament greater prominence in His word. When we hear of the pernicious errors connected with “sacramental grace,” we may well rejoice in the style and brevity of the oracles of inspiration. For adult and infant disciples we have “a plain and positive *inclusive command*”† to baptize them, “teaching them,” says Jesus, “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”

We arrive at many most important conclusions by inference. Females were not enjoined to attend at the celebration of the three great annual festivals of Israel, yet their presence was both frequent and acceptable unto God. And though not named, it is admitted that they ought to obey the dying injunction of the Author of the Christian Passover.

* Isaiah 52: 15, appears to be a prophecy of our Lord's commissioning to disciple and baptize the nations. See also Ezekiel 36: 25. Titus 3: 5, 6.

† Bickersteth.

We arrive at the conviction inferentially that we should sanctify the first day of the week rather than the seventh, unto the Lord our God. During this dispensation it is the purpose of our heavenly Father to try the reins and test the religious candour and integrity of His children. For the upright there is abundance of light to lead them into all truth.

3. In association with the mandate of the risen Saviour, He supplies a most gracious promise to the docile and the progressing members of His mystical body,—“And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Here we have the assurance of the Divine presence and Spirit of our King and Head in all circumstances. It is applicable to every believer and every Christian communion. It should be gratefully appropriated by all who bear the image of Christ. The Holy Spirit has sustained the Church and children of God in every age and century. There have always been His sealed ones even in the darkest periods of apostacy and persecution. All history proves this. And this proves the faithfulness of the “true Witness” and covenant-keeping God who here promises. Without this gracious and Almighty protection, the gates of hell must have prevailed against the Church of Christ many a time. But we know in whom we have believed, and are confident that what He hath spoken He will fulfil.

When the devout student of the oracles of God opens, reads, searches, and reflects upon revealed truth, he lifts up his soul to Him with whom is the residue of the Spirit, and the interceding Son obtains from the Father all that is sought. The holy Agent enters the soul, illuminates the understanding, elevates the affections, spiritualizes the mind, renders the heart contrite, and sanctifies increasingly the child of God through the truth. This is the experience in some measure of every follower of Jesus. This honour has every saint; and in this way all Christians are taught by God truly and savingly. The realization of such beatific presence and influence is a demonstration of the verity of the promise, “Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

When in the dark day of adversity, the children of God are steadfast and immovable; when the provision of Zion is greatly

blessed, when her priests are clothed with salvation, and her saints shout aloud for joy; when sinners are turned to the Lord by repentance, and faith in the crucified and risen Son of God; when disciples have their graces and consolations increased and multiplied; when the idolater and his fellows turn from dumb idols to serve the living God, and confide wholly in Jesus of Nazareth for salvation; when Jewish unbelief and Gentile hostility alike yield to the power and influences of the Spirit of Christ; when many are not ashamed of avowing themselves devoted to the Saviour at His holy Table, and when the sacrament of baptism is devoutly prized and received; when the Spirit is poured out from on high, so that believers walk in the comfort and joy of the Holy Ghost, adorning their profession, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; when grace is matured into a ripeness for glory; then do we behold that the beatific promise of the text is delightfully fulfilled—"Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

How happy are they who, having yielded themselves to God's Anointed, are being increasingly disciplined for Him, and taught "to observe whatsoever he has commanded!" How suitably may we apply to ourselves the appeal of the apostle when comparing the guilt of those who sinned under the economy which was ushered in by the ministry of the heavenly host and the splendours of Sinai, and that of those who disregard the mild and beautiful radiance of the dispensation which was inaugurated by the Word made flesh! "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard Him?"* May ours be the felicity so devoutly supplicated by the holy apostle—"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you: to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."†

* Hebrews 2 : 2, 3.

† I Peter 5 : 10, 11.

PRAYER.

MAY the Spirit from on high be poured out upon us, O Lord, so that we, having yielded ourselves to the Anointed of the Father, may not only be His disciples, but may be growing unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. May our meditations upon the revealed truth be productive of much and lasting good. Impart to us, Heavenly Father, abundant grace. May our study of thy Holy Word, in the fruits of righteousness manifested in our lives, be seen not to have been in vain. May we ever be wiser and better for our searching of the Scriptures, and keeping of thy ordinances as these have been delivered to us. Blot out, for the sake of thy dear Son, all our sins; sanctify us wholly, and keep us until the day of God. We commend to thy mercy all nations. Prosper the Christian efforts of thy servants to disciple and instruct them. Bless the nation, the empire, and the province with which we are especially connected. Bless all in authority, giving them grace to glorify Thee in all things. Bless all thy people. Hasten the beatific time when all things put under Him, Jesus shall be adored as the prince of the kings of the earth, as King of kings, and Lord of lords; and unto the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, shall be ascribed endless praise, dominion, and glory. Amen.

THE END.