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KRUMMACHER'S CORNELIUS THE CENTURION, AND
LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ST. JOHN.

EDINBURGH:
THOMAS CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET;
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CORNELIUS THE CENTURION,

AND

LIFE AND CHARACTER OF

ST. JOHN,

THE EVANGELIST AND APOSTLE,

BY

F. A. KRUMMACHER, D.D.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

WITH

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF THE AUTHOR,

AND A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION ON GERMAN THEOLOGY,

BY THE

REV. JOHN W. FERGUSON, A.M.

MINISTER OF ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

OF

THE AUTHOR.

THE following brief account of **FREDERICK ADOLPH KRUMMACHER** will probably prove not uninteresting to those who appreciate the Christian sentiment and cultivated mind displayed in “**Cornelius the Centurion**,” the production of one who has long been eminently distinguished among his countrymen, both as a clergyman and as an author, in the higher departments of literature.

F. A. Krummacher was born at **Tecklenburgh**, in **Westphalia**, on the 13th July 1768. After having been employed as Professor of Theology in the University of **Duisburg**, he became a minister in the Reformed Church at **Krefeld** in 1807, where he undertook the cure of souls, as more congenial to his feelings. This situation he exchanged for a country parish at **Kettwick**, in **Westphalia**, from which he removed to a wider sphere of usefulness in **Bemburg** ;

here he continued till 1824, his labours being abundantly blessed by the Great Head of the Church. Since that period he has been a clergyman in Bremen, where he still continues, respected for the consistency of his character and the apostolic simplicity of his life.

From an early period, he has been intimately acquainted with ancient and modern poetry ; this, along with his profound knowledge of the language and customs of the Eastern world, and his diligent study of the Scriptures, has given that peculiar bent to his mind which beams through all his writings. His various compositions abound with images and comparisons ; and he generally endeavours to convey knowledge, and to express his sentiments, through the medium of poetry.

He was early accustomed to trace the development of the human spirit through all the gradations of life ; and, being gifted with a keen sense of the beauties of nature, and having a mind alive to the language in which nature speaks, he saw everywhere similitudes and allegories which were symbolical of hidden truths, —these he endeavoured to express in the simplest language, so as to be intelligible even to a child. He saw that the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of grace bore the impress of one Infinite mind, and the exhibitions of that mind in the works of creation and

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in the inspired volume, he found to be in perfect harmony with each other ; and these analogies it was his peculiar delight to trace.

He appears to be thoroughly imbued with a striking feature of the German character—a delight in children ; and the great beauty and simplicity of his style have eminently qualified him for being the successful writer for their instruction, which he has proved himself to be in his own land. To use the words of a foreign critic, “ It was the delight of his heart to find enjoyment in every thing,—in playing with a child, in looking on a blooming rose, in contemplating the variegated colours of the evening sky, in confidential friendship, and in the quiet hours of study.”

By his countrymen he is regarded as a poet of no ordinary rank ; in his poem entitled “ The Child’s World,” there is, according to a German reviewer, no display of creative genius, but that spirit which delights in the words, “ Suffer little children to come unto me.”

In portraying the character of Cornelius, he evinces a mind actuated by the same purity of motives, by the same desire for truth, and is evidently in possession of the key which opens up to him every step in the progress of the Centurion, from the first dawning of divine light on his soul, until blessed with the full

blaze of it in the ministrations of the Apostle of the Jews. It was a saying of one of the early fathers of the church, “ If you wish to apprehend the meaning of St. Paul’s writings, you must first imbibe his spirit.” This remark may be applied with much truth to the author of Cornelius,—it is impossible to read his analysis of this New Testament Abraham’s mind and feelings, without being convinced that his own path has been that of the just, which, like the shining light, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The following extract from the Author’s Preface, will shew the circumstances in which the work was composed : —“ The meditations on the conversion of the heathen Centurion and his household, were originally preached as sermons in Bremen. They are now divested of that form, some are enlarged, and some curtailed. The style is historical, as being suited to the subject, and my own views of Scripture. It appears to me that the numerous divine manifestations related in the Old and New Testaments, may be regarded as one continued history of God in his relation to man. Luther calls it “ the History of all histories,” for it is an account of the stupendous miracles of the divine majesty and grace, from the beginning even unto eternity. The sermon of the Apostle Peter is the simplest, and at the same time, the most comprehensive of all narrations.

“ In the same spirit, our Lord Jesus compares the history of the kingdom of heaven, to the development of a little seed of corn, or a grain of mustard seed ; for the operations and the secret influence of God are every where the same, in the kingdom of nature, and in the kingdom of grace, as well as in the kingdom of glory.

“ The life of the Centurion Cornelius is a flower plucked from the garden of Jehovah ; I hope I have written it with that simplicity and candour, which is essential to history, if we wish it to resemble a mirror, in faithfully depicting incidents as they occur.’

“ CORNELIUS.”

THE history of the Centurion Cornelius, which the Evangelist Luke has preserved in his Acts of the Apostles, is well worthy of our devout and attentive consideration ; for it is a renewal of the holy feast of Pentecost among the heathen, and in a heathen house. In Cornelius we see a remarkable example of the power of the Holy Spirit, when He calls, enlightens, sanctifies, and blesses men ; and we also behold the saving mercy of our great God and Redeemer, in letting himself down to those that seek him, so that “ they may feel after him and find him,” Acts xvii. 27. It would, indeed, be difficult to get another history in which the mysterious connection between the visible and the invisible world lies more clearly open to our view. What an inestimable blessing the word of God has bestowed on us in describing so simply and circumstantially, the inmost character of this soldier, thirsting after truth, searching, longing for, and at last joyfully finding peace ! Are not his wants our wants ? Do not our hearts, if we rightly understood them, sigh for the peace and the

happiness which he sought for and found ? Let us, therefore, turn our attention to this Simeon among the heathen, who earnestly sought for the consolation of Israel and the light of the Gentiles ; and who was esteemed worthy to behold the Saviour, and in him to find peace.

“ We praise thee, O Lord our God, that Thou, in thy precious word, hast preserved to us the inmost history of thy chosen ones, and thy manifestations of grace unto them. This Thou hast done that we may have our hearts quickened, by looking on them, and learn how to direct our feet in the paths of peace. Enlighten our eyes, that we, by the guidance of thy Holy Spirit, may rightly apprehend thy grace and truth ; and that, following the example of our Saviour, we may more and more be partakers of thy light and peace. Amen.”

“ There was a certain man in Cæsarea, called Cornelius, a Centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”
Acts x. 1, 2.

With these simple words the Evangelist opens the history of the mighty acts of God among the Gentiles ; his subject hitherto had been the announcement of the gospel to the Jews and Samaritans only ; but here he describes the dwelling place and rank, the person and character of the man in whom the Lord's mercy and truth were to be manifested.

“ *There was a certain man in Cæsarea.*”—

Cæsarea, or, in other words, Cæsar’s town, was a city of considerable importance, on the Mediterranean Sea, which Herod had greatly embellished, and though it had formerly borne another name, called it Cæsarea, in honour of the Roman emperor.

It was at present the capital of Judea and the adjoining province of Syria, as well as the residence of the Roman governor. A garrison was stationed here, which consisted partly of native Syrians, and partly of Italian or Roman troops. Cornelius was Captain of an Italian company, a man remarkable, as being the first among the Gentiles who, by the preaching of the Apostle, was led to believe in the name of Jesus, and to make an open profession of the gospel.

Cornelius is, besides, the first mentioned among those “ who were afar off, but whom it was promised that God should call,” Acts ii. 39; and also the first among the millions of Gentiles, who were to be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But he concerns us more nearly, in being our New Testament Abraham; for in him began God’s work of mercy, whereby our Gentile forefathers were admitted into the flock of the Great Shepherd.

Cornelius was a Roman Captain. His rank and profession were not the most likely to lead him to the investigation and acknowledgment of the truth; on the contrary, it was more probable they would lead him away from it.

The gospel is not confined to any station or calling; all who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, may

be benefitted by it, whether clad in warlike accoutrements, in purple, or in the garments of poverty. It is the light of God, which shines not less on the blade of grass than on the tall cedar, illuminating the cottage as well as the palace. Here there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ, Gal. iii. 28.

Cornelius is the fourth Centurion commended in the New Testament on account of his faith. The first of whom we read is the one at Capernaum, who intreated our Lord, with great humility, to heal his servant, and on whom our Saviour pronounced this high encomium—"Verily I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"—at the same time prophesying of those who should come from the east and the west, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. The second* is the other Centurion at Capernaum, who asked and obtained from our Lord the healing of his sick child, after the physicians had been employed in vain. Next comes the one who kept watch at the cross of Christ, at whose death, being seized by an overwhelming conviction of the truth, he cried out, "Truly this was the Son of God!" Lastly, there is our Cornelius, who, in mind and character, humility and faith, bears a strong resemblance to the first at Capernaum. St. Paul says that God has chosen "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;" † yet he has always chosen some of them. Yes, even now, there are not a few who, high in worldly rank and honour, engage with

* See Note A.

† See Note B.

apostolic zeal, and a child-like, humble, scripture-faith, in spreading the word of God, and the light of the gospel amongst the heathen.

Our Cornelius was by birth and education a pagan and not a proselyte. Of the latter there were two kinds: those who, renouncing heathenism, embraced judaism, and underwent circumcision, conforming to the whole Levitical law, called *proselytes of justice*, or *proselytes of the house*, because they were incorporated with the house or people of Israel, and those who, renouncing heathenism and the worship of idols, merely professed their belief in one God, and pledged themselves to obey the moral law, but without undergoing circumcision, or observing the Levitical law and service. These were called *proselytes of the gate*, being, as it were, excluded from the interior of the house. But Cornelius was neither.* Had he been a proselyte of justice, or of the gate, Peter would not have been unwilling to receive him into the community of Christians, when so many proselytes of all nations were to be found among those baptized after his preaching on the day of Pentecost. Nor would "they of the circumcision which believed," who accompanied Peter, have been astonished, "because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." Cornelius was a Gentile by birth,—but certainly no Gentile in mind or character, no worshipper of idols, for he acknowledged and feared the one true God, the God of Israel.

* See Note C.

How could he have attained such a clever understanding? In no other way than by the word, and the grace of God: for the Holy Scriptures had even then made their silent secret way through a great part of the world. Such is their nature and destination, so it is in the present day, and so it shall be unceasingly. The knowledge of the one living God had been spread among the Gentiles, through the scattering of the Jewish people, during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Besides, in Egypt, two hundred years before the birth of Christ, the written word of God had been made accessible to the great mass of the people, being translated into Greek, the language of the civilized world. In this manner, probably, the word of truth had reached the Gentile Cornelius, and through its means, he had arrived at the knowledge of God. Without doubt, he had heard also of the mighty deeds of the Lord which were done in Judea, and of the messengers of God, who, like Philip, in Syria, and even in Cæsarea and its environs, were announcing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yet man is not saved by the mere acknowledgment of this all-important truth, for it may be only a barren conviction. Indeed, the falling away of all nations, in the early ages, from this simple belief, their loss of the knowledge of the one true God, and the consequent strictness with which He maintained his worship amongst his chosen people, is a fearful proof of the deep deterioration and delusion of men. The acknowledgment of one God and an Almighty

Creator, is but the commencement of a Christian's life ; the devils know that there is a God, but while they believe, they tremble. The prodigal son knew well that he had a father, but of what service was this to him, until his wounded heart was awakened to long for this father, and for a reconciliation with him ! In our Cornelius, it was not a barren conviction ; on the contrary, it was a heart-felt desire for the living God, and for his revelation.

“ *For he was a devout man, and one that feared God, with all his house.*”

Devout is a beautiful word, and is here full of signification—that Cornelius, after he had learned to know the true and living God, made meditation on him, and seeking after his fellowship, his highest and most earnest occupation, the guiding principle of his thoughts and life. He also *feared God*; the one cannot be separated from the other, for the fear of God is an humble holy veneration of the Most High, and is grounded on a lively conviction of His glory and omnipotence, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, who dwelleth in a light which no man can approach unto. Whosoever knows God aright, cannot be otherwise than penetrated with a holy awe. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; therefore, saith the law, (Deuteronomy x. 12.) “And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

This fear of God shows itself in a holy detesta-

tion of thinking, wishing, or doing, anything that displeases him.

Such was Cornelius, and such was his whole household, his wife, children, and servants; we find two of the latter mentioned in the 7th verse, besides the devout soldier who waited on him continually. The words of Joshua, "I and my house will serve the Lord," were also in the heart of our Centurion—his light shown brightly, that all his house might fear and seek the Lord along with him. Though Cornelius, as a Gentile, might not enter the Synagogue of the Jews, yet, what was far better, he could transform his house into a temple of God! Blessed is that house where they fear the Lord thus, and walk in his ways!

If his house were a temple, offerings of love were the sacrifices which he brought thither; "he gave much alms to the people," and fulfilled the law,—“Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” Isaiah lviii. 7.

“*He gave much alms;*”—plenteously, and with kindness, he dispensed his gifts, and was not weary of well doing.

“*He gave to the people,*”—that is to say, to the poor of the Jewish nation—to the people of God, whose debtor he was, in order to show his gratitude for being partaker of their spiritual things. Cornelius proved his devotion and fear of God in his compassionate and benevolent love towards his neigh-

bour: on which account he was of good report among all the nation of the Jews, verse 22d. And, what is much more, in him was fulfilled the promise made by Isaiah, in the name of the Lord, to those who exhibited love, out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned—"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward."

The sacred history, after it has, in a few words, depicted his mind and habits, leads us now into his chamber, "*He prayed to God alway.*" Here we see the sacrifice of his lips, which was well pleasing unto his heavenly Father.

Not merely in his chamber, but in every place, and at all times, his heart was, in thought and prayer, directed upwards to the source of all light. He praised and thanked God for the work of grace which He had begun in him, and for the light with which He had blessed him.

But, at the same time, in the immediate presence of such a holy and good God, he perceived the more clearly his distance from Him—his own poverty and deficiency—his sinfulness, and the darkness of his mind; and so much the more ardent became his desire for enlightenment, for purification and for holiness. He besought, therefore, farther grace, and more abundant gifts from God, and prayed to Him continually.

In this manner does the word of God, "that dis-

corner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," portray Cornelius the Gentile. Most lovely picture! But does it not put to shame many whom the Lord has called from the beginning to the inheritance of his holy ones in light?

What with this Gentile was but the commencement—his devotion and fear of God, his love of his neighbour, his aspirations and prayers—should much more be the daily occupation of the children of light! the blossoms and fruits of their lives! Is not the path of Cornelius the only right path to life, to freedom and happiness for the children of God! Cornelius, as yet, had not this joy; his eyes had not yet seen his Saviour; but, even then, he longed with his whole heart, and we may put in his mouth the words of the 42d Psalm, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God; when shall I come and appear before God!" But, if the Lord make a refreshing fountain spring up in the thickets of the wood, for the hart panting with thirst, how much more shall he open the fountain of life to those who seek him! Here may we use the concluding words of the Psalm, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

So it happened to our Cornelius. He longed for the salvation of Israel, for the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and it was given to him in full measure.

In him was fulfilled the divine promise : “ The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and will save them,” Psalm cxlv. 18, 19.

O Lord ! draw us unto thee ! for thou hast made us, and our heart is ever disquieted until it find peace in resting upon thee !

II.

THE history of the Centurion Cornelius is written minutely and circumstantially, not merely because he was the first Gentile whom the Apostle converted and baptized ; but that in him we might see how very precious each individual is in the eyes of God. In the external world, man is but a cipher : “ As for man, his days are as grass, as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth ; for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone ; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” Psalm ciii. 15, 16.

So it is with all the generations of men, they wither and fall away like the leaves of the trees in autumn ; their memory and even their name disappears from the earth, as if they had never been. How transitory and uncertain is the life of man, who yet dwells here so securely ! We cannot think of ourselves too humbly or too insignificantly ; nor yet can we regard ourselves too highly, when we look up to God, to the living God, who, before the foundations of the world were laid, chose and ordained us to be his children through Christ.

Therefore the royal Psalmist, after comparing man to the grass and the flower of the field, continues, in the 103d Psalm : “ But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s

children ; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

And thus speaks the prophet in these moving words : " Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." Isaiah xlix. 15, 16.

The gospel shews us the value of even one human being in the eyes of God, when Jesus made the children come to him, so little esteemed by his disciples, took them in his arms one after another, and blessed them, saying, " Of these are the kingdom of heaven ; and when he described himself as the faithful shepherd, who left the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, to go after the one which was lost : and again, when he saith, " There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." In our history we may well wonder at the great instruments employed, and at heaven and earth set in motion, so to speak, for the sake of one individual.

But has not God the Lord, by means of one man, blessed all the dwellers upon earth ? Has he not presented to us *one* Abraham for an example of righteousness by faith, and did he not by *one* Moses ratify the old covenant ? And above all, " As by the offence of *one*, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of *one*, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Every man, therefore, in the confidence of faith, may look beyond the sun and stars of heaven and

say, "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them."—Ps. cxxxix. 16.

"He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming unto him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa."—Acts x. 3—8.

The history here begins to show how God drew nigh unto Cornelius, when striving diligently to find him, according to his promise, that he would manifest himself to those that seek him. This happened gradually, and by a revelation from the invisible world.

The devout, child-like believer, was not without hope that his desire for the light and countenance of God would be gratified; this was probably increased by the intelligence he had received, of the announcement of the gospel in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea, particularly in Samaria, by Philip and those Christians who were exiled from Jerusalem. How often

must he have sighed, " Oh ! that one of these messengers of God would come unto me, to point out the path of salvation and peace ! " He continued in prayer and fasting, from the morning until the ninth hour, in order to become free from all that is earthly, and more susceptible of the much longed for grace and revelation. He strove to fulfil all the demands of the law, in order to attain a higher life and peace than the law could give ; he hungered and thirsted after that righteousness, of which he had only a faint idea.

According to his custom, he had now fasted and prayed until the ninth hour ; it was the time of the evening sacrifice, when the Jews, went to the temple to pray ; and the wish of David was in his heart, " Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. "—Psalm cxli. 2.

" *Then had he a vision.* "—that is to say, a most wonderful power of sight was imparted to him. What our natural sight is, we know from daily experience, and yet we never think how wonderful such a gift is. Place yourself in thought for one moment in the situation of the man born blind, whom our Lord sent to wash in the pool of Siloam, and who, when he raised his head, had received sight. How must he have felt, when he beheld, for the first time, Mount Sion with its temple, the city of Jerusalem, the blue heavens, and the sun with its glorious light ! All this, streamed into his eye, was

formed and dwelt there. How wonderful it is, that through the small aperture of the eye, the great, the vast starry firmament enters in! He who formed the eye, shall he not see! He who has given us our ordinary sight, in its nature and properties so inexplicable, has he not another, a higher, and deeper vision in store for us!

In our history a vision is described, in which He who formed the eye, now made it discern spiritual objects. He had promised it, when he said in Numbers xii. 6, "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision." And in Joel, and by the Apostle Peter, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall dream dreams!" He has often fulfilled it, in different ways, to his chosen ones, during both the old and new covenants. Jacob saw the heavenly ladder in a dream, while his bodily eyes were closed; and the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, the supposed father of Christ, in a dream; Peter (verse 10th) was entranced, in order to receive the counsel of God; and Paul was carried into the third heaven, to hear words which no man could utter. Others, like the shepherds at Bethlehem, the women at the tomb, and the disciples after our Lord's ascension, saw with their bodily eyes heavenly beings. Cornelius also had a vision in the day-time, while fully awake, and conscious of what was passing around him.

"He saw an angel of God coming unto him."—The

whole of Scripture teaches us, that God, in his all-encircling government of the world, makes use every where of means and instruments ; he does not circumscribe, thereby, his own power or glory, but, on the contrary, makes them appear more evident to man.

After God had said, “ Let there be light—and there was light,” he had no need to place the sun in the heavens, that through it light might be transmitted ; but he has done it, and thus we have a sign and a token of his almighty power and love, and, at the same time, a visible picture before our eyes of him who is love itself. He, the Almighty, needed not the help of angels to accomplish his purpose ; but his love *willed* the existence of such beings, who, near himself, participating in his glory, and acting in his service, might enjoy his God-like nature in a higher degree than man.

Like the earth, heaven also has its apostles,—“ Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments.” Psalm ciii. 20. They are beings, not like us, poor children of men, tied to this earth—not like us, burdened with an earthly and corruptible body—not dust and ashes—but children of light, who ever behold the face of their father in heaven. Such as they are, blessed, free, and joyful beings, clear as the light, and rich in every virtue, we shall one day become, as is promised in Luke xx. 36.

They know this, and wish for it ; and to help forward this great work is their occupation and their happiness. They rejoice over each sinner that re-

penteth, and delight in watching over those little ones whom they hope to have for their future companions in the kingdom of heaven. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Heb. i. 14. Therefore are they called angels, that is to say, messengers, or servants of God. The word of God, with fatherly wisdom, has disclosed as much as is necessary for our good, of those inhabitants of the invisible world, the blessed as well as the fallen.

The scripture is given as a light unto our feet, which stand here, on earthly ground, and as a lamp unto our path, which leads towards heaven. If we receive the word of God in humility, and use it in faith, we shall esteem ourselves happy in the possession of those heavenly secrets which have been already imparted to us; content with godliness, we shall not desire to know and understand like God himself. We walk not by sight, but by faith, and by this way we shall attain the same understanding as the angels of God who surround and watch over us.

The angel of God, whom Cornelius saw coming to him, spoke and said—*Cornelius!* He addressed him by that name, which his parents had given him at his birth, and by which afterwards, in a more extensive circle, friends, relations, and acquaintances, had distinguished him.

In like manner the Lord called the youth Samuel three times by his name, in order to declare his determination regarding Israel and the house of Eli, and the revelation was made after Samuel had

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answered, "Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." To call by name is a familiar mode of approaching any one, to whom we have something to disclose; and, in the mouth of the Most Holy, is a condescension to the lowly children of men, and a particular marking of his personality.

"Mary," said he who rose from the dead to the weeping woman, and she recognised him, and fell at his feet, exclaiming, "Rabboni!" "Simon, son of Jonas!" said the Lord to Peter, three times, with the deepest meaning, when he saw him, for the first time, after his resurrection, and when the sun of the new life was about to arise from the tears of the fallen disciple. What a high honour for a mortal, to be addressed as a friend by an inhabitant of the heavens! Blessed is he who knows that his name is written in the book of life, and uttered with joy by heavenly beings!

"*Cornelius looked on him.*"—The angel stood before him, clad in a bright garment—he looked on him and was afraid. It always happens thus with the men, to whom the inhabitants of heaven visibly appear: Moses, Gideon, the shepherds in the fields, and John, all felt in the same manner when they beheld their visions.

Why such terror for those beings, who never come to injure, but always to bless, and whose forms, bright as the day, can have nothing to excite fear?

Alas! It is the childish terror of our first parents, when, conscious of their fall, they tried to hide themselves from the sight of God, and which is entailed

upon us along with their sinfulness, and arises from the conviction that we have lost the image of God, and our original fellowship with him. When the divinity of our Lord Jesus suddenly became apparent to Peter, at the miraculous draught of fishes, he fell at his feet, and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" And Abraham, when the Lord came nigh unto him, acknowledged himself "to be but dust and ashes!" This fear of God and of holy beings is always entwined with sinfulness; and much more with the love of sin.

It has been the source of the wide spreading idolatry of the whole human race, who, in order to escape from it, sought to "change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man," as we read in Romans i. 23. "The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"—Is. xxxiii. 14. It is only in love that there is no fear; "perfect love casteth out fear." Whosoever experiences fear does not yet love fully;—yet the path towards faith and love is certainly through fear.

It is thus with Cornelius—trembling, and with a secret awe, he inquired, "What is it, Lord?"

The answer of the angel contains two things; the assurance of God's mercy, and a command, telling what Cornelius was to do.—"Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." What a condescending speech to man!—the prayers and

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the alms of the Gentile Centurion are here spoken of as a sacrifice, of which the Scriptures often say, "It has ascended up unto God." It was a special mercy of God to appoint sacrifices for sinful men placed under the law, before he received them as his children; for they were a seal and token to the apostate race, that the bond between them and God was not entirely broken, and at the same time they were a symbolical promise of a future and a perfect reconciliation.

They were a mutual giving and receiving—on the part of man, a free acknowledgment of guilt and separation from God—on that of God, a visible sign of his grace and compassion, without which the men of the old covenant might well have despaired. Therefore, the word of God says, speaking of sacrifices, "the smoke ascended up unto God like a sweet smelling savour."

This can only be when they are offered with a believing heart, desirous of salvation, and when the smoke and flames of the sacrifice are an emblem of a soul, consecrated to God by the fire of his Spirit. Then the blessing of the sacrifice returns back on him that offers it, as we read in Hosea vi. 6. "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." The sacrifices which the Centurion offered with his lips and hands, from a devout and godly heart, were alms and prayers.

Such gifts and offerings are well-pleasing unto God, they ascend up to him, and are preserved in his remembrance: for "the prayers of the humble,"

says Jesus the son of Sirach, very beautifully, “ pierceth the clouds—and will not depart, till the Most High shall behold to judge righteously, and execute judgment.” And again, “ The Lord preserves the good deeds of men as a signet ring, and their good words as the apple of an eye.”

The Apostle says also, Heb. vi. 10, “ God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

What honour for us mortals ! The Lord of heaven and earth not only hears our petitions and prayers—not only allows us to tell him every thing, and to lay open our hearts to him, but permits us also to give unto him—preserves our words and our gifts in his remembrance, and they become the common property and bond of union between the fatherly heart of our God, and the praying, loving, child-like hearts of his chosen ones !

Cornelius had, until now, sought his salvation in the path of the old covenant, of the law and the promises, by means of fasting, prayers, and alms ; the way of the new covenant of mercy and truth is now to be laid open to him. After the heavenly messenger had comforted and rejoiced the terrified Centurion by his gracious words, he continued, “ Now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter ; he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side ; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.” Here we see again the friendly character of the inhabitants of heaven,

and their sympathizing love towards men. Their manner is ever the same. The shepherds of Bethlehem were afraid at the coming of the angels during the night when the glory of the Lord shone round about them ; but their fear was soon removed by the words of the messenger of God, “ Fear not ; for behold ! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

Not only Simon the Apostle was described to Cornelius, but the house where he dwelt, which belonged to Simon the tanner, and was situated near the sea. It is worthy of remark that the Holy Scriptures often avoid the minute description of outward circumstances ; for instance, with regard to the place where the apostles were assembled at the pouring out of the Holy Ghost ; and also that they, elsewhere, observe the greatest exactness, as in the present history.

Here we cannot fail to know how the occurrence happened, for we have the speech of the angel given word for word by the Evangelist, and again by Cornelius (verse 30th.) Is not this another proof of the friendly interest taken by heavenly beings in each individual ? Every one acquainted with the gospel knows that Simon the tanner was named by the angel along with the Apostle Peter. We may here say, “ As it is with God, so it is with his servants.” The Lord takes pleasure in the children of men, and in every child of man, whether his station and calling be that of an artizan and tanner, or of an apostle and messenger of light. “ Have we not all one fa-

ther, and hath not one God created us ?” are the words of the prophet Malachi, showing thereby the dignity of men, through their descent from the one whom God created in his own image. But how highly is our humanity exalted through the new covenant, in which the Son of God became a man,—in his glory is still the Son of Man,—and as the Son of Man will come again to judgment ! As each one becomes sanctified by the washing of regeneration, and is received into his covenant by the triune God, as each partakes of the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Lord’s Supper, the seal and token of this covenant, and as each soul is saved from death, there is rejoicing in heaven !

O comforting and blessed covenant, which unites so closely our poor earthly Bethlehem, and its sinful inhabitants, with the heavenly Jerusalem and its angels ! Blessed are they whose names are inscribed above ! Amen.

III.

“ A MAN can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.” John iii. 27. These are the words of John the Baptist, in speaking of his divine calling, and the power with which God had invested him to announce the kingdom of Christ. “ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” James i. 17. This truth is so palpable that it appears almost unnecessary to state it, were it not that, from its very obviousness, we are inclined to overlook it. As a single seed of corn cannot unfold itself into the stalk and ear without the quickening influence and care of God, so the immortal seed, through which we become “ the first fruits of his creatures,” must be vivified by the Almighty !

We do not see this influence descend from above ; we cannot distinguish it in the gradual development of the stalk and flower, even though, with the rapidity of Jonah’s gourd, it spring up in a single night,— we only observe the unfolding after it is completed. We see the rose blown, but not the act of blossoming ; it almost appears to make and to form itself ; but how can we doubt the care of an Almighty hand, or the wafting around it of an invisible breath ? We do not doubt it, for the natural language of every

heart is, "All depends on God's blessing," thus uttering a truth implanted in every mind, but especially with regard to our spiritual life, which may be compared to the field that God cultivates. All depends on his influence and blessing, without which we can do nothing. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5. How could we come to God if God had not first come to us, and enlightened us by his presence! He must bless our labour, and work in us both to will and to do. This work of God in us is a mystery, yet not altogether incomprehensible; it is like the visible and palpable influence of the sun upon us and our earth; for the truth of the one can as little be doubted by a reasonable being as the existence of the other; in both cases experience is an infallible teacher.

In order to exhibit this truth to our faith, the Holy Scriptures set before us a visible example of the invisible influence of God, and of the descent of his Holy Spirit upon our spirits. We may also be assured from our history, that if we seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all things that we need shall be added unto us.

"On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the sixth hour. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but, while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at

the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven."—Acts x. 9—16.

THIS section of the chapter appears at first sight dark, difficult, and not well adapted to general edification; but on examining it more minutely, we perceive in it the commencement of an unspeakable blessing to the human race. Like the rest of the Scriptures, it should be profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. iii. 16.

We see here also a manifestation from the invisible world,—the beginning of a new creation and a great work of God; and if enlightened by his Holy Spirit, we shall observe in it another instance of his grace, his glory, and his truth.

The history has hitherto made us acquainted with the disposition and character of the Centurion Cornelius. After he had been led by heavenly guidance to the knowledge of the one true God, and of his own sinfulness, he was filled with the desire of a nearer fellowship with Him, and sought after the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Although a Gentile according to the flesh, and thereby shut out from the house of Israel, "to whom pertain-

eth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," Rom. ix. 4, yet he was a true Israelite without guile, according to the spirit ;—and in fasting, praying, and giving alms, had acted like one, as far as a Gentile could. The grace of God now came nigh unto him, and for the strengthening of his faith and hope, the Almighty informed him by a heavenly messenger, what he was next to do,—human means were to be employed ;—he must send to Joppa, to invite the Apostle Peter to come unto him ; he it was that should tell him what he ought to do. The merciful God deals humanly with the children of men ; how should it be otherwise, since he created man, and constituted human nature as it is. A gardener acquaints himself with the nature and character of the plants which he wishes to cultivate, and suits his care to its necessities ; so God, in his grace, adapts himself to the peculiar habits and wants of men, and deals humanly with human nature. To keep up this comparison, the natural root of the spiritual life of man lies already in his seeing and hearing. "Blessed are the eyes which see what ye see." The heavenly gardener descends upon the root of the soul's life, and tends and nourishes it, in order that it may grow up into a heavenly plant.

The shepherds at Bethlehem received the announcement of the birth of our Lord, by means of their bodily sight and hearing ; so did Simeon and the wise men of the East. "Come and see," said Philip

also to Nathanael.—He who had not seen the Lord, could not be an Apostle,—his resurrection and his ascension into heaven, happened visibly ; and John, in the commencement of his Epistle, lays great weight upon the fact, that he and the other disciples had seen with their eyes, looked upon, and with their hands had handled the Word of Life. This beholding through the external senses, on the part of those disciples whom the Lord had chosen, was the beginning and germ of a spiritual acquaintance ; on which account, those alone who had at an early period believed upon him, were esteemed worthy of seeing and conversing with him after his resurrection. The grace of God always influences us by degrees ; every thing upon earth unfolds itself in the same manner, and even the formation of the world, and filling it with plants, animals, and men, took place gradually, and step by step. As the kingdom of heaven upon earth grew up like a plant, and like a seed of corn, brought forth first the blade, then the stalk, and then the ear—so must it be gradually formed in the heart of man. That which is divine, is transfused into man, and God makes use of him as a fellow worker with himself, to spread abroad his truth. As Cornelius sent his servants to Joppa, so the Lord sent his servant Peter to Cæsarea, in order to open the eyes of Cornelius, and lead him to the kingdom of heaven. How gracious is our God and Saviour in his treatment of the human race, and how dear unto the Lord are his people. An extraordinary preparation was required, and it was necessary that

Peter should be instructed in a peculiar manner. Though God employs men in the execution of his commands and decrees, he never uses them like mere machines, nor does he, by force, drive his people along the right path ; on the contrary, they must act and work along with Him of their own free will, and from their own knowledge and conviction.

The nearer man stands to God, the more spontaneous is his service, and the further he is removed from him, the more must he, like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Joseph's brethren, be used by his heavenly Father, as a mere instrument, held in the bonds of darkness. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John viii. 36. Simon Peter was chosen to open the door of the Great Shepherd's fold to the first Gentile and his household, and to lead them into it. Why was it Peter ? Why was it not John or James ? or Philip, who had already preached the gospel, and converted many in the neighbouring Samaria, and of whom Cornelius had probably heard ? Why was it not delayed till the conversion of Paul, the peculiar Apostle of the Gentiles ? The answer is contained in our history. Peter was chosen to begin the work of converting the Gentiles, because he was the most opposed to God's universal grace, in willing the conversion of the Gentiles ; it was therefore the more clearly proved to be the design and the work of God. The bondage of Israel in Egypt was loosed by Moses, and the kingdom of God was spread farthest by the persecuting Saul, both of them by nature and education

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the most unlikely to perform such glorious works. "Base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ; that no flesh should glory in his presence."—1 Cor. i. 28, 29.

The gospel history has depicted with peculiar truth and openness, the natural disposition and character of the Apostle Simon Peter. The Lord had given him the significant surname of Cephas, or Peter, that is to say, a rock, or a man of rock, not merely in reference to what he should become, but also to that which he was by nature. As the natural talents and dispositions of men are very different, one excelling or falling short of another in understanding, imagination, or memory, so Simon Peter was distinguished from the rest of our Lord's followers, by an impetuosity of temper which seems to have been born with him. This, like the other powers of the soul weakened by sin, as long as man is not regenerated by the Holy Spirit, is apt to degenerate into caprice, conceit, or self-will ; and shows itself by obstinately holding fast any opinion which the mind has once embraced.

None of the disciples gainsaid our Lord so often as Simon Peter. When Jesus told them of his approaching sufferings, he was the person who drew him aside and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord ; this shall not be unto thee"—on which he received the answer, "Get thee behind me Satan : thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." When

Jesus washed the disciples' feet, Peter withstood him, from a false humility and mistaken respect, until our Lord said to him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." And how strongly did his self-confidence contrast with the words of our Lord, warning him of his future denial! In his fall also, in spite of his better judgment and conviction, he showed a stubborn obstinacy, which rose even to curses and imprecations. This rebellious, yet desponding heart of rock, became softened under the guidance, and through the influence of its gentle and lowly Master, and the confidence in its own strength disappeared before the power of the Highest. The Holy Spirit did not change the Apostles so much as to destroy, or take away, the peculiarities of their dispositions and character, or their human weakness and prejudice,—they certainly received through his agency, the full mercy and grace of God, but His gifts and his Spirit must daily increase, and ever more and more consume the innate dross of their minds. They must strive to approach perfection, and strain every nerve to lay hold on Christ, to fight the good fight, and run along the appointed path, in order to obtain the crown. St. Peter, who was dear unto our Lord, did this during his whole life, in order to come forth as victor in the conflict with the powers of darkness, and with his own innate corruption.

This struggle ended only with his crucifixion, of which our Lord prophesied to him, when he said, "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another

shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.”—John xxi. 18. He also subjected himself in Antioch to the severe and righteous reproof of the Apostle Paul, because he dissembled with the Jews, when, to please them, he once more came under the bondage of the Levitical law, to the offence of the Gentile church. Thus, his natural man, and human will, came into collision with the new-born spiritual man, and with the will of the Lord. The Bible has never been silent with regard to the human weakness and errors of its heroes, that we might see how difficult it is to extinguish entirely the old man, which is always returning ; and also to show us that we should not despair of attaining that object, by a persevering conflict, and through the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

It appears to have been particularly difficult for the Apostle to comprehend the counsel of God, with regard to the calling and blessing of the Gentiles. The prejudice in favour of his own nation, as the peculiar people of Jehovah, which he had imbibed with his mother’s milk, still clung fast to his soul ; though he had announced, at the feast of Pentecost, that the Lord was about to call into his fold, those who were still afar off, yet he did not say this from himself, but from the Spirit of the Lord.

The time and the hour, the grand moment of the second birth of the world, was now come. Our Lord had often alluded to it before, and once distinctly said, “ Other sheep I have which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold and one shep-

herd.' On another occasion, he praised and rewarded the faith both of a Canaanish woman and a Gentile-Centurion.

He has also commanded his Apostles, in the most-decided and definite manner, to go to all nations and preach the Gospel to every creature. God had willed that his kingdom, as one not of this world, should be spread abroad, not by force or constraint, but through knowledge of the truth, and internal conviction, both by those who announced it and those who received it. The Gospel, as a power from God, should be not merely a precept, but a living principle to all who receive it—to form in them a new life, which, through the light and grace of God, may unfold and increase like a plant in a good soil, “until they all come, in the unity of the Father, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Eph. iv. 13.

Peter, who found it so difficult to wean himself from the old covenant and conform to the new, and to whom our Lord had promised, that he should give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and that on him he should build his church; he it was who should begin the great work of God among the Gentiles. The beginning, however, must first be made in himself—for how can one be what he is not, or give what he has not? A reformation must take place, which was done by means of a manifestation from heaven, and through a vision.

Peter went up, about the sixth hour, or, according

to our reckoning, at mid-day, to pray, on the house-top, or flat roof of the house. The Jews were fond of praying on the house-top, under the open heaven, because they were here undisturbed, and could turn their face during prayer, towards the Temple and the holy city of Jerusalem. In this circumstance, we may perceive how Peter continued faithfully to observe the rules and customs of Judaism; little aware that they were soon to cease, and give place to the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth.* After he had finished his prayer, “he became very hungry, and would have eaten,”—but he must now be fed with other food—there was opened to him, as before to our Lord, while his disciples were bringing him food in Samaria,—a wide field, ripe for the harvest, and *he*, as the first reaper, began the work.

He was entranced, that is to say, transported out of his natural state into a higher and supernatural one; his outward senses were closed, but the eyes of his inner man were opened, that he might behold heavenly things.† “He saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him,—Rise Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, not so Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again, the second time,—What God hath

* See Note D.

† See Note E.

cleansed, that call not thou common." This was done thrice, to strengthen the impression of the divine testimony; and the vessel was then received up again into heaven, to shew that it was a divine manifestation. In this vision we behold the condescension of our Lord to his beloved Apostle, in now making known to him the secrets of God, in the same manner as he used to do to his disciples, by means of parables and allegories. The whole of revelation is a letting down, and, if we may so call it, a humanization of the invisible God; through it alone can man come to his heavenly Father and become His child. Almost all the Old Testament consists of types and similitudes. The sacrifices and ceremonies, the tabernacle and the temple, the people of Israel and their history, Canaan with its warriors and its very names, were all images and pictures of what was to come,—glimmerings of a yet concealed light and future blessing, the elements of the true life which is in Christ Jesus. We may well admire it. Even in this day of light, since the coming of the Son of God, we see through a glass darkly the secrets of the future and perfected kingdom of heaven; yet the time shall come when we shall see them face to face, and know even as also we are known. Thus the Apostle Peter, like all the prophets who were before him, was led to a higher knowledge gradually, and step by step. We see also in this vision, that something entirely new was about to begin in the kingdom of God upon earth. The prophets had, for ages, foretold it; and

our Lord himself had ordained and predicted it ; but the contracted view of the disciples could not distinguish it ; therefore the thing itself was done, and they were led to comprehend it slowly and gradually, The lightening's flash destroys the aged tree ; but the gentle day-light developes a new life out of what seems past away and decayed. This new light removed the old economy and covenant which God had established during more than fifteen hundred years, by laws and precepts, priests and prophets :— it was also the declaration of a new covenant, by which all the Gentiles, without the law, were led into the path of grace. This decree of God, the fulfilment of which Peter was to begin, was disclosed to the Apostle visibly, though mysteriously. God has always connected the visible world with the invisible, in his manifestations to men,—and even in the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. He had commanded, through Moses, the distinction of animals into the clean and the unclean ; into those which might be eaten and sacrificed, and those which might not. By this law He had typified the separation of the people of Israel from those nations who were stained with idolatry ; the 80th Psalm thus compares the heathen to the wild beast of the field.

The time of distinction and separation was now to cease. Paul says in Ephesians ii. 13, 14, 15, 16, “ Ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us. Having abolished, in

his flesh, the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances ; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God, in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." Through him both Jew and Greek have access, by one spirit, unto the Father.

“ *Kill and eat,*” said the voice ; the same which commanded Isaiah to write, “ They shall bring an offering unto the Lord out of all nations,” chap. lxvi.—the same which inspired Paul to say in Romans, chap. xv. “ That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” The sanctification of the Gentiles has been going on, even to the present day, and will continue to go on until all be fulfilled which God has promised through the mouth of His holy prophets. The beginning of this great work of God has been made ; it now becomes us, as brethren in the truth, to forward its progress by our labours and prayers, that His kingdom may come, ever more and more, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We have visions and words from heaven no longer ; we have both in our Bible ; nor is there ever wanting a manifestation of the mind of God in the daily occurrences around us, in the providential events of life : and, above all, in the secret history of our souls ; thus beholding God in every thing, what is in itself common and unclean becomes purified and sanctified ; and in this way is the grace of God revealed to all men.

IV.

It is a remark of Luther, the father of our church, that the history of the people of God differs as much from the histories and biographies of men, as heaven does from earth. In profane history one may see the greatness or littleness of the work ; but in this narration there is only one thing to admire and honour, namely, the word of God, through whose will and guidance all things are accomplished. The histories of the Bible are, with justice, called holy, not only because they are written by holy men, but because they are the words of God, and we must observe this particularly in order to understand what a great treasure the Evangelist Luke has left us, in his Acts of the Apostles. They are not so much histories by the Apostle, as the very words of God, telling how the Gospel, by means of those whom he had sent, began to make its way through the whole world, and through faith on the part of mankind, justified and blessed them without the law. In this book we find the doctrine and the example of faith side by side, and we see at the same time the human sympathy and condescension of God our Saviour, awakening a new life in the hearts of men. How gently and tenderly did he receive into his fold those who sought admittance,

sending to them his faithful servants and messengers ! fulfilling to his chosen ones the gracious promise : “ Even to your old age I am He ; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you ; I have made and I will bear ; even I will carry and will deliver you.” Isaiah xlv. 4.

“ Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, behold, three men seek thee ; arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, behold I am he whom ye seek ; what is the cause wherefore ye are come ? And they said, Cornelius the Centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God, by an holy angel, to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then called he them in and lodged them. —Acts x. 17—23.

In the last section of our history, we saw how the decrees and secret counsels of God, for calling in the Gentiles, and blessing the whole human race, by the Gospel, were revealed to the Apostle Peter in a vision from above, and how this work of mercy, this new creation, like the creation of the first man, when it was said, “ Let us make man in our image,” began in heaven above, in order to be perfected in earth among the children of men.

We have now to consider this beginning and progress of the divine work upon earth.

“*Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean.*”—He found himself in uncertainty with regard to its signification, it was a visible and allegorical representation or type of a change about to take place through the instrumentality of Peter. The time that is to come is present before God as well as that which is past. With him there is neither yesterday, to-day, nor to-morrow ; a thousand years, whether past or future, are but as one day before him. “Surely the Lord will do nothing,” saith Amos, “but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” And it is on this account they were named *Seers*, or those that see, because they came forth as the prophets or speakers of God.

He let them see that which was hidden from the eyes of men, and concealed in his tabernacle. Yet the glory of God seldom manifests itself without some obscurity along with it—it cannot be otherwise, when we consider our weak nature, unable to comprehend the things that are of the Spirit of God, or contemplate the depth of the thoughts and the mysteries of our Creator ! “O Lord, how great are thy works ! and thy thoughts are very deep !” “They are high as heaven,” and “deeper than hell,”—deep and encircling every thing like the sea. How simple and great, and at the same time how deep and comprehensive, is Jacob’s vision of the heavenly ladder, which reach from earth up to heaven, and on beholding which the Patriarch cried out, “How

dreadful is this place ! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." It was the earthly Canaan, and the temporal Zion, the road to the heavenly Jerusalem. Here was the place where the Son of God, the Light and Life of the world, came down upon earth, "when the angels of God were ascending and descending upon him." John i. 51. How glorious, yet how simple was the manifestation which took place to Elias on Mount Horeb, when first the storm which tore the rocks asunder, then the earthquake and the fiery flames passed before the Lord, and when He himself came at last in the soft breeze, making known to the zealous prophet in this manner the mode of his own government of the world, and the way in which his servant was to act. The visions by which God, in the time of the new covenant, disclosed his counsels, are more simple and less veiled, than those of the old ; they resemble in clearness and simplicity the parables of Jesus Christ. The vision of Peter reminds us of the net full of every kind of fishes, to which our Lord compared his kingdom upon earth ; and the sheet let down from heaven filled with every kind of beasts, indicated the mighty preparation making by God, "that he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Eph. i. 10.

"*Peter doubted in himself, what this vision which he had seen, should mean.*" He certainly recognised it as a revelation from God ; but he did not discover its signification. There was something within him

which obscured the light of God, and withstood his full acknowledgment of the truth, exactly in the same manner as formerly, at the washing of the disciples' feet. He displayed in this his prejudices as an individual Jew, and his zeal for the pre-eminence of his nation, which had been nourished in him from his childhood. He held fast his human views of the mercy of God, which were still narrowed and contracted by his regard for the law. But we must on no account compare the doubting and deliberating Apostle with those rationalists, who, blinded by pride and selfishness, oppose human wisdom to divine revelation, as if they were of equal authority, while their true reason is an unwillingness to obey the commands of God, and embrace the only belief which unravels the stupendous mystery of the human mind. No ! Peter did not think here on what is human—but the divine manifestations and the law of the old covenant, rose in all their majesty before his soul, so that he could not discern in its full clearness, God's comprehensive mercy and blessing for all men. Indeed, this would have been nothing less than to understand the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the unsearchable riches of Christ, whereby all things were to be made new.

The prophets had foretold this new dispensation, and Peter himself, moved by the Holy Ghost, had spoken of it on the day of Pentecost ; but, like the disciples of our Lord, who, notwithstanding his prediction, would not believe in his resurrection until it had happened, Peter could not comprehend until

now, that he was to become light and life unto the Gentiles. Even the Apostles in themselves bear testimony to our frail humanity ! Peter was a regenerated child of the Spirit, and a true disciple of our Lord ; but the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ was not yet perfected in him. Eternal life, or the knowledge of the one true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, can only unfold itself by degrees, and by continued repentance and faith. It was so with Peter ; the veil of Moses was not quite taken away from his eyes, and it must not be torn forcibly away because he was a faithful disciple of the Lord, and a true child of God. A dazzling and blinding beam of light from heaven, was not necessary for him, as it was for the rebellious and threatening Saul, the scholar of the Pharisees ; all that was required was a parable from above, in which the light should be enveloped. As the germinating seed of corn penetrates the hard soil, in order to come at the light which animates it ; so there was in Peter a feeling of anxiety, a doubt and a desire to know, *what the vision meant that he had seen.*

While he was revolving in his mind what had taken place, “ *behold the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate ; and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, lodged there.*”

In the Scriptures, but particularly in the simple narratives of the Evangelists, there is not even one little word like “ Behold ” put in vain ; on the contrary all is important. These men, the two servants

and the soldier, without their own will or knowledge, were the instruments in the hand of God, to lead the Apostle to a higher step in faith, and to a higher life. They came and asked for Peter at a most appropriate time, for he was troubled, and his mind was tossed to and fro ; in the common language of life we would say, they arrived then *by chance*. But this expression has a very different meaning in the mouth of our Lord, when he says, that not even a sparrow shall fall to the ground, without the knowledge of our Father which is in heaven, for the very hairs of our head are numbered. “ By chance,” either signifies having no connection with any thing else, and then the word expresses nothing ; or else it means, having an invisible connection with that which is above, from whence comes down every good and perfect gift—grass and foliage, rain and drought, fruitful and unfruitful years, health and sickness,—not by chance, but from the hand of our Father. Christians know no other *chance* than this !

The three men came.—The Lord has many different kinds of servants and messengers in his kingdom ; but he generally makes use of the meanest, the most natural, and the least conspicuous : for example, Abraham, Joseph in Egypt, and David, whom he called from amongst the sheep. He chose most of his Apostles out of Galilee, from amidst the fishing nets, and transformed them into fishers of men, and angels to his people ; and the conversion of Samaria began with a woman, by means of a pitcher of water at Jacob’s well.

Why should we, in the foolish manner of men, place in opposition to each other those words, but imperfectly understood, natural and supernatural? They both mean the same thing in the kingdom of God—that He, from whom, to whom, and by whom all things are, sends rain and snow, as well as the word which issues forth out of his mouth—makes his angels, winds, and his ministers, a flaming fire; and transforms fiery flames into his servants, and storms into his messengers.

Here are two Gentile servants, and a Roman soldier, sent to an enlightened Apostle to solve his doubts, and disclose to him the path in which he should walk; God in this acting simply and employing no extraordinary person. It has often happened thus in the life of believers; the smallest circumstance, or what in the language of men would be called a mere accident, first opens their eyes and their hearts to a new light and life. In the same manner, many of the actions of the Son of God upon earth, such as his first interviews with those who in him were to find salvation, and even the choice of most of his Apostles, appear to us like a work of *chance*. Why should the blind Bartimeus sit by the way-side, and Matthew at the receipt of custom, while the Lord passed by? and why should the Samaritan woman come to Jacob's well while Jesus was sitting there waiting for his disciples? Alas! heathenism still lurks in our language, and since the manifestation of the grace of God, the world continues to act on its own principles.

The arrival of the three men soon put an end to the doubts and deliberations of the Apostle: they called his name; he saw them from the roof of the house; they seemed almost a continuation of the vision he had seen. *Then spake the Spirit unto him.* What Spirit? The Spirit which our Lord had promised to his disciples should come to them in his place, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God; the invisible representative of our Lord, who now guided the Apostles, as Christ had formerly guided them; the same said unto Peter, "Behold three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." This was a repetition of Christ's command, after his resurrection! "Feed my lambs! Feed my sheep." What an important and what a solemn charge, to become the messenger of the Gospel—to announce the words of peace and joy to souls desirous of salvation! "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans x. 15. God has appointed this office of preaching reconciliation with himself; and the Holy Spirit which bears witness in our spirit, can alone qualify men for it. In the simple words which the Apostle hears, there is implied the whole use and object of this office.

"*Behold three men seek thee;*"—they long for thee, and to hear thy words, as being a chosen witness of the truth. Thou art appointed to help the afflicted, and calm the troubled hearts of those who seek after

the freedom of the children of God. “*Arise, therefore!*” Now that thou art ready to spread the Gospel, arise for the service of God; Christ will enlighten thee, that thou mayest enlighten others, and deliver them from the bondage of darkness. “*Get thee down*” unto them; and make known the light of truth, and the word of life, unto the weary and heavy laden; the crushed and bruised heart, the glimmering taper, and the broken reed. Now must thou, with the balm of Gilead with which thou hast been entrusted, alleviate pain, help and soothe, bind up and heal. “*Go with them!*” use for them the gifts which thou hast already received; offer them thy life and all that thou hast, as thy Lord and Master has done for thee. Go with them, like Moses formerly with the Israelites, through the wastes of sin and of death, towards the heavenly Canaan, to the treasure which is preserved for us through Jesus Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem. Go with them through the straight gate, on the narrow path, which leads to the crown of life and to immortality. “*Doubting nothing.*” A doubter is unsteady in his character, “like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” James i. 6, 7. Doubt nothing, fear nothing, but believe only. Doubt nothing, although they mock thee, and laugh at thy words, and drive thee from city to city. Doubt nothing, even though thou seemest to work in vain, and though not even one little seed of corn spring up into the green stalk.

Doubt nothing, only believe. It is faith which overcometh the world.

Thus, in those words, which told the Apostle what he ought to do, there is contained the whole duty of a preacher of the gospel. How great and important is the aim and labour of that man who is called to be a messenger of God, to prepare the way before him in the hearts of those for whom he suffered death on the cross. That Spirit alone which called and sent him, can give him strength and ability for his vocation.

How comforting then is the promise, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!" Matth. vii. 11.

"Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the Centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy Angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee."—Words, says the Apostle himself in the next chapter, "whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." After Peter had heard the request of the men, "he called them in and lodged them." They had executed their commission before entering the house of Simon the tanner. Probably they had remained without from

modesty ; for it was a Jewish house, and they were Gentiles, whom the Jews at that time disliked to come into their dwellings, lest they should defile them.

Thus the Jews, from whom was to come salvation unto all, in their proud dream that they were the noble among men, raised higher than ever the wall of partition as the times of the Gentiles approached.

“ *Peter called them in and lodged them,*” ready to gratify their wish, and journey with them the next day. Thus was the compact concluded, and a desire to know the word of God united those men, who, until now, had stood far apart.

The great object of the Gospel, is the gathering together of all men into one congregation of the Lord, under one head, Jesus Christ, and into one great family and household of God the Father, —in one Spirit, through the bond of peace and love, —a union of all that dwell upon earth, so that every knee should bow to the name of Jesus, and every tongue acknowledge that God the Lord is the only true God !

It was for this purpose Jesus Christ, the Word, which was from the beginning, came down from heaven, divested himself of the form of God, became flesh, and dwelt among us ; for this purpose he was exalted, and a name given unto him, which is above every name. Therefore did the Holy Spirit fill the Apostles with power from the Highest, and all the fulness of God, and is ever labouring that the time of rest may come. Therefore, the heavenly messengers of God minister unto those who shall be heirs

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of salvation. Therefore shall the Gospel be preached, even unto the ends of the earth, and the word of God make its way round the world, so that there shall be no speech nor language, where its sound shall not be heard. To this great union also do Baptism and the Lord's Supper, those visible seals of the eternal covenant, direct our eyes ; and, O highest of all honours, it is the duty of all Christians, as brethren in one faith, to labour and pray that the name of God may be sanctified, his kingdom come, and his will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

V.

“THE Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”—As the Gospel is more glorious than the law, the festival of the new covenant is more so than the Sabbath of the old. The Sabbath of the law concluded the week, and followed the days of labour; it was a ray of mercy from above upon sinful men, after the six week-days of pain and toil—and a consoling promise, “that there remained a rest for the people of God. Our Gospel day of rest precedes our week-days, as the day of reconciliation and of the righteousness and peace purchased for us. It is the resurrection day of our Lord and Saviour, the pledge of our own resurrection; and the seal of our perfect redemption. In it we solemnize a weekly feast of Easter, a heavenly family-day, and assemble in the house of God, not as “strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” This day teaches us our intimate connection with each other, and our fellowship with the saints above, being all members of one body, of which Christ is the head, who is the way, the truth, and the life, through whom alone we come to the Father. Therefore, we offer up prayer unto the Lord, and praise him with spiritual songs. He is in the midst of us, and causes us to receive his Gospel.

God made the Sabbath for man, whom he created in his own image ; and through his Gospel he has exalted it into a Sun-day, or day of Suns, on which the Sun of Righteousness shines upon all with healing in his wings.

The following verses set before us a picture of such an assemblage, the first that met together in a Gentile house.

“ And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, stand up : I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation ; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, so soon as I was sent for ; I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me ? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour ; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter ; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner, by the sea-side, who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee ; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.”—Acts x. 23—33.

Here we have the much desired arrival of the Apostle Peter in the house of Cornelius at Cæsarea, on the fourth day after the latter had received the command of the angel to send to Joppa. The messengers had arrived there on the first day; Peter lodged them all night, and set out with them on the morrow, accompanied by six other brethren, believers of the Jewish nation. They arrived on the fourth day, and were received with great joy. The history of this reception merits our attention. We see in the Centurion, and those who were assembled for a similar purpose as himself, a little community seeking peace and truth. Gentiles by nature, they may well serve as examples to us.

The two principal persons in our history now meet together,—the Roman Centurion and the Apostle of our Lord. In the first, we see a picture of human nature, longing for the freedom of the children of God; in the second, the ambassador of Christ, the Word and Life that came down from heaven, through whom alone that freedom can be attained.

Let us direct our attention to Cornelius, and to his desire for peace and truth.

We are acquainted with the Centurion already, and know that the solicitude of his heart was to come to the knowledge and possession of the truth. He was devout, and feared God; the aspirations of his soul were directed upwards, and his own desire, as well as that of his whole house, was to be at peace with God and in fellowship with his heavenly Father.

The small seed of the everlasting word, although it may be crushed and concealed, lies hid in the inmost heart of every one, and in the very depth of his being. The most erring and the most fallen can never entirely divest himself of it ;—it is this which constitutes him man, and is the indestructible witness that God the Lord made him in his own image. Even though the interior light be greatly darkened by the power of Satan, and man's own grovelling desires, yet, beneath this very darkness, there is a concealed light ; and the most abject superstition which bows the knee to a piece of wood or metal, bears witness to a lost faith, long past away, and shows an unconscious desire ever seeking after truth. As there is no one without a conscience, and no mother's heart without love for her child, so there is no man without some kind of religion. The Lord Jesus made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and even recalled dead bodies into life ; so the influence of divine light, and the power of the Highest, awakens and enlivens the dead word of eternal life, and frees it from the bonds of darkness.

When man becomes conscious of the *Word*, concealed in the depths of his soul, and desires help and light from heaven, it is the germinating of the hidden seed.

If man love darkness more than light, he can destroy this seed in two ways ; either by forsaking spiritual, and giving himself up to wordly pleasures, or by dreaming that he is partaking of God's grace, while wandering in a path chosen by himself. The

heathen did the first, when, giving themselves up to the world, they materialized the glory of the incorruptible God ; and, falling into deeper and deeper darkness, at last sunk into brutishness, and the most grovelling idolatry. For this reason Paul began his sermon to the Athenians with the announcement of “ the unknown God.” The second was the manner of the Pharisees, who, wedded to Judaism, and blinded by their own selfish dreams, imagined that through the works of the law, they could render themselves acceptable to God, and procure their own salvation. From this proceeded their self-righteousness, which opposed the Gospel, and considered all those in darkness who differed from themselves.

Heathenism had long ceased to obscure the mental vision of Cornelius, for light from above had found its way into the depths of his heart. He acknowledged and revered the one true God, and faithfully used every means which his acquaintance with the Jews and their sacred writings afforded, in order to increase his knowledge. Though he and his household were Gentiles outwardly, yet in spirit and faith they were Jews ; and the more they knew God and his revelation, the stronger became their desire for His grace and fellowship. It was not through means chosen by himself that he sought to obtain them ; but it was according to the law of God, and the custom of Israel, through fasting, alms, and prayers.

This, however, was of no avail, so long as the approbation and grace of God were wanting. Through the law, there is no man righteous before him, “ for

by the law is the knowledge of sin ;” and the greater man’s effort to fulfil it, the more vividly he perceives his distance from the true light, in which there is neither shadow nor darkness. “ For by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Eph. ii. 8, 9.

Cornelius felt this when he longed for the grace and the gifts of God ; like the publican in the temple, he stood at a distance, under the burden and yoke of the law, weary and heavy laden, hungering and thirsting for that righteousness which is of great value in the sight of God, and sighing for the freedom of the children of light.

His prayers, and his works of mercy, came in remembrance before God, who now opened the way to his grace and fellowship, and commanded Peter to lead this stranger into the kingdom of heaven.

“ *And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.*” — Like another Simeon, he waited for the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit had filled Cornelius with confidence that his most secret wishes should be gratified, and a faint dawn of the light of our Lord had already appeared, promising a speedy sunrise. He now assembled in his house all those relations and friends who lived in a similar hope with himself. Hope and joy are sympathetic, and are always shedding a bright effulgence around them, but much more when they are of divine origin ; Gospel happiness is the

joy of the heavenly family, and cannot be confined to one person.

The friends of Cornelius must not only sympathize in his joy, but they must participate in his spiritual blessings and heavenly gifts, and be saved by the same salvation. We can imagine them watching on the house-top, to try if they could discover, in the distance, those messengers who were to announce to them peace and happiness !

“*As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.*”—The latter expression, “*worshipped him,*” signifies merely—bowed his face to the ground, as Joseph’s brethren did before Joseph, and David did before Saul. It was the most lowly salutation, and the deepest expression of reverence ; the princes of the East regarded it as their right, and required it even from foreign ambassadors ; but it was no more worship than our habit of uncovering the head as a mark of respect.

That Cornelius, a Roman, should have followed this eastern custom, was a token of his deep veneration for the Apostle. Who can condemn him for this ? He did what his heart prompted, and threw himself on his face, for, in the Apostle, he beheld the servant and disciple of the Lord, who was to bring him salvation and peace, joy and eternal life. It would not have been wonderful though he had been unable to distinguish between the ambassador and the Lord who had sent him, for when he prostrated himself in

the dust, his soul was overwhelmed with the plentitude of his blessings.

We must allow that he did rightly, when he threw himself at the Apostle's feet with the deepest veneration. But Peter, as a servant of God, fulfilled all righteousness, when he raised Cornelius with the words, "*Stand up, I myself also am a man.*" Paul and Barnabas acted thus, when the people and priests at Lystra wished to sacrifice to them as gods; they tore their clothes, and said, "*We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you.*" Acts. xiv. 15. The Angel of God, before whom John prostrated himself in the island of Patmos, declared that this honour should be shown to God only, "*For I am thy fellow-servant.*" Peter followed the example of his Lord, in not seeking his own honour, but that of him who had sent him; the nearer we stand to God, and the more we experience His grace, the more lowly we become, for how can a man be anything, or wish to appear any thing in His light, or in His presence?

Where there is self-ignorance, there is also pride and haughtiness, and wherever there is the pride of knowledge, of wisdom, or of fancied virtue, the Spirit of the Lord cannot dwell.

After the Apostle had spoken with the Centurion, he entered with him into the hall of reception. Many Gentiles were assembled here, and the six Jewish brethren who accompanied the Apostle from Joppa, joining themselves with them, formed together a little community desirous of salvation.

It was a lovely union, which had never taken place until now, a picture of the great and holy covenant, which was henceforward to extend over the whole earth, embracing all nations, colours, and languages, and uniting all into one household of God, in the bond of faith through the Spirit.

With reverential silence they received the Apostle, but confidence was soon restored when he began to speak : “ *Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation ; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, so soon as I was sent for : I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?*” Cornelius and his friends knew very well that it was an unusual thing for a Jew to be in company with Gentiles. The doctors of the law had carried to the very utmost the divine command, to hold no fellowship with the godless Canaanites ; and, at that time, it was even considered a pollution to enter the house of a Gentile.

This delusion was about to disappear before the word of peace. The Lord Jesus had begun to destroy this prejudice, both by word and example, in converting Samaritans and Gentiles, and receiving them into his fold. Peter, however, justified himself, by appealing to the command of God, made known to him by the vision at Joppa ; Cornelius also gave an account of the vision, in which the angel commanded him to call the Apostle. “ *Thou*

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hast done well that thou art come." He concludes, "Now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."

How simply and truly does the Centurion describe the object for which he and his friends had assembled in his house. We stand before God, to hear from thee all the things which God has commanded. These are the words of a soldier, who stands before his general, to receive from him the commands of his king. Instead of saying *before God*, he might have said *before thee*, as being the ambassador of God; but the expression, *before God*, is more reverential. The Apostle Paul uses similar language, when he says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2 Cor. v. 20.

In these strong words Cornelius showed what should be the object and character of every solemn assembly. We are always present before God, our heavenly Father, when we join together to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Since the grace of God appeared to all men, and God reconciled the world to himself through Christ, the common worship of our Creator has assumed an entirely new form. It no longer requires the magnificent temple, the palace of the Eternal, but merely a house of God, where his glory may dwell, whether that house be great or small;—the village church is not inferior to the most magnificent edifice. In the new dispensation there is no veil to conceal the mercy seat—no

Holy of Holies, which the anointed high priest alone is permitted to enter,—no outer court, where the Gentiles must stand at a distance. No, the veil is torn, and the barrier taken away; a living path into the holy place which is above, stands always open. We have a High Priest at the right hand of the Father, even Jesus Christ, who hath purchased us with His blood, and washed us pure from our sins. We are His children and His property, a priestly royal people, called from darkness to His wonderful light. Where two or three are assembled together, there is He in the midst of them. We appear before Him in public worship, not as guests and strangers, but as fellow-citizens with the saints above, as children of the household of God; still on the road to our Father's house, but joyful in good hope, and certain of our heavenly inheritance. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John iii. 1.

We are ready to hear all, says Cornelius, which God hath commanded thee.—In the Holy Scriptures we have all which Cornelius desired to hear from the Apostle; for God has richly disclosed to us, in them, his hidden wisdom.

It is a characteristic of the word of God, to shine as a light, and illuminate the whole world, that every man may be blessed. By it are we reconciled to God our heavenly Father, and joined together as his children in one holy fellowship. This is the object of the announcement of the Gospel, the ordinance

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of God himself, and belongs to its very nature, as its name implies. When we assemble in the house of God, we are visibly reminded that we have one Father, from whom all things are, and we in him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him ; at the same time we acknowledge ourselves to be children of one Father, members of one body, of which Christ is the head, and fellow citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

We have much greater cause than David, who saw the future salvation only from afar, to love the service of God, and say, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand !" "Come ye," to use the words of Isaiah, that Evangelist among the prophets, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," as true worshippers, such as the Father wishes us to be.

The assembly in the house of Cornelius sets before our eyes a beautiful picture of such unions as were soon to be common among the Gentiles. They were penetrated with a fervent desire for the light which comes from above, with a lowly feeling of nothingness before God, with a pious veneration for the word of eternal life, and the messengers of God who announced it, and with child-like simplicity they hung upon the lips of the Apostle. They now received with singleness of heart the words of truth from his mouth, and there grew up in them a living faith, while peace and joy filled their souls.

In this we behold the fulfilment of the words of our Lord, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.” O beautiful sight ! this first house founded on a rock, which the Lord built for himself in the midst of heathenism, formed of living stones, of hearts seeking for peace and truth ! “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”

VI.

“ For I will give you a mouth and wisdom,” Luke xxi. 15.—This is the promise which our Lord made his disciples, and he has faithfully and abundantly fulfilled it. How could the timid ignorant Galileans, and the persecuting Paul, have proclaimed the goodness of God in our redemption to the whole world, if the Lord had not given them a mouth and wisdom ? In them, and in all those whom, in latter times, the Lord chose to be the heralds of his grace and truth, the words were fulfilled which Paul says of himself, “ When I am weak, then am I strong—I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

In humility, there is true courage, and in simplicity, real power and wisdom. The Lord filleth the hungry with good things ; and the rich he hath sent empty away ! Thus sung Mary, the mother of Jesus. And Paul writes, “ We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us,” 2 Cor. iv. 7. Man can only become the receptacle of divine power and wisdom, when self-wisdom and self-righteousness are taken away. Peter the Apostle required to be purified from the first, before he was called to announce the Gospel to the Gentiles—and Cornelius to be freed from the second, before he could lift up his voice in the praise and glory of God. We can only expe-

rience the truth and power of the Gospel, when we cast away our own wisdom and righteousness, and in all humility seek the righteousness which cometh from God. Then will the Lord give us a mouth and wisdom, enable us to know more and more his grace and truth, to proclaim his goodness, and to glorify and praise him. He satisfieth our mouths with good things ; so that our youth is renewed like the eagles.

“ Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”—Acts x. 34, 35.

“ *Peter opened his mouth and said.*”—This expression is applied to our Lord, when on the mountain, surrounded by his disciples and a multitude of people, he began to teach them : also to Philip, when he explained the Scriptures to the treasurer from Ethiopia, and preached to him the Gospel of Jesus. The Holy Scriptures frequently make use of this simple mode of speech, sometimes to point out more vividly the person speaking, and the importance of what he says, and sometimes to mark the beginning of some great work. In like manner, our Lord Jesus, when he wishes to arouse the different classes of people to whom he is speaking, frequently says, “ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear !” As the ear is the door which conducts into the inner life of our souls, so the mouth is the key which unlocks it.

Our Apostle had already spoken to the Centurion—he told him he had willingly come to Cæsarea, because God had shown him there was no man common or unclean; he then asked why Cornelius had summoned him. When he heard the humble reply of Cornelius, and saw before him the assemblage of Gentiles, all desirous of salvation, his heart became full, and he hastened to speak. We have here the introduction of the Apostle's sermon, and seem to be present at the joyful opening of his mouth.

“*Of a truth I perceive,*”—he now exclaims, with rejoicing admiration and astonishment. We can only comprehend and sympathize with these feelings, if we transport ourselves to the time of the old covenant, and place ourselves in the situation of the prejudiced Israelites. From the time of Abraham, Israel had been the only people which the all-wise God had chosen. He had separated them from other nations, brought them up in a peculiar manner, and disclosed to them his righteous decree, that from them should proceed the Saviour of men. To them was intrusted the oracles of God, and to them was promised a king, and kingdom of grace and truth. The law was to proceed from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Is it to be wondered at that the Israelites should believe themselves to be, as indeed they were, the nobility of the human race; and that they never could divest themselves of the idea, that the future heavenly kingdom was to be Jewish, and that the Gentiles were only to be happy servants, and not children of that king-

dom? Hence it was very difficult for the Apostle of the Lord to raise himself above the common prejudice of his people. He required not only to be instructed by a vision from above, but also to receive an especial command to go to the Gentile family that sought after him. Now, for the first time, in consequence of the divine injunction, and also from the sight of Cornelius, his family and friends, he acknowledged the decree of God with joyful admiration. The Apostle required to see a practical illustration of this truth, which he already knew in theory; for he had often heard it from the mouth of Jesus Christ, and he himself had distinctly preached it at the day of Pentecost, when he said, "All that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." It is thus with the decrees of God, in respect of our future beatitude; the day of our own experience can alone make them clear to us, and we can only understand the whole truth, when we ourselves have seen, tasted, and felt the goodness and glory of our Lord.

What did the Apostle now perceive, "*That God is no respecter of persons.*"—That is to say, God, the searcher of the heart, does not judge from appearance and outward talent, whether to impart or withhold his blessing unto men, for his love is impartial. When Samuel was sent to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's seven sons, as King of Israel, he wished to choose Eliab, the first-born and most majestic looking;—but the Lord said, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him;

for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Sam. xvi. 7. God also commands in the law, "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but ye shall hear the small as well as the great ; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man ; for the judgment is God's." Deut. i. 17. Jehovah is no respecter of persons, either in his blessings or in his judgments. Job says, speaking of him, "nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they all are the work of his hands." In his sight, the poor widow's mite is of as much value as the gold thrown in to the treasury by the rich. Both give him of their substance, and he seeth their hearts.

But particularly in his kingdom of grace, he has shown that he regards not the person. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are ; that no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

He chose the people of Israel, to use the words of Moses, the fewest of all people, to be the nation of his covenant, and the depository of his wonderful light. He drew Moses out of the water, and made him, though slow of speech, become his oracle, the leader of his hosts, and his trusted one, with whom

* See Note B.

he spoke as one friend speaks to another. He took a shepherd boy, the descendant of a Moabitess, from amongst the sheep, and anointed him to be king and prophet in Israel. And the Son of God himself called his Apostles, not out of Jerusalem, not out of the schools of the Pharisees, and those learned in the law, but from amidst the fishing-nets, and out of obscure and despised Galilee. But the highest example of God's impartiality, which astonished even Peter the Apostle, was, that he now directed his mercy and grace towards the Gentiles, thereby calling all men to his kingdom and fellowship without distinction of family or descent. Oh! it is a most precious truth that God is no respecter of persons! Had he been so, then, surrounded by myriads of angels and perfect intelligencies, he would never have regarded us poor children of the earth. But it is well for us! "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." He has looked even upon us, given us the light of his countenance, and become man for our sakes. O wonderful condescension of our God and Saviour! Unspeakably great is the divine mystery, God manifested in the flesh! God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself!

In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.—These words have sometimes been explained thus: "It matters not of what faith or creed thou art, whether Jew, Heathen, or Mahomedan, if thou only honour and fear God, or whatever thou regardest as thy God—do nothing unjust towards thy neighbour—and lead

a blameless life before the world—then thou requirest nothing more for thy salvation !” To the dishonour of the Gospel, this expression has often been thus interpreted. How miserably foolish ! The Apostle Peter would then have contradicted his own words, for he said, in Acts iv. 12, speaking of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, “ Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” In this case also, the devout and charitable Cornelius would not have needed to call the Apostle, to hear from him what he must do to be saved,—he might have remained in heathenism. The continuation of the history, and the just interpretation of the Apostle’s words, however, will show this truth more clearly.

Out of every nation God will certainly collect his flock and his people ; He has the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. God wills that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. The grace of God has appeared to all men, and he has redeemed us by his blood “ out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Rev. v. 9. But all is done according to his holy and gracious ordinance. Man must first feel and confess himself to be in need of help, before he will receive it from above ; he must desire and strive to become blessed, and then all things shall be given unto him. Our Apostle says, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.

“ *He that feareth God.*”—The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, the wisdom from above. It is also the root and commencement of repentance, faith, and sanctification, in a word, of the new and divine life. It is not the servile fear which seizes the ungodly, when the judgement of God, having arrested him in the midst of his profligate course, he sees the hand-writing on the wall, the joints of his loins are loosened, and his knees smite one against another; such a fear only prompts men to fly from the face of God. Nor is it the fear of an idolater, which, grounded upon a false idea of the divinity, is but the terror of a superior power, and is without consolation and without hope. No, the fear alluded to by the Holy Scriptures and our Apostle, is very different. It depends as much upon a right understanding of the holiness and omnipresence of the living God, as on a knowledge of ourselves and our dependence on him. Its very essence is the humble conviction of our distance from him who is the spring of light and life, of our unholiness before the Holy One, and our unworthiness of his mercy and love, as well as the desire of possessing a pure heart, and of enjoying the light of his countenance. The true fear of God is already an approach to him. The publican, who, in the fear of God, entered the temple, and would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, “ God be merciful to me a sinner,” went down justified to his house; not so the pharisee, in whom no trace of the fear of God could be discovered.

Cornelius feared God: he had learned to know him through divine revelation, and by its light he had also become aware of his own unworthiness; for he was contrite and pure in spirit. Humility was the root and foundation of his spiritual life: he feared God. When this is the case with man, there can never be wanting a desire for the grace and fellowship of God.

Peter added this other characteristic: "*And worketh righteousness,*" that is to say, whoever desires and strives to perfect his spiritual life. Our Lord says, "Labour for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," or in other words, seek to obtain everlasting food. In Matthew, he also says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,"—the righteousness which is esteemed in the sight of God, and which he hath commanded.

Cornelius did seek, but in a natural manner, and according to the light and knowledge he had already obtained. He endeavoured, as far as he could, to do what was right, to fulfil the law and the commands of God. He was charitable to the poor, kind and friendly to his family and servants, fasted often, prayed continually, and was reported among the Jews to be a righteous man. But the more he tried to fulfil the law, to lead a godly life in thought and deed, and to secure the divine approbation, the more he perceived the deficiency of his own righteousness, the poverty of his works, and the sinfulness of his character. It is impossible, by outward actions, to change the nature

of the heart, as long as the foundation of all goodness is wanting, the animating and quickening love of God. Through the works of the law a man can become a servant but not a child of God. Cornelius was the servant ; and certainly his soul, in offering the sacrifices of faith and obedience, longed to be the child. But the stronger this desire became, and the more he tried to love and serve the Lord with his heart and soul, the more he felt his own incapacity, and perceived his distance from that righteousness of which God approves, and which could only be imparted to him by means of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit. His soul hungered and thirsted for this, with the most heart-felt humility ; like the little seed of corn beginning to open, which languishes for the dew and the sunshine.

Whosoever humbly feareth God, and doeth righteously, and earnestly desires his fellowship, is accepted with him ; God regards him graciously, receives and adopts him. “The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him,—in those that hope in his mercy,” and the works which they do are sacrifices of righteousness, which are well pleasing in his sight. So were the prayers and alms of Cornelius in the eye of God—he was esteemed worthy of a revelation from the invisible world ; and an Apostle of the Lord was sent to preach the Gospel to his household, and lead them in to the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. He who, by the reading of the Scriptures, had awakened holy desires in his mind, would now,

through the gracious influence of his Spirit, enable him to bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

We see, from the words of the Apostle, the way in which Cornelius attained righteousness and happiness, and became accepted with God. In this manner, and in no other, can we become partakers of this treasure. Before we can desire the salvation of God, we must feel our need of it. The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The work of regeneration must begin in our hearts, with the fear of the Lord, a knowledge of his commands, and a lively conviction of our own sinfulness and separation from him ;—in other words, it must begin with humiliation and repentance.

Conscience already, if we listen to its voice, shows us that we have departed from the living spring, and lost the paradise of the divine fellowship. “Thou hast made us, O Lord,” says a father of the church, “therefore our heart is always disquieted until it finds rest in Thee!” Conscience is in reality, a dim feeling, a sort of misty conviction of the original innocence which we have lost,—of the image of God which is now distorted by sin. Hence man, having lost the original equipoise of his faculties, feels from his birth a restlessness and disquietude from which he seeks to escape by means of levity, dissipation, and too frequently by means of vice. Thus Adam and Eve hid themselves from the Lord, and Cain, prompted by the envious feeling of his ungodly nature, became his brother’s murderer.

The word of God is the awakener of the conscience, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Then man becomes alarmed for himself, and asks, "What must I do to be saved?" This internal disquietude, the consequence of our fall, is that which leads the sinner back to the living spring which he has forsaken. Happy is he who, feeling this, and perceiving its real origin, instead of seeking to escape from it, or to calm it by worldly means, permits it to lead him into the presence of God. This is the true fear of the Almighty, which is the beginning of wisdom! And more and more vividly does that man feel his own poverty and insignificance; and more and more humble and lowly does he become!

Happy is it for us that God is greater than our hearts. "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool:—but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2. "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 31, 32. Let us, therefore, repair to his mercy-seat, though we be of the same class of people as the publicans and sinners! Even though our sins be as scarlet they shall be made white as snow.

If we, like Cornelius, hunger and thirst after right-

eousness, or, if we feel an earnest desire to forsake an ungodly life and obtain peace ; and if we, like him, seek the Lord in fasting and prayer, and with faith and patience long for eternal life, then will the Lord draw nigh unto us ; we shall more and more experience his grace and love ; he will purify us from all unrighteousness, and, by his word and Spirit, give us that peace which passeth understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away, and which will remain through all eternity, for he is faithful that promised.

VII.

“ GOD, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”

This is the commencement of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews ; what infinite grace and mercy, on the part of our heavenly Father, do these simple words imply ! God has spoken to man, to the sinful and fallen human race. He has descended among them after they had broken his covenant and lost his light and fellowship ! He has given them his word, after they could no longer behold his countenance, and has made a new covenant with them, rebellious and apostate though they be. The Word, or, to express the idea differently, the wonderful gift of speech,* is the means of connecting the minds of men with each other, and is the instrument of all human improvement and development. Without the Word, or human speech, there would be neither faith nor hope, friendship nor love, sympathy in suffering, nor universal joy ; we should not have the reciprocal cares and affections of parents and children, nor, indeed, any other permanent human connection ; we should be like the dumb beasts of the field, but, the longings of our superior intellect being ungratified, we should be without consolation and without happiness. How

* See Note F.

wonderful is the arrangement of God, whereby he has connected all the prerogatives of man, even his intellect and reason, with the breath which proceeds from his mouth. As the word is the connecting link between man and man, which brings their hearts and souls, their thoughts and feelings into contact ; so God sent *his Word* to the sinful human race, to bring them into contact with himself, that they might no longer doubt his grace and mercy, and that they, his erring children, might be enabled to find their Father once more. This is the reason why he has given us his word, and spoken to us in former times by his prophets, and in the latter days by his Son ; this is the object of the law, the promises, and the Gospel.

Let us admire the grace of God, when, having spoken to us by the prophets, by his only Son, and by his messengers, who were filled with the Holy Spirit, should continue to intrust the announcement of the word to men, in order to bind them more closely to God, and unite them more firmly amongst each other, as being fellow citizens of one kingdom, and members of one household.

“ The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ ; he is Lord of all.”—
Acts x. 36.

The Apostle now begins his own sermon—it is short and simple, but rich in meaning, and comprehensive in its very brevity and simplicity ! The sub-

ject is Jesus Christ, His work of peace, His word of peace, and his kingdom of peace. For the first time Peter begins to understand that the expression, "Christ the Lord of all," signifies that he is the Messiah both of Jew and Gentile. He now mentions what had already reached the ears of Cornelius,—the word of promise which God had sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace unto them by Jesus Christ.

The expression *sent* is often used in the Holy Scriptures, in speaking of the word of God, and the preaching of it. The Lord uses it himself in Isaiah, when comparing it to the rain and snow which fall from heaven and fertilize the earth,—“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void ; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it,” *lv. 11.* After men had sinned and lost the divine image, God sent them his word, the word of promise, that during the struggle with the serpent he might be near them, and enable them to obtain the victory.

As the word or human speech, is the wonderful instrument which links men together, so the word of God imparted to them is the only thing which can unite them again to God, and is the object of every divine revelation to the fallen race. During the first ages God held frequent intercourse with man, and his word came down directly unto them, for example to Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and the other patriarchs ; the Lord also spoke with Moses, the

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mediator of the old covenant, as one friend does to another. But as the human race removed farther and farther from the living God, the word of promise was entrusted to the children of Israel only, partly veiled in allegories, symbols, and shadows, partly sent to them by the prophets, until the eternal "Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. The word of the old covenant was fulfilled to the children of Israel by the sending of the Son of God; and when the new covenant was concluded by the sacrifice of himself, the word of reconciliation was extended to us also. This is the word which is now preached among us, and which Cornelius longed to hear.

The Apostle clearly shows the meaning and object of this word, by the expression, *preaching peace by Jesus Christ*. Peace! What a beautiful word! It signifies the assembling together of all that is true, and good, and joyful. For this reason, Israel in ancient times, and in the present day their descendants, make use of the expression, "Peace be unto you!" when they salute each other, or wish each other joy. But what is peace? Since sin and death have entered the world, and every where spread their direful dominion, so that no man escapes, peace has disappeared from the earth, and in its place disquietude has entered. In the circumstances of our first parents when they fell, we behold a picture of the restless and disquieted state of the whole human race. Instead of looking joyfully towards the God of love, who had created them in his own image,

and now like a father drew near to them ;—fear and terror, as for a consuming fire, overpowered them, and they sought to escape and to hide themselves from his presence. Instead of the child-like innocence with which they formerly acknowledged and loved their Creator, living in blessed fellowship with him, they now experienced the condemnation of their own hearts ;—the original simplicity and harmony of their natures were destroyed, and discord arose between body and soul, so that they warred against each other. On looking back after their expulsion from Paradise, they beheld the cherubim, with the flaming sword, instead of their lost Eden ;—before them was death and decay ; and a prophetic spirit could discern, in the midst of the plains covered with thorns and thistles, labour and toil, sickness and pain, groaning and suffering.

Internal disquietude cannot fail to show itself outwardly, hence arose discord and hatred to each other, selfishness, envy, hatred and malice. Abel's blood cried for vengeance against the restless and fugitive murderer of his brother.

What a melancholy picture ! Alas ! It is the condition of the sinful human race, the picture of earth, and of its histories. How can peace exist where sin, the progeny of darkness, has its dwelling, and where man, having broken his connection with God, the spring of all light and life, has changed his original nature, and is at variance both with his Creator and himself. When we look above us, to the eternal dwelling place of light, and then to our own insigni-

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ficant existence, or observe the vain objects and pursuits, the sighs and longings of men, and then direct our gaze to the future—to death and the grave—judgment and eternity!—what terrible testimony have we that Adam has broken the covenant and lost the peace of God!

Happily for us, we both can and shall regain this peace—for he, the God of peace, and the Father of all grace, has promised it to all, through Jesus Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. The Old Testament contains the preliminaries and preparations for this bond of peace. Noah saw its sure testimony in the dove's olive branch, and afterwards, in the rainbow stretching peacefully amidst the clouds of heaven over the lately convulsed and deluged world. Abraham longed to see the day of the Lord, and did see it and rejoiced, and the salvation that was to come illuminated also the dying bed of the aged Israel. In what beautiful colours do the prophets paint the promised joyful future, particularly Isaiah, *the Evangelist of the old covenant!* In order to ratify this bond of peace, a mighty manifestation of grace, on the part of God, was necessary, which should so far surpass the ideas and comprehension of men, as heaven is higher than the earth; namely, the incarnation of the living God, the sending of the only Son of the Father. God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself! He sent his Son that we might become his children, for so hath he loved the world! In speaking of this word of God, Peter writes, "Of which salvation the

prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you ;” the angels also desired to look into those things ; and when they appeared to the sons of Adam, they celebrated them with their songs of praise, “ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

In what does this peace consist ? The Apostle Paul answers this question very beautifully, when he says, “ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” God is the author of the covenant of peace, the God that makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust ; and the mediator of this covenant is Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners.

It is as plain and obvious as the sun in the heavens, and shines upon us in the same manner without any agency on our part. As we enjoy light and warmth by means of the sun-beams which connect us with the luminous orb above ; so we receive the grace and favour of our God and Saviour by means of faith, the heart-felt and spiritual link between us and our Creator.

Through faith we enter into an entirely new relation with the world, with the law, and with God ; and a godly life dawns in our souls, by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. While we become more and more conscious of our innate depravity, we receive

at the same time, the certainty of the forgiveness of our sins, the pledge and seal of our divine inheritance, and the confident assurance that we are the children of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. " Things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's." As this peace of God is far above our comprehension, and passeth all understanding, so it transcends all human language, is the root and spring of all happiness, for peace of conscience is indissolubly connected with it ; our heart no longer condemns us, and we have the blessed assurance that whatsoever we ask from God, we shall obtain. We have perpetual access to his mercy-seat, and when, through our own weakness, guilt, or faithlessness, our spiritual alliance with him is disturbed, we have only to approach him with confidence, acknowledging our sin, to receive anew from him mercy and forgiveness. He is greater than our hearts, and if we sin, " we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins." He only says to us, " lovest thou me ?" and is ready to unite us to himself more closely than ever, in the covenant that we have broken.

This peace includes peace with all men ; for how could envy and hatred, anger and bitterness, dwell in a heart which knows how much has been given it, and how much has been pardoned ? In reference to this, our Lord says, " Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you," Matt. v. 44. Stephen obeyed this in-

junction ; when his enemies gnashing their teeth, ran upon him with one accord and stoned him, he said, “ Lord lay not this sin to their charge.” They could not disturb the heaven which was within him, for he who is in peace with God, is in peace with all his creatures.

We no longer enjoy the garden of Eden upon earth, we must remain pilgrims and strangers during our whole life, live in perpetual conflict, and pass our days like those of a hired servant. Though Adam and Eve mourned among the thorns and thistles of the barren earth, for the loss of their beautiful Eden which lay behind them, yet there is consolation for us ; in looking upwards to the heavenly Adam, we behold many signs and tokens of a far more glorious Eden. Therefore the Apostles, and all those into whose hearts the love and peace of God had been poured through the Holy Spirit, rejoiced in affliction ; and death itself appeared to them no longer as the terrible executioner of the divine judgment, but as a heavenly messenger of peace, and a guide into the eternal Eden, where all strife and warfare are at an end.

On what does this peace and covenant of peace ground itself ? On the glory and dominion of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Therefore the Apostle says, “ He is Lord of all”—that is to say, of all things, animate and inanimate. After he had finished the work of redemption, he ascended into his glory, and unto him was given all power in heaven and on earth. “ For to this end Christ both died, and rose,

and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Rom. xiv. 9. God hath "set him at his own right hand, in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Eph. i. 20, 21. This Lord of all glory whom God has exalted, is our Redeemer and Saviour—our Prince of Peace, and our King! "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." 1 Cor. viii. 6. He gave himself as a mediator between God and man, and having accomplished the work of atonement, he labours unceasingly by his word and Spirit, that his kingdom may be enlarged, and that of his peace there may be no end.

When Peter announced this Gospel of peace to the first assembly of Gentiles at Cæsarea, they heard it in faith, and received it with joy, and were immediately admitted into the fellowship of Christians upon earth, and into the community of holy ones above.

That which happened to Cornelius and his household, is a picture of what took place with regard to our heathen ancestors. The greatest blessing our father-land ever experienced, was the arrival of those messengers who announced the Gospel of peace, proclaiming, "Thy God is king!" and who scattered in our soil the imperishable seed of the word of truth, that we might thereby become the first fruits of his creatures. Since that time, the Gospel has dwelt in our land, and the Prince of Peace has sojourned

among us, and proclaims to us, "Come unto me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls!"

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Heb. ii. 3. Seek ye peace and truth, are the words of the prophet, thereby giving us to understand what we have lost. We have fallen away from God, and each one, according to his peculiar circumstances, finds himself in a state of perpetual declension. All men have a feeling, though it may be an obscure one, that it is so with them; they all seek for some resting place. In this way self-delusion easily arises, for a drowning man grasps at every straw. The Apostle John warns us of the danger of this, when he concludes his first epistle with the words, "Little children keep yourselves from idols." He does not mean the idolatrous images of the heathen, but a far more dangerous species of idolatry, against which the children of light have also to struggle—the worshipping of self, and of the world,—the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. These more refined idolatries are not less sinful, though less easily detected, than the grossest idolatry of the heathen; and they lead the heart of man as far, if not farther astray, from the living God. It is much more dangerous to have an idol in ourselves, or in our own hearts, than to have it outwardly before our eyes. When we regard the character and pursuits of the greater part of men, we discover how

eagerly they all seek for peace—but, alas ! they seek it only in the world, and in its perishable wealth, where it is not to be found. If at times the feeling of their restless unhappy state arises strongly in their souls, they strive to banish it by what is falsely named pleasure, and there, in voluntary self-delusion and blindness, they remain in their fallen, miserable state, until at last, when too late, they become aware of the deceitfulness of sin, and without peace sink into the grave !

Oh ! be ye reconciled to God, while there is yet time, and see that ye receive not the grace of God in vain ! Now is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation ! Follow the example of the Gentile family at Cæsarea, who rested not until they had found peace through him who is the Prince of Peace ! The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Amen.

VIII.

“THIS is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” The Apostle Paul writes thus to his beloved Timothy, full of joy because the glorious Gospel of the blessed God was committed to his trust—and thanking Jesus Christ, his Lord, for counting him faithful, and committing to him the ministry of reconciliation. The Apostle then compares his former state, as “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious,” with his present renewed and holy life; and shows us the ground of that peace which he had enjoyed since he knew the Lord Jesus, and believed on him. The Apostle could not have given a stronger example than his own, of the grace of God, and the renewing and converting power of the Gospel! He who formerly had breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, had now become a messenger of peace, from whom the divine brightness was reflected, and, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, was about to renew, by the words of his mouth, the image of God in the long estranged world. What he had received, he was to impart to others; and those whose hearts the Lord should open, were, through his means, to become that which he now was. We behold in Paul an ex-

ample of a believer, whose life was hid with Christ in God. He therefore adds, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting"—and the ground of this faith and peace is contained in the true and precious words, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

If we wish to attain the peace of God, and become heirs of everlasting life, we must first firmly believe the words of reconciliation and atonement, and then love and prize them with our whole hearts and souls, for this is life eternal, "to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." And this life we shall enjoy, if we, like the Gentile Cornelius, in all humility, hunger and thirst after righteousness and salvation. As the blind, the lame, and the unclean, came unto Christ while he walked upon earth, and were healed by him; so we must first approach, and by faith lay hold of our incarnate Redeemer, who came into this world and dwelt among us. For this reason the New Testament commences with the four-fold history of our Saviour; and the Apostle Peter begins his sermon to Cornelius, with an account of the earthly pilgrimage of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us also contemplate it.

"That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing

good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with him.”—Acts x. 37, 38.

In order to understand the commencement of our text, “*That word, which was published throughout all Judea,*” we must observe that it is a peculiar property of the language in which the divine revelations were written, to express *word* and *thing* by the same combination of letters. The well-known sentence in Luke i. 37, “*For with God nothing shall be impossible,*” might also be translated “*no word** shall be impossible.” In the same way the shepherds at Bethlehem say, “*Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this word which is come to pass,*” or as it is in our translation, “*this thing which is come to pass.*” That which we express by the term *thing*, signifies also, in the language of the people of God, *word* or *words*, and with great reason. Without God’s word and will, nothing can be done ; a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his permission. When He speaks, it is done, when He commands, it stands fast. Every thing before it takes place, is but *a word* in the mind of God ; and afterwards, when it has happened, and become a fact, it again becomes a word in being related to another. The flood happened long ago, but in *words* it stands written as if still happening, forming a living picture before our eyes. The incarnation of the Son of God was from all eternity a *word* and counsel of the Almighty ; and it was

* In the original *το ῥημα*, literally “the word,” which, like the Hebrew *דבר*, signifies in the sacred writings, either *word* or *thing*.

also a word in the mouths of his prophets. At his birth in Bethlehem it became a fact, or a thing done ; afterwards it again became a word, a preaching an announcement, and a Gospel. The great subject to which Peter alludes, is the history of Jesus Christ, his actions and his earthly pilgrimage. This is what we must now consider.

“ *That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea.* ”—Cornelius had already heard of Jesus and his miracles ; the report of them had spread through all Judea, through Syria, and the neighbouring countries. The Apostles, but particularly Philip, had preached the Gospel in Samaria ; and, at a later period, it had even reached Cæsarea. Certainly Cornelius would receive Peter’s intelligence with far more eagerness, and it would arrest his soul far more powerfully, because he had all along expected that salvation should come from this Jesus of Nazareth. For the same reason, the Apostle, taking for granted that Cornelius and his friends, were already acquainted with Jesus and his miracles, thus addressed them, “ *That word I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea.* ” Judea, that is to say, Canaan, was, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, to be the land of Emmanuel ; and Micah also says, “ *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* ”

“ *And began from Galilee, after the baptism which*

John preached.—Jesus lived in Galilee, in the little town of Nazareth, in perfect seclusion, until his thirtieth year. It was out of Galilee he came when he began his office of teaching; here he called his first disciples; and here he performed the first and also the greater part of his miracles. Out of the obscure and despised Nazareth arose the light and salvation of the world, according to the words of the prophet, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined,” Isaiah ix. 2. The ways of God upon earth have always been different from the ways of men—as he, at the creation, called forth light out of darkness; so he now made the work of redemption arise out of obscurity and insignificance.

This great work commenced with the baptism of John; when this man of God, in the spirit of Elias, preached repentance for the remission of sins, announcing the approach of the kingdom of heaven, and the dawn of the Sun of Righteousness—and when Jesus came to him desiring to be baptized. Then that word, which had been concealed in the bosom of the Father from the beginning of the world, assumed a form in which it could be seen and heard; and that was done after the manner of men, which had never entered the imagination of man to conceive. The Lord of light and glory, in a form of deep humiliation, as though he had required the baptism of repentance, in order to fulfil all righteousness, permitted himself to be baptized by a man, who, ac-

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according to his own confession, was unworthy to unloose the latchet of his shoes.

Thus the divine work, which was to remove forever the separation between heaven and earth, between the Holy God, and the sinful human race, was begun in the deepest humility, and the divine nature must become human, before the human could become divine.

The Apostle now describes our Lord himself and his life upon earth. He calls him simply Jesus of Nazareth, as shortly before he had proclaimed him to be "Lord of all." He makes use of that human name which the angel had given him at his birth, and which had been a very common one among the Israelites since the time of Joshua.—"*Jesus*, with the addition, *of Nazareth*." As the Lord himself, through the depths of humiliation, must perfect his work of righteousness before re-ascending to that glory and splendour which were his from the beginning; so must also his name, in the same path of obedience, shame and humiliation, become a name above all names, to which every knee should bow, and which every tongue should praise. Jesus, our Saviour and Redeemer, "is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. vii. 25; it was he, this high and holy one, of whom the Apostle speaks. But Cornelius and his friends must learn to know him as the Son of Man, and the Messiah, who came into the world to save

sinner, — he is therefore called the Man of Nazareth.

Ye know, continued Peter, “*how God anointed him with the Holy Ghost, and with power.*” — This expression is symbolical. Anointing with oil was an Eastern custom, meant to denote a peculiar honour, — it was principally used when kings were crowned, and was a token, that as they were ordained by God, they should also receive his gifts. The anointed ones of ancient times, however, were only pictures and shadows of a greater ANOINTED ONE, the Messiah, or the Christ. In Jesus of Nazareth the prophecy was fulfilled, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek : he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn.” Is. lxi. 1, 2. This anointing took place visibly, when heaven was opened after he was baptized by John, when “the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him ; and a voice came from heaven, which said, thou art my beloved Son ; in thee I am well pleased.” Most wonderful mercy of God ! The only Son of the Father came down among us in a simple and lowly form, as a man among the children of men, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and with power from above, in order that he, as the

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mediator between God and man, might fulfil that work of redemption for which his Father had sent him; and that we also might be anointed through him who is infinite in holiness.

Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.—

In these few words, the Apostle gives us a sketch of the whole life of our Lord. The last three years of his life were spent in perpetually going about from one place to another, in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. The good shepherd, who sought first the lost sheep of the house of Israel, *here* revealed himself as the promised one, through whom the sinful world should again receive the light and life which it had lost,—and here, for the space of three years, he preached to all, the Gospel of the kingdom of God; but in the life of our Lord one day was as a year, so rich was it in manifestations of grace and truth, in word and deed.

Doing good.—In these two words the Apostle describes the object of that life which was a source of so many blessings. The greater the thing, the more simple are the words required to express it. We say of the sun, as well as of the smallest satellite that twinkles in the firmament, “*it rises.*”—We use the same expression, “*it shines,*” in speaking of an insignificant little taper, as when describing our great luminary which showers down so many benefits. John expresses the highest and most glorious thing which can be said of God, in those most simple words, “God is love!”

The words in our text, "*doing good*," although common, and not remarkable, are most glorious and comprehensive in sense and signification. Beneficence, compassion, and love, constituted the character of our Lord ; and were the beams which issued from him unceasingly, for he was the Son of Righteousness, and the Light of the world, imparting life, joy, and energy to all who approached him. Peter adds, "*Healing all those that were oppressed of the devil* ; and these certainly were the greatest and most remarkable cures which our Lord performed. Jesus Christ healed innumerable sick people, of whom the Evangelist has only described a few, all that was necessary, was to be in his neighbourhood, to behold his countenance, to utter a few petitioning words or to touch his garment, and the blind saw, the deaf heard, the lepers were made clean, and the sick became whole. Wicked spirits, and every kind of disease, must equally give way before the power with which God had anointed him.

Sickness, and every kind of malady, are, in their character and origin, merely the fruits and consequence of that power which the devil has obtained over man by sin. The root of the evil lies in the kingdom of darkness, for in heaven above there shall be no more sickness. Thus, every cure which our Lord performed was a victory over the kingdom of darkness—of life over death—and a sure proof that he was the light and life of the world. In the expression, "*healing all that were oppressed of the*

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devil," the Apostle includes all who were diseased, or afflicted in any way; but, certainly, those who were inhabited by evil spirits, whose souls were bound by Satan, the demoniacal and the possessed had especial cause to praise and glorify the loving mercy of their deliverer. There were many such unfortunates at the time when the Son of God was upon earth—at the dawn of the kingdom of light, the power of Satan had stepped visibly forward on the arena—and, it must have been by divine permission, in order to show more clearly the fearful dominion of sin and of death, and thereby to prove the power of that victorious prince of peace, who came to destroy them. The Lord healed those miserable beings, as a proof that Satan, who had the power of death, was now overthrown, along with the whole kingdom of darkness; and that Jesus of Nazareth was in reality "*the Saviour of the world,*" who should deliver the men of all ages and all nations from the power of evil, and make them, through the Holy Spirit, able to receive salvation, and be partakers of the fellowship of God. His innumerable deeds of almighty power and love, were performed and written, as John says in his Gospel, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," chap. xx. 31.

"*For God was with him.*"—What great and glorious things the Apostle expresses in these few words, which at first sight appear too simple, because they are frequently used in the Holy Scriptures with re-

gard to other men. Abimelech said to Abraham, "God is with thee in all that thou doest;" of Joseph, it is said, "the Lord was with him," meaning, that God "made all he did to prosper in his hand." Nicodemus said to Jesus, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." God was with Joshua and also with Elias, when "the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man." But these words, when used of the Son of God, have a much higher sense, and a deeper meaning. He alone could say of himself, "I and the Father are one, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; I am in the Father, and the Father in me." These are the precious words which our Lord Jesus speaks of himself, thereby disclosing his nature and character,—and to which his own miracles, and afterwards those of his disciples, bore testimony.

Our Apostle, in reference to the promise in the old covenant, with which Cornelius was acquainted, uses the expression, "*God was with him,*" with which his prophetic name, Immanuel, or "God with us," beautifully corresponds. Jesus of Nazareth has appeared as the Immanuel of the human race, in order that the whole earth might become a land of Immanuels. We behold in the human form of the Son of God, and in his earthly pilgrimage, our own human nature exalted, and, in looking towards him, we may exclaim, "God is also with us!" The Lord of heaven, who in all things became like his brethren, and was not ashamed to call himself *brother*, is our new and our true Adam. No man cometh to the Father but by

him ; He is the way, the truth, and the life—He in us and we in him ; He is the vine, we are the branches ; He is the shepherd, and we are the sheep. This is the signification of his name, Immanuel ! Hosanna be to him who has come, and who will come again ! Amen.

IX.

“ YE shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,” Acts i. 8. Thus spake the Lord Jesus to his disciples, when, after his work on earth was accomplished, he led them up the Mount of Olives, and ascended from thence into heaven. After they had received the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle fulfilled gloriously and wonderfully the commission of their ascended Lord, converting nations to the Gospel, by the testimony of their mouths and by their written words.

How simple and deep, how natural, and yet how divine, are their narrations, both of the actions and words of Jesus Christ ! That disciple whom the Lord loved in his Gospel, his first Epistle and his Revelation, gives us a glimpse both of his own spirit and that of all the Apostles. The words with which the first Epistle begins are particularly worthy of remark. It was composed in his old age as bishop of Ephesus, and in reference to his then nearly concluded ministry ; but both in it and in the commencement of his gospel, his heart seems to expand, and we can clearly perceive, in the midst of his fatherly earnestness, the same spirit of love which prompted him to lie on the bosom of his much loved

and now glorified Master. "That which was from the beginning," he writes, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that our joy may be full."

With what depth of feeling does the Apostle speak here of his ministry, and of his bearing witness to Jesus Christ, and the truth of his Gospel! His language struggles with his thoughts and sensations, and he strives to express the dignity of his office, and the glory of his heavenly Master. The Word which was from the beginning,—that life which is eternal, had appeared to them who were to be his messengers,—they had seen it with their eyes, had looked upon it and touched it with their hands,—that which they had seen and heard they now announced, in order that all who heard and received it might have fellowship with the Apostles,—that they might become Apostles also, be made partakers of the same happiness, and enjoy the same fellowship with the Father and the Son.

How could the high object and dignity of the Gospel testimony be more simply and strongly laid before us, than in these words? All the Apostles thought and felt as John here expresses himself,—they even ventured to offer themselves as examples to the faithful in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus

Christ, and in their conformity to him, as in 1 Cor. xi. 1. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," and in Phil. iii. 17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample."

May the Lord awaken in our souls the lively wish to be in simplicity of heart and love, like those men who first bore testimony to "the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God," and may he enable us to do this by the power of the Holy Spirit !

"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem."—Acts. x. 39.

With these words the Apostle Peter interrupts his narration of the actions and character of the Lord Jesus. We, he says, his disciples and Apostles, were eye and ear witnesses of the great and wonderful manifestation of God, in his Son Jesus of Nazareth. John says, "we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We, the witnesses chosen of God, "did eat and drink with him," says our Apostle in the 41st verse, laying great stress on his own testimony, and that of his fellow-apostles, for the greater a thing is in itself, the more testimony does it require, and so much the more important is the office of a witness.

For this first testimony, we must thank the word of reconciliation, which has reached us, and, by the

power of the Holy Spirit, has inspired the world as with a new life: this word lives, and will ever live among us, for it is a spring of life proceeding from God himself, which cannot be dried up, and which flows for ever.

When the Apostle says, "We are witnesses of all things which he did," he speaks of the actions of Jesus. These actions were ample proof and testimony that the Father has sent the Son, that the Father is in him, and he in the Father, and that both He and the Father are one. Jesus said, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works." When the disciples of John came to him and asked, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" Jesus referred them to his miracles as a proof that he was Jesus the Lord. In what other manner, or by what other means could Jesus of Nazareth, in his humble human form, have shown forth his glory, than by those deeds of almighty power and love? Is it not the peculiar property of the manifestations of the invisible God, that the lowly should yield to the highest one, and that external nature should quail before him, who was to regenerate the world? How could Jesus have proved more fully, that "in him was life; and that the life was the light of men," than when he restored the eye and the ear to their proper functions, which, to their possessors, were as though they had been dead, and when he summoned the buried body of a Lazarus again to life? In what can we more clearly perceive his

power over the mysterious world of sin and darkness, and be convinced that he is the Son of God, who came to destroy the works of Satan, than when we look upon those whom he healed, who were possessed of the devil, and whom he delivered from the bonds of sin and of death ?

Nicodemus said, “no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him ;” it neither occurred to him, nor to any one among the nations of antiquity, to doubt the connection of godlike deeds with divine power, the one being the characteristic of the other.

The miracles of Jesus prove his close, though inexplicable, relation to God his heavenly Father, and are divine credentials of the unspeakable dignity of his person. The actions of men show us their mind and disposition ; they, in like manner, represent to us the mingling of the divine and human in the character of Jesus ; they make the picture perfect, and, at the same time, prove his power to deliver the world from sin and from death. “All these are written,” says John, in the conclusion of his Gospel, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

These miracles of the Lord were performed in the land of Immanuel, in Judea and Jerusalem—before the eyes of that people, among whom, for ages past, the God of Israel had performed so many mighty deeds, and to whom he had manifested his strong hand, and stretched out arm, in such a variety of

ways,—before a people from whom light and life, truth and justice, were to come forth, and spread over the whole world, but who also had always proved themselves to be a rebellious and perverse generation, and of whom the Lord himself had said, “If the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. If the chosen people had not gazed listlessly on the miracles of Jesus, with which the whole land was resounding, but had they, on the contrary, recognised, and in faith received him, as the promised and long-expected one, as the way, the truth, and the life; then Israel would have become a nation of evangelists, an apostolic people, the salt and light of the earth, and through them the Canaanitish kingdom of the world would have been annihilated.

Alas! Jesus came to his own kingdom and his own people, but they received him not, and rejected his testimony. This appears incomprehensible—but this people, so wonderfully singled out from other nations, had become accustomed to the mighty actions of God, performed in the days of their fathers, and which, being described in the Holy Scriptures, they had read from their youth upwards—their hearts had become hardened, and their minds callous, both to miracles, and to the law and the prophets; all of which seemed to them, merely every day things.

For this reason, they gazed without wonder on the miracles of Jesus, as they would have done at any tran-

sient illusion, while, at the same time, they despised his doctrines, and were displeased with his person. Therefore the curse of Moses, instead of Abraham's blessing, rested on them, and continues even to the present day,—a melancholy proof of the estrangement of man from his heavenly Father, and of the difficulty he finds, after having quitted the right path, to return to his proper existence, a life in accordance with the will of God. In the obstinacy and rebellion of the house of Israel, we have a manifestation of the depravity of the heart of man. In the miracles of Jesus, which the rulers and princes of the people could not deny, without contradicting the testimony of their senses, they rather chose to behold the power of Satan, than the finger of the living God. The explanation of such delusion is given in the words of our God, “If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !” Matt. vi. 23.

The Lord Jesus knew well that it would happen thus, and that only a few of the lost sheep of the house of Israel would acknowledge him as the good Shepherd.

He therefore chose twelve men to be his Apostles, and his own peculiar witnesses, according to the number of the unbelieving tribes of Israel—and he also chose seventy believing disciples, to go two and two and prepare his way before him ; they corresponded to the seventy elders of the supreme counsel,* who rejected him,

* The Sanhedrim or Council, who determined the most important affairs of the nation ; they had the power of life and

and on whom the Holy Spirit no longer rested, (Num. xi. 25.) To them he said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Acts i. 8.—"And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning," John xv. 27. The grace and the dignity of that office with which the Lord invested them, was unspeakably great.—"Blessed," he says, "are the eyes which see the things that ye see, for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." Luke x. 23, 24. They were to see and hear the greatest of all the manifestations of God, into which the prophets, who had foretold it, had wished to search, and which even the angels desired to look upon; they were also, as being eye and ear witnesses, to announce it to the world. That which John the Baptist says of his own divine calling, "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven," applies in a still greater degree to the disciples and apostles of the Lord. He himself says unto them, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." John xv. 16.

How did Jesus choose his disciples? Certainly not from caprice, nor in order to try them; but as he "needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man, he chose them according to his divine wisdom and rectitude. He acted

death, and even the king, the high priest, and the prophets, were under their jurisdiction, Luke xxii. 66.

in this as he had formerly done in his choice of David to be king of Israel ; for he looked not on the outward appearance but on the heart. He did not choose his witnesses out of the schools of the learned and acute scribes and pharisees, nor yet out of the great and far-famed Jerusalem, but out of the obscure and much contemned Galilee. Here he found, and chose for his own, Peter, John, and James—sinful and weak like other men, but of simple hearts and minds, and uncorrupted by the destructive luxury of the capital, and the dry and self-righteous wisdom of the schools. Withdrawn from the privileges of their people, their souls were like empty vessels, which afforded room for the truth, and more easily received and preserved it ; the eyes of their understanding were simple and unsophisticated, so that at the first glance, they perceived something of the hidden glory of the Lord Jesus, and joyfully received him. Therefore he needed only to say the truly simple and paternal words, “ Follow me and I will make you fishers of men ;” and the word found a place in their child-like hearts, “ they straightway left their nets and followed him.

Jesus of Nazareth appeared, at first sight, to them, merely a beloved master and teacher ; soon, however, he became a prophet mighty in word and deed,—afterwards, they acknowledged him as the long promised Lord and Saviour ;—and at last they worshipped him as the only begotten Son of the eternal God ! The Son of Righteousness illuminated their minds only by degrees ; they must live three years with

their Lord, and behold all that took place during that blessed and gracious period ; they were defective, and erred in many ways ; when the first hour of their Master's suffering had arrived, their feeble light seemed to darken ; their first love, however, was not utterly quenched, excepting in that child of Satan who betrayed him ;—in the other disciples, the glimmering light soon burned again brightly, never more to be extinguished. During forty days they beheld him who had risen from the dead ; they were witnesses of his visible ascension into heaven, and received, from his own mouth, the promise, “ Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

Mat. xxviii. 20. In this manner, those first witnesses and heralds of the kingdom of God, gradually increased in love and in piety, until they were prepared to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit in full measure, and to dispense to others, that living water which shall flow on for ever, and fertilize the garden of the new Eden.

They must now say to the whole world—we are messengers of Christ, witnesses of one who came into the world to save sinners, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth ! Like the Lord himself, who went with them through Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, every where manifesting his glory, and inviting the weary and heavy-laden to come unto him—his messengers now spread themselves over the whole world, preaching Jesus Christ their crucified and now risen Lord, and calling upon all, high and low, rich and poor, to turn from darkness to

light, and from the power of Satan unto God ! The word grew and prevailed, in order that the earth might become full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. All this was done through the instrumentality of the untutored men of Galilee, and by means of the Apostle Paul, whose self-righteousness and wisdom the Lord having taken away, transformed him from a fierce and cruel enemy into a faithful servant and friend ; so that he now determined to know nothing “ save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”—Most wonderful efficacy of the word, which to the Jew was as a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness, which was every where spoken against, and which was as much at variance with the nature of man, as the cross on which it is grounded, by the very mention of which a Roman fancied himself dishonoured. But the Lord, whose name is “ Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God,” was with his servants who bore witness unto him,—their watchword was, “ whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s !” They rejoiced in their sufferings, and at last had the honour of sealing their testimony with their blood, in their deaths to become like their great Shepherd, and then to receive out of his own hand the crown of glory !

These simple men, who came out of an obscure corner of the world, but who were anointed by the Spirit and power of God, preached among us the

divine work of redemption, “the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”—As the cross was raised upon Calvary—they raised up the word of atonement in our miserable world, the dwelling place of sin and of death, and poured forth every where a new life. We must have lost the power of appreciating what is great and divine, if we are not penetrated with astonishment and admiration, when we look on the unpretending aspect of those witnesses of the truth, and on the simple means by which they affected such glorious results, in short, on their human insignificance and lowliness, and yet their heroic courage. Are not our schools and churches, baptism and the eucharist, our Bibles and songs of praise, our hospitals and orphan-houses, all monuments of those witnesses who preached the Gospel in our land, and testified *here* of that faithful and true witness who is called Amen.

We must not content ourselves with a mere transient admiration of those instruments in the hands of the Lord, who were so weak, and yet so strong—but we must receive the intelligence they utter as the oracles of God. “If we receive the witness of men,” says John in his first Epistle v. 9, 10, “the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,”—and in the twelfth verse, “He that hath the Son hath life.” Another Apostle says, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed

unto us by them that heard him ; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." Heb. ii. 3, 4. We need no longer the testimony of signs and miracles ; of them the Bible presents us with sufficient, and, indeed, the Holy Scriptures, in their origin and comprehensiveness, are as great a miracle of God as any thing related in them. Those messengers, to whom the Lord gave a mouth and wisdom, still walk among us, and pray and admonish us thus continually, " Be ye reconciled to God !" and when we receive their word, there rises up in our own hearts a witness, which transports us above all that is external and earthly. It happens to us as it did to the man lame from his mother's womb, at the gate of the temple called Beautiful, when Peter took hold of his right hand, and raised him up, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, " immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God," Acts iii. 7, 8. " If ye continue in my word," says our Lord, John viii. 31, 32, " then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The whole of the Gospel is God's testimony to his Son ; it is like the gift of speech bestowed on man, that he might preserve it, impart it, and extend it. It is therefore called *gospel*, that is to say, " good news," and a joyful announcement of the *Word* be-

come flesh ; it is spread from mouth to mouth like human language, and like the treasures of speech, descends from one man to another ; if the eye and ear of every one were to close, then human speech, and, along with it, human thoughts and emotions would perish ; it is the same with the word of God, it would be extinct likewise.

It is entrusted to every Christian, that he should labour and work diligently for its preservation and extension, as a servant of God. All who have received salvation are to preach the Gospel, though, like Cornelius, it should only be in the circle of their family and friends. In the first little assembly of witnesses who devoted themselves to the Lord, and first testified of Him in Judea, and then through all the world, we see an example for each Christian, and for every Christian community, to imitate.

For this reason our Lord set the greatest value on the public acknowledgement of him, “ Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven ; ” and Paul says, “ If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved, Rom. x. 9. “ Ye are,” says Peter in his first Epistle, ii. 9, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should *show forth* the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

X.

“THE hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone ; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,” John xii. 23, 24. This was said by the Lord Jesus, a short time before his sufferings, to Philip and Andrew, when they informed him that the Greeks, who had come up to the feast at Jerusalem, desired to see him. Our Lord here speaks of his own glorification, and of his approaching death, the path which led to it ; the comparison he makes use of is very simple, a daily occurrence in the kingdom of nature, which every one knows, but which no one comprehends. The corn of wheat falls into the ground, dies and decays ; and by this means only does it bring forth fruit ; if we had not known and seen it from childhood, it would appear almost impossible that out of death a new life should arise ; but it is the universal law of this earth, and is of daily occurrence.

The simplicity of the image must not surprise us ; for, in reality, the growth of the plant from the seed is as great a proof of the mysterious influence and power of God, as the formation of the human eye, or the guiding of the planets through the heavens. The humility of the comparison shows the humi-

lity of him who uttered it—the only Son of the Father, the first-born of every creature, who, if he had so willed it, might have remained alone in that glory which he had from the beginning ; but he divested himself of the form of God, and appeared in our sinful mortal body, in order to save us from sin and from death, and obtain for us the freedom of the children of God. The whole life of our Lord, and the silent though stupendous act of the redemption of the world, resembles the history of a little seed of corn.

In the year that had been predicted, God sent his Son, born of a woman ;—a manger at Bethlehem was the only cradle of the child ; and his birth was made known to few, besides the shepherds in the fields, Simeon and Hannah in the temple, and the wise men of the East. A question of the latter drew down the first storm on the head of our Redeemer, which caused the murder of the children of Bethlehem and the flight into Egypt. The report of the Messiah's birth now became extinct ; though, when Jesus taught in the temple, at the age of twelve, his youthful glory dawned for a moment in the presence of a few. Many years passed over, and still nothing remarkable took place—at length stepped forward Jesus of Nazareth, in the humblest of human forms, and announced himself as the long promised anointed one of God ; and proved himself to be a prophet, mighty in word and deed. The people were astonished and wondered at his miracles, but few believed on him,—the high priests and rulers, the

mighty and the learned, hated, slandered, and persecuted him; and then turned the hearts of the people against him; only a small number of faithful disciples, both men and women, remained attached to him. His enemies triumphed, he fell into their hands; they condemned, crucified, and murdered him. In this manner ended the public history of Jesus of Nazareth.

All this took place in the narrow circle of Judea; a land subdued by the Romans, and despised by the whole world. Romans crucified him whom the Jews had delivered into their hands—he died and was buried—but, lo! his death became the means of his glorification. The mightiest of all events was now finished, the divine work, sealed by the hand of God, spread through every land, and the word from the cross penetrated through the world, introducing along with it a new form of things, and a new life, which are as inseparably connected with him that was crucified as the dew with the morning dawn.

“Whom they slew, and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.”—Acts x. 39—41.

After the Apostle Peter had interrupted his sermon on the sending and anointing of Jesus Christ and

his life and miracles, by referring to himself and his fellow-apostles as eye-witnesses, he comes to the greatest and holiest, the most wonderful and the most mysterious of all manifestations, the ground, the resting point, the very corner stone of the Gospel—the crucifixion of our Lord, and his resurrection.

“*Whom they slew, and hanged on a tree.*”—There is great simplicity in those words, which describe so briefly that all-important event, which the four Evangelists have fully and circumstantially related. They certainly describe it as a thing which took place on earth and among men; but the Apostles generally speak of it as a thing done, finished, and perfected in heaven. The four Evangelists, after having described the mighty deeds of the Lord, and the various manifestations of his glory as the Son of God, give a minute account of his shame and ignominy, his sufferings and his death—as the darkest night will sometimes follow the brightest day! The historians of our Lord resemble a mirror, which gives a faithful picture of the surrounding objects—the heart of John, however, does sometimes interrupt his recital; when he is moved by his own description of that glory which perpetually hovered over our Lord even in the midst of his sufferings.

In the beginning of his sermon Peter follows the example of the Evangelists—his words may be rendered thus: Jesus of Nazareth is he, concerning whom God sent his word, from age to age, to the children of Israel; preaching peace through him as

Lord of all. The fulfilment of the word of prophecy began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached and published through the whole land of Judea,—anointed by the Holy Ghost and with power, our Lord went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; and in this manner he proved himself, by his actions and doctrine, by his word and miracles, to be the holy one of God. Our Apostle comprehends all in that most significant sentence: “For God was with him, and we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and at Jerusalem; whom they slew, and hanged on a tree.”

Who did this? The children of Israel, to whom he had been promised, whose fathers had looked for him with the most ardent and longing desire,—the men who had seen and admired his divine power and miracles, who had beheld his wisdom and his holiness, his gentleness and humility, his love and benevolence—whose salvation and redemption he had so earnestly desired, and on whom he had heaped his blessings—Him they accused as a blasphemer of God; and, as a rebel and a murderer, they crucified and slew him! And who was he whom they slew? The same Jesus who testified of himself that he is the Son of God, the light of the world, the resurrection and the life, one with the Father, and sent by him for the salvation of the world, the truth of whose words were proved by innumerable deeds of almighty power and love—whom the storm and the waves obeyed,—who made the blind to see, and who re-

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called the dead to life. He, the holy and righteous One, in whose mouth deceit was never found, whom no man could accuse of sin, he was slain and hanged on a tree. What a difference there is between the words of our Apostle, "*For God was with him,*" and the cry of our crucified Lord himself, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?*"

How astonishing and incomprehensible, nay even impossible, all this would appear if we had not heard it from our youth upwards, and were as familiar with the cross of Jesus of Nazareth as with the sun in the heavens ! But we know that it thus happened, for Peter loudly and openly proclaimed it at Jerusalem, in the very face of his enemies and murderers. "*Whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you ; and killed the Prince of Life.*" Acts iii. 13—15.

This is the simple recital of that which took place in Jerusalem and on Golgotha about eighteen hundred years ago ; this is the circumstance from which all the Apostles and Evangelists, in their discourses, proceed, and to which they are perpetually recurring. Of this Paul says, in 1 Cor. ii. 2, "*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" The crucifixion of our Lord is still crying unto heaven ; it is the most ruthless act ever committed by men, and the most terrible proof of the natural guilt of the human heart, as well as the darkest and most mysterious veiling

of the hand of God in his government of the world, “Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain ;” Acts. ii. 23, —it is the deepest humiliation and forbearance of that being who had, in himself, the power of life and of death, but who yet permitted himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter ! Yes, even to death on the cross. Is it wonderful that when this happened, even those disciples who had seen his glory should be seized with fear and trembling, should flee away and forsake him, or that, even to the present hour, the word of the cross has been to so many a cause of offence and a stumbling block ? But, in the very circumstance, that the crucifixion of our Lord is utterly at variance with human feelings, thoughts, and expectations, lies the proof that it is divine, and that Jesus, the crucified One, is the Christ, the Saviour of mankind, the Son of God, who came into the world to save sinners.

With the death of our Lord on the cross his earthly history was closed, and that work was perfected for which he appeared in the flesh. He himself cried out, “It is finished !” before he bowed his head and gave up the ghost,—the words spoken at the gates of Eden were now fulfilled,—the old serpent had bruised his heel, but he had crushed its head ;—the consoling prophecies of ancient times, in which God had promised to the fathers a Mediator, a Redeemer, and an everlasting King, were now accomplished. That one true sacrifice, of which all the former sacrifices

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in the world had been symbols, was now perfected, and had ascended up to God as a sweet smelling savour. He who came forth from the beginning, and who has lived through all eternity ; he, the only begotten of the Father, the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person, who upholds all things by the word of his power ; who, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, to whom has been given all power on earth and in heaven. He has procured, by the one sacrifice of himself, that all have it in their power to be saved ! In order to accomplish this, he divested himself of the divine glory, and appeared in the form of our sinful flesh. He became the lamb that bore the sins of the world ; and, through his blood and the veil of his flesh, he has procured for us a new path and entrance into the heavenly kingdom ;—" He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows,—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." Isaiah liii. 4, 5.

This is the wonderful and mysterious history of the sufferings which Christ experienced, and of that glory into which he afterwards entered, which the prophets longed to behold, and the angels desired to know ! The ways of God are as much higher than human thoughts and conceptions, as heaven is higher than the earth ! the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the deepest humiliation, and the most perfect condescension of God to men ; and for this reason it is the

most difficult for the natural man to comprehend or believe. In the present day, men fancy themselves able to judge of the acts and counsels of God, by their reason; and contemplate the sufferings and death of our Lord as they would a mere human history or event. Others are moved and affected by the recital; like the daughters of Jerusalem they weep over him, but afterwards, because they have heard from their youth upwards that all this was done for them, they apply it to suit themselves, and for their own peculiar advantage. This is not the method of the Apostles, nor yet of the faithful believers in all ages,—they did not look merely at Golgotha, they did not think only of themselves, but, enlightened by the Spirit of the Lord, and filled with humility on account of the deep corruption of their hearts, they looked upwards with living faith to the exceeding richness of the grace and love of God, who “spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” Rom. viii. 32. The crucifixion of our Lord is the most striking proof of the enmity of man towards God, of the complete deterioration of his nature, and his utter estrangement from his heavenly Father.

In the third chapter of the Acts, Peter says, “through ignorance, ye have slain the Prince of Life,”—that is to say, blinded by their own prejudices, they put to death the incarnate God, prompted by the same spirit which led them in former days, to resist Jehovah, and bow to those idols which the rest of mankind had long revered, and they now re-

joiced because they had succeeded in crucifying Jesus, mocking him while hanging on the tree. In this the depravity of man was manifested in its darkest and most odious aspect; but at the same time, the love of God was exemplified in its clearest and most brilliant light. Alas! we must all, without exception, confess, that we have nailed the Lord of Glory to the cross, and that for our sakes he was crucified and slain!

On a tree—are the words of Peter in his sermon. He who knew so well from his own bitter experience, both the corruption of the human heart, and the temptations of Satan, now looked back to that tree, where the virtue of man was first overpowered by his desire to be as a god. The garden of Eden and the garden of Gethsemane, the pleasant tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the wood of the cross on Mount Calvary, certainly stand in most intimate connection. Oh! man look into thyself! Thou who wast created in the image of God, and animated by his breath! How much dost thou still preserve the likeness of thy Creator, who is love itself? Is love towards him who alone is worthy the foundation and groundwork of thy character? Compare thyself for one moment with the Son of Man who died on the cross, and ask thyself, how much of his faith and obedience, his humility, patience and long suffering, his purity, benevolence, and love, thou preservest in thy heart? Compare the immortality engraved in imperishable characters on thy soul with the short and insecure duration of

thy earthly pilgrimage. Place thyself in spirit on the bed of death, behold the struggle which awaits thee, and listen to those sighs and groans, the powerless expression of the sufferings thou must inevitably undergo ! Watch thyself gradually sinking on the dark bosom of all-ingulfing chaos, and follow thy soul flying to the lightning splendour of the throne of God, and the terribleness of an eternity of judgment ! Canst thou then say, " I am pure in my heart, and free from sin," thereby giving the lie both to thine own conscience and the word of God, which sets before thee thy sinfulness and the loss of thy primeval excellence ?

If thou art thus utterly fallen in the abyss of thy alienation from God, and the depth of thy sin and misery ; then, like one who, in a deep pit at mid-day, does not behold the sun shining, but only the stars glimmering in the heavens ; so shalt thou, by the eye of faith, discern the cross of the Son of God through the midst of his heavenly splendour ; and in the Lamb which was slain, recognise thy Lord and the pledge of thy salvation. For God " hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21.—and " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. Who can comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height of the love of God, which passeth all understanding, in that he sent his only Son to die for sinners ! God is manifested here, and Christ also, who died for us ; and, what is

of far more importance to us, who was raised up again from the dead !

“ *Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly ;*” —for it was impossible, our Apostle says, in his sermon at the feast of Pentecost, that he should be held by the bonds of death.

After he had finished the work which was given him by the Father, perfected it, and glorified the Father before the world, but more visibly before those who had eaten and drunken with him, and were afterwards to preach the gospel to all men, on the third day, as he had prophesied, he arose from the dead, “ declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,” Rom. i. 4. He died for our sins, but rose again for our justification. Our death the wages of sin, has become the death of the Prince of Peace, who knew no sin ; by his means the power of death has been taken from the devil, and our dissolution is no longer the recompence of our sins, but the means of freeing ourselves from them, and entering into eternal life. The resurrection of the Son of Man from the dead, is the visible pledge of the future resurrection of all the children of men ; and shows the new and incorruptible form in which the human body, after experiencing the usual course of decay, shall rise again and be glorified. “ For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,” this corruptible shall become incorruptible, and this mortal shall put on immortality. The indestructible germ of a spi-

ritual body lies concealed in our natural one, and, though opposed by our earthly nature, it is never destroyed, for it is of divine origin. "Howbeit," Paul says, "that was not first, which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual," 1 Cor. xv. 46.

As we are now born in the likeness of the earthly Adam, so we shall afterwards be formed in the image of the heavenly Son of Man. He will glorify our worthless body, the body of humiliation, that it may become like unto his body—the Prince of Peace, who was slain and is now alive, shall do this—the author and finisher of our faith, who has the keys of hell and of death. Then shall the triumphant song of the blessed resound through heaven, death is destroyed for ever, "O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57. What a glorious Gospel! and what a joyful intelligence, full of grace and truth! O that one were inspired, in order to express it adequately!

The mighty act of God in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, was visibly manifested to his believing disciples, and to them alone. God showed him openly, "not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead." 41st verse. "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the

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things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts i. 3. But this grace and blessing were only vouchsafed to his disciples and those who had believed on him ; not to the rest of the people who had refused to receive him. They who had rejected him, were neither worthy nor capable of beholding the glory of his resurrection ; they were unworthy, because their eyes were closed, and their hearts were hardened, so that they could not comprehend the truth, especially those whom he had approached as a friend, but who had rejected him as an enemy. It would, besides, have been useless for our Lord to show himself unto them ; they would have refused his testimony no less than before, and only have increased the measure of their guilt and sinfulness. They were also incapable of beholding Jesus risen from the dead ; their deceitful eyes and impure hearts could neither discern what was heavenly nor recognise the glory of God. Can a dog admire the beautiful lilies in the fields, or enjoy the song of the nightingale ? Before men can appreciate what is spiritual and divine, the scales must be removed from their eyes, by means of repentance and faith. The great work of the resurrection of Christ did not take place merely that mankind might admire it ; all the mighty acts of God have been done in silence, for the Lord dwells in the thick clouds, and cometh forth in the soft breeze. It was impossible to behold the resurrection and glorification of our Lord, without having previously believed in him as the Son of God, from having witnessed his incarnation and the sacrifice he

offered on the cross ; and it was as a reward for having followed him during his humiliation that the disciples now beheld his exaltation. Here we may quote the words of Jesus himself : “ I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life,” John viii. 12 ; and again, “ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,” John iii. 36. And Paul says, “ No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,” 1 Cor. xii. 3.

Why was it that the disciples only, who had lived in intimate fellowship with our Lord during his three years’ ministry, and who had loved him as children love a father—why was it that they alone were esteemed worthy to behold his resurrection and glory ? Why was this inestimable privilege vouchsafed to them ? Were they already those Princes in the kingdom of heaven which it was promised they should afterwards become ? Were they no longer, spiritually speaking, babes and children, but men and fathers in faith and in truth ? Not so, they were wanting, and fell short in many respects ; they were not free from disquietude, fear, and doubt ; and they had no hope of the resurrection from the dead of their Lord and Master. But they were simple in heart and mind, and uncorrupted by the false wisdom of the Scribes and Pharisees, for they had been almost all born and educated in Galilee ; and they were pure vessels, in whom the desire for the promised redemp-

tion had never become extinct. Therefore, the grace of God, which feeds the young ravens when they cry, led those unsophisticated souls to the path of salvation ; they found Jesus of Nazareth again after he had been dead and was buried ; they came and saw him, they bound themselves to him more closely, if possible, than before, so that they never should forsake him ; and the Lord, who could see their inmost hearts, revealed those things unto them which he had concealed from the wise and prudent ; told them that their names were written in heaven, and bade them rejoice in these words, “ Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see ; for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”—Luke x. 23, 24.

After the Sun of Righteousness had risen upon them, through its influence the little seed of corn grew up silently, but gradually, in their hearts, until they became plants of God, and trees of righteousness, well-pleasing unto the Lord. They, whom Jesus had chosen, were esteemed worthy of beholding the glory of God, manifested in the glorification of his Son, and to bear their testimony to the truth of his death and resurrection.

This they did in the fullest manner,—they preached Christ the crucified and risen again, to every creature, with unutterable joy, boldness and self-denial ; and became instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit, to give the world a new form, and to im-

part to the faithful of all nations a new life. By their means, that cross which, on Golgotha, had witnessed the sufferings of the Son of Man, and which was the very disgrace of humanity, was now raised up before the whole world as the victorious banner of light and truth, the tree of eternal life; and spread out its arms to give peace and joy to the weary and heavy laden, to console the afflicted, and to point out to every pilgrim the path toward his heavenly home! That word of salvation which proceeded from God, and which was first announced by the witnesses and messengers of Christ, has since spread farther and farther through the whole world, and calls to every one, "Be reconciled to God!" "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

XI.

“IT is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Heb. ix. 27. In our own souls there is a secret and mysterious voice, which is constantly judging us—it is “the law written in our hearts; our conscience bearing witness; our thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another,” Rom. ii. 15. Our own heart condemns us, and we can as little repress this action of the spiritual heart, as we can, by an effort of the will, control the motion of the corporeal one. This law written within us, or this conscience, is in reality the Eternal Word, which is even now concealed in the depths of our soul, and which, though we can at times lull it to silence, we can never altogether destroy; for it is destined to be the origin of repentance in sinful man, and to awaken in him a sense of what is holy and divine; but it has a duty to perform still more terrible, for it begins in man the eternal judgment, even while he is an inhabitant of earth. Our first parents, after their fall, judged themselves before the sentence of God was passed over them. The divine and everlasting Word is unspeakably near to man, Oh! that he would listen to it now “while it is called to-day!”

After death comes the other judgment, as certainly as man must die he must be judged ; then shall that word which was concealed upon earth, stand forth openly, and pronounce its verdict on his past life of trial, which now lies clearly displayed before him ; the counsel of God shall now be manifested ; that which was hidden shall be brought to light, and the Lord shall appoint to every one his future condition and place of abode. But the Holy Scriptures inform us of another judgment, in which that Christ, who was once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear the second time unto them that look for him, without sin unto salvation. Happy are all they who belong to this number !

“ And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead.”—Acts x. 32.

Hitherto the Apostle had spoken of the sending and anointing of Jesus of Nazareth, of his public teaching, his actions and his miracles, of his sufferings, death and resurrection ; and of those signs and tokens of the kingdom of heaven, by which Jesus had manifested himself as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.

The Apostle now speaks of a future manifestation of the Son of Man, as the judge appointed by God to pronounce sentence both on the quick and the dead. This must indeed be a most important truth, since

Peter so expressly states that the Apostles were appointed to preach and testify it to all people. In all their writings they bear witness to the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh, and foretell his return to judgment and the manifestation of his glory. Paul himself, while preaching to the people at Athens, concludes his sermon with the announcement of the day of judgment, when all the world should be judged in righteousness by one man, Jesus Christ, "ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." Let this be the subject of our contemplation at present.

God the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is, as the Bible teaches us, "Judge of all," Heb. xii. 23; but he himself says, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man." John v. 22, 27. And Paul says, "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained." Acts xvii. 31.

Our Apostle also refers to this universal judgment, which is to take place after the resurrection of the dead at the last day, which the Scripture calls "the day of Christ," or "the day of the Lord." This judgment shall be the visible ending or completion of God's mighty work of salvation; and, at the same time, the highest and most stupendous manifestation of the exaltation and glory of the Son of Man. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,

—as certainly as he has already come, he shall come again—for how should he to whom the kingdom has been given, and who has existed from all eternity, begin and not conclude, commence and not accomplish? The last judgment shall finish the great work of salvation, for it is the third and last scene in God's government of the world.

The first scene took place in lowliness and abasement. As a man casts seed into the ground, then goes away and leaves it for many long days and nights, until it begin to spring up—so the word of salvation lay for more than a thousand years of night and twilight, concealed in mysterious promises, symbols, images, and prophecies, in which the great and the little, the earthly and the heavenly, the mean and the glorious, were most wonderfully blended. After the fulness of time had arrived, the word became dead, and the images and shadows took form and substance at Bethlehem, the least among the thousands of Judah. The day dawned, God sent his Son, born of a woman; the Word which was from the beginning, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that was made, became man—divested himself of the form of God and assumed our human body—went about the land of Israel, not that others might serve him, but in order to serve others—gave his life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world,—and by his humiliation, even to death on the cross, became the perfect way, the fulness of truth, and the everlasting life. When Jesus, at the moment of his dissolution, cried out, “It

is finished! then that took place which had been willed by God through all eternity, and the hitherto mysterious and inexplicable counsel of Jehovah now took the form of a simple human history, for it was accomplished. “*Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,*” Heb. xiii. 8.—The first four thousand years of the world’s history are “the yesterday which is past.” The *to-day* began with the exaltation of him who had abased himself. After he had risen from the dead on the third day, he continued on earth during the period of forty days, and then returned into that glory which he had from the beginning, ascending into heaven before the eyes of his disciples. Thus the word which had begun in silence, and before a few witnesses, now returned to the place whence it had sprung, to heaven and to eternity. The gospel of reconciliation had been preached among the children of men, and the regeneration of the world now began, in Jerusalem, at the feast of Pentecost.—The Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, with a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and this in the presence of devout men out of every nation under heaven. The disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, and the listeners were astonished, because they heard them speak in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God. These miracles were the continuation of the history of Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified but now risen Lord. When they heard this, three thousand were touched in their hearts and

believed; they gladly received the word, and were baptised,—and now the gospel is spreading through every land, and penetrating to every quarter of the world, and its ministers are praying and admonishing all: “Be ye reconciled to God!”

The present time is the *to-day*, the second period of God’s government. Is it yet at an end? Does every knee bow at the name of the crucified One? Does every tongue acknowledge that he is Lord? No! another day of God is before us: “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” were the words of the two men in white apparel: “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him,” surrounded by his saints, and wonderful in his glory. And Paul says, “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living,” Rom. xiv. 9. This is the day of judgment, the harvest time of the Lord, when he shall send forth his reapers.

Then shall Jesus the Mediator, appear, as the one appointed of God to judge both the quick and the dead. All those men who have lived and died upon earth; all those who are living at present and shall die, as well as those whom the great day of the Lord finds in existence, shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The general resurrection must take place, and they who are in their graves, whose bodies have mouldered into dust, shall, like Lazarus, hear his voice and come forth.

As it was impossible that the sinless body of Jesus Christ should remain in the grave longer than three days, or that the Holy One should see corruption—so it is impossible that our bodies, which had been made corruptible by sin, should remain for ever in the grave—the hour must come when they will arise from the dead, and assume a new and an incorruptible form. In that day, the voice of the Son of Man shall change those who are still alive, and awaken from its sleep, and bring to light that portion of the divine nature, which God implanted, when he breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life; and which, though long crushed and repressed, could never be annihilated. There shall also be summoned forth in a new and incorruptible form, those bodies that are asleep, which God at the beginning created immortal, and which had only undergone the usual course of decay, because they were under the power of sin. All this shall be done “according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Phil. iii. 21. Were this not to be the case, for what purpose should the Son of Man have clothed himself with our sinful and mortal flesh? And since he has won back for us all that we have lost through sin, must he not also restore to us our immortal bodies? Unless he do so, he cannot be the heavenly Adam, or the Lord of life,—unless he do so, he cannot have freed us entirely from the fruits of sin, death, and corruption. Therefore shall all the dead be clothed with a new body, and they which are alive at that day shall be changed :

“ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” 1 Cor. xv. 53.

Thus shall the great day of the Lord commence—and as, after the creation of our earth, the first day began with the separation of light from darkness,—so shall the last day, the end of earthly time, conclude in the same manner, with the separation of light from darkness—of the good from the bad ! Human language can only give a faint idea of this fearful reality, and is like a dew-drop reflecting the image of the sun. Our Lord no where condescends more to our human weakness, than when speaking of that which is great and incomprehensible—but particularly in alluding to the future day of judgment. He, the judge of all, in speaking of his return to judge the world, when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, calls himself “ the Son of Man,” his name during his humiliation, and by which his disciples had known him during his pilgrimage on earth. He compares himself also, at the beginning of his magnificent description of the judgment of the world, to a shepherd dividing the sheep from the goats ; and it is not until he pronounces the final sentence that he calls himself a King !

He also honours the assembled children of men, by making known to them the grounds of their acceptance or condemnation—and also deigns to listen to their reply, as he did when a sojourner here below. He thus recognises, even in those condemned to eternal punishment, their lost but once God-like nature.

What shall be the measure and rule by which he shall judge mankind? It shall be love, which is the fulfilment of the law; but why should it not be faith? Most needless separation; is not love the fruit of faith? and does not our life animate the different parts of the same tree, whether it be the root, the stem, or the fruit? When the grape is full, is it not a proof that the vine has been full of sap? And when the reaper cuts the harvest, does he not leave the roots in the earth, and carry the ears of corn into his granary? Therefore man shall be judged by his fruits. Faith, hope, and love, these three are one; they remain together, and shall be glorified together; but love is the greatest among them. Yes, he, the Son of Man, shall then be our judge; but love shall be the standard, according to which he shall pronounce judgment. I have been hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in prison, in order to save, redeem and console you, who were hungry, thirsty, poor and miserable! And he who has loved, saved, or comforted the least of my brethren, has acknowledged me and experienced my love! All the children of men, they who, with humble joy, shall stand at his right hand, and they who, in fear and trembling, are placed at his left, shall recognise in him, the man whom God hath ordained to judge the world in righteousness.

All "shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation," John v. 29. "For we must all appear before the judg-

ment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. The Apostle Paul says, in speaking of the resurrection of the dead, "and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. So also is the resurrection of the dead : it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption : it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body," 1 Cor. xv. 37, 38, 42, 44.

The Creator has everywhere shadowed forth in the outward form of inanimate nature, a secret and mysterious meaning ; and we may in many respects consider the appearances around us, as images and symbols of a future and invisible world. Thus, there are certain creatures, whose very aspects fill us with terror, as if they were the living pictures of sin and condemnation. That which man was, while he walked in his earthly body, shall be shown by the form he assumes at his resurrection. The just shall become like the angels, and shine like the sun,—the unjust, on the contrary, shall not have the beautiful and radiant angelic form ; but their countenances which, like Cain's, during their residence on earth, depicted envy, malice, and uncharitableness, shall much more now bear the mark of Cain on the forehead.

The resurrection of the dead to judgment is the great truth, which the Lord Jesus commanded his

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disciples to preach and testify to all people ; after he had himself announced it, even in the very presence of those judges who condemned him to death. They have faithfully fulfilled this command, and preached the gospel of judgment as well as of reconciliation, from the house tops and in the market places ; in the schools and before the people ; in the halls of the great, and in the cottages of the poor ; it has been proclaimed to the whole world, and is even now spreading through every land. If this Gospel, in the more serious hours of our life, and above all, at the hour of death, appear great and terrible, how much more shall it appear so, when it shall be announced by the heavenly trumpet at the great day of the Lord ! Then shall the truth, the holiness and righteousness of the great God towards the children of men, be clearly manifested in the presence of the assembled hosts of heaven. As the sun touches with its rays and illuminates the most insignificant blade of grass, so the light which proceeds from the throne of God, and the all-piercing eye of the eternal judge, shall shine upon and penetrate the inmost character of every one, and disclose the secrets of every heart ! Who shall stand in that day before the Son of Man !

Oh ! how consoling is it for those that have loved him, to think that our Redeemer, the now glorified Son of Man, shall be our judge ! He who has dwelt upon earth, and who became like us in all things, with the exception of our sinfulness ; who was tempted in all respects as we are, and who, as a merciful

High Priest, hath compassion on our infirmities ; who was well pleased when the widow cast her two mites into the treasury, and took pity on the necessity of the Canaanitish woman, and praised her humble faith, who promised he would not forget, even a cup of cold water given to one of his disciples, if it were done from love toward himself. He is ordained by God to be the judge, both of the quick and the dead ! The unalterable compassion and fatherly tenderness of God, whereby he chose us through Christ, and loved us before the foundations of the world were laid, still continues and shall continue unchanged until the end of the world, and the commencement of the great Sabbath of eternity ! He who was once our brother shall become our judge ; the author and the finisher of our faith, and of our happiness.

The now glorified Jesus shall appear in the majesty of his power, to judge all the earth in righteousness. No more shall he come as the supplicating and beseeching shepherd, but he shall appear as a king, as the crown and perfection of humanity, to judge both the quick and the dead ! He shall be seen by all the races of men ; and the counsels and decrees of God shall be visibly displayed before every eye. “ For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries,” Heb. x. 26, 27. The Lord shall ask us then, as he once asked Peter

“ Lovest thou me ?” and happy shall it be for those who can answer him joyfully and confidently, “ Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” Blessed are all those who shall then be found worthy to stand before the Son of Man !

XII.

“ IF we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” 1 John i. 8, 9. The Apostle describes the knowledge and the confession of our sins, as the tree and its fruits ; the first and necessary condition, by which we obtain from God forgiveness of sin. If a man wish to destroy a weed, he must first pull the root out of the earth and bring it to the light. “ When I kept silence,” says David, “ my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me ; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid ; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,” Psalm xxxii. 3, 4, 5. How can a child that has grieved his father and mother remove the oppression and sorrow from his own heart, unless he confess his error to those beloved parents ? And how should a sick man apply to a physician, if he does not know that he is sick ? In that case he will feel no need of the physician, despise the art of medicine, and take no measures for being healed. Here we may quote the words,

“ Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

It is a fearful error to make God himself a liar ! It was not thus Cornelius acted ; truth was in him, and he knew that he was a sinful man, and that internal peace was wanting. He sought this peace by fasting and prayer, by giving alms and by good works. The people in Cæsarea said, “ the Centurion Cornelius is a good, a noble, a pious, and an excellent man ! ” But he himself said, “ I am a poor sinful man ! God be merciful unto me. ” Then the Lord sent him his faithful servant Peter, and Cornelius received that which he had sought for with his whole heart, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and the grace and peace of God through Jesus Christ. Happy are they who are poor in spirit, for the riches of the kingdom of heaven shall be theirs. Cornelius stands before us as a picture of mankind, sighing and longing for the peace of the children of God ; he is also a picture of those who, having earnestly sought, have at last obtained this costly treasure.

“ To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. ”—Acts x. 43.

WITH these words the Apostle concludes his sermon and testimony of Jesus Christ. The Apostolic

style consists of using few words, but those few having a most comprehensive meaning. Thus Peter includes in this simple sentence the substance of all he has hitherto spoken, of the Lord and his appearance on earth—of the object and aim of his gospel and preaching. This expression of our Apostle contains three different heads or ideas :—First, by Jesus Christ alone can sinful man receive salvation, peace with God, and eternal happiness :—Second, the world had for ages longed for salvation and for a Saviour, and prophecy had promised him and testified of him :—Lastly, he has now appeared, and all who believe on him shall receive through him forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Let us first consider salvation through Jesus Christ, then the promise, the expectation, and the appearance of this salvation ; and, lastly, all that is obtained by means of faith.

Forgiveness of sins,—is the only thing named by the Apostle, because it expresses all that salvation which we have obtained through the sending of the Son of God. Certainly the forgiveness of sins is, properly speaking, only the commencement or dawning of the divine work of regeneration within us ; but if man does not resist, this beginning is most assuredly followed by the full and perfect accomplishment of it.

The new birth begins on the part of man, with the acknowledgment of sin ; and forgiveness of sin is the ground and foundation of salvation and eternal life. If a sick man wish to recover health, he must first get that morbid matter removed which is the cause

of his disease. After the good father, mentioned in the Gospel, had clasped in his arms his erring, but now repentant son, and had pressed him to his heart, all the rest followed of itself; he received shoes on his feet, the handsomest raiment, and a ring on his finger; the fatted calf was slain, and there was singing and dancing in honour of his return; in short, he enjoyed all a son's privileges and blessings. His past sins and errors were annihilated both in the eyes of his father and in his own penitent and grateful heart. When the Lord Jesus said to the man sick of the palsy, "My son, thy sins are forgiven thee," the man then became the son of our Saviour, he took up his bed and walked. "Therefore, being justified by faith," that is to say, freed from the power of sin, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 1. Forgiveness of sins is followed by the rooting out of all sinfulness, by the hand of the merciful God, and is the commencement of a new life.

What is sin?—Sin, says the Apostle John, with great simplicity, is "the transgression of the law." It is also falling away, erring, and separating from, the one right path,—where there is once unholiness there is increasing unholiness, always a greater distance from the true aim and resting place of the soul; and, unless stopped by a higher power, there is a deep and progressive fall. Let it be granted, that our earth had an understanding and a will of its

own, and that it desired to leave the path appointed by its Creator round the sun, and to wander through the immensity of space, left to its own darkness,—what would be the consequence? It must infallibly fall into great mischief and danger, and soon become again, as it was at first, without form and void, and covered with darkness; but if it should at last perceive its own evil condition, its first question would be, “What must I do to regain my former path?” We mortals are like such a planet which has left its right course; we have departed from the only source of light and life, and are no longer formed in the image of God; we are sinners, and at the same time desirous of the glory and dignity of God, which we ought to have, but which we have lost.

Sin is “an ungodly state,” the very opposite of that which is divine; just as lying, darkness, and death, are the opposite of truth, light, and life; and in this opposition to the character of God lies the most mysterious and terrible part of its serpent like nature. It is also a perfect contrast to the true and original human character,—man was not created to imagine that which is ungodly; but, as a strange and unnatural thing it has crept into his character. The human mind would indeed be a contradiction and an inexplicable riddle, did not the Scriptures give us as clear an explanation of it as we either require or can comprehend. Along with the image of God, which, in faith and love, ought freely to develop itself in the heart of man, we have lost the fellowship of

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our heavenly Father ; we have lost happiness, life, and peace, the original property of our souls, and are fallen into the power of sin and of death. Thus we must all acknowledge that sin, in its origin, character, and consequence, is a work of darkness, and the only real evil.

Our salvation can only begin with the feeling and acknowledgment of our sinful condition. It is strange it should not commence at the present moment with every one, since the disunion of their external and internal nature lies directly before their eyes, and must strike them at once. James says in his Epistle, “ For what is your life ? it is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” And yet, in the very self-consciousness of man, there lies an unanswerable argument of an immortal existence and an endless futurity. Nothing is more certain or natural to man than death ; and yet he does not believe this, for he fears it as though it were unnatural. The pleasures, recreations, and embellishments of life, which we call enjoyment and diversion, are, if viewed in a proper light, merely a flight from death,—and an arduous exertion to drown the thoughts of the transitory nature of our existence. Our life is but a helpless hovering between time, which is always escaping through our fingers, and eternity, which surrounds us on every side.—We possess neither the one nor the other. The vault above us consists of a heaven of infinitude ; but the clouds of death and corruption are perpetually poised over our heads. We may de-

scribe our existence here as a perpetual struggle between life and death ; and a prophet amongst the Gentiles calls it, “ the dream of a shadow !”

Does not the character of our internal life also bear witness to the opposing circumstances in which we are placed, and to the corruption and misery of man ? Who is there that will not acknowledge, that innocence and purity of heart, holiness and peace of soul, the light and the fellowship of God, are the highest and most desirable blessings ? Why then do those heavenly flowers and fruits not unfold themselves, undisturbed and unhindered, in our characters ? Why is there so much inquietude in the short life of man, born of a woman ? Why does the flesh lust against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ? And though bound together, why are they at variance, so that the good which they will they cannot do, but the evil which they will not that they do ? Why is there a law in our members warring with the law in our spirits ? And why are we subjected to the law of sin ?

The more clearly we perceive our own unhappy condition, the more deeply shall we be able to look into the simple law of God, which is love, and prove and judge our own characters by it. The law, which is the manifestation of the holy will of God, has stepped into the place of his lost fellowship ; it is the divine image, now expressed in words, because it had visibly disappeared ; it is a justification of God to degenerate man, and is like a mirror in which he may behold both what he has lost, and what he might have

been had he remained in the image of God ! That law which is love, demands love only ! Thus sin appears what it really is, enmity and rebellion against God ; consequently, the circumstances of the human race would be utterly miserable and comfortless, were it not that, in the law itself, as well as in the conscience of man, there is a sure testimony and pledge that he, the Lord who created us in his image, shall renew that image, and shall free us from all sin and unholiness. But we must first say from our hearts, “ O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ! ”

The sentiment which gives rise to this expression, although it may be deeply buried and concealed, is to be found in the bosom of every human being ; on which account Paul says, “ For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now,” Rom. viii. 22. The idolatry farthest removed from God and the truth, still expresses, although it may be darkly and obscurely, the reminiscence of the lost paradise and state of blessedness ; and a certain consciousness of sinfulness is the ground and foundation of every religion, even though it may have degenerated into the worship of the devil. However grovelling it be, its very name implies that it is a seeking and a longing for a lost peace and salvation. That condemning, yet consolatory word of God, which was uttered after the fall to our first parents, with regard to the serpent and the seed of the woman, was inherited by all the descendants of Adam, along with their human form,

and although it may be misunderstood, is engraved in the heart of all humanity.

Even their idols and images, temples, altars and bloody sacrifices, express their conviction of sinfulness and misery ; their searching for a remedy amidst the outward objects which surround them, and their desire for the Saviour and Redeemer that should come from above to restore to the miserable human race the happiness which they had lost.

Even the heathens had their prophets, who unconsciously and against their own will, prophesied like Balaam of old, of the one that should come.* It is so difficult to destroy entirely the image of God, that we may have hopes of the amendment and repentance of even the most sinful creature in existence ; from the thickest darkness he may be turned to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

That which, in the portion of the world estranged from God, was but a groaning on account of their miserable condition, and a vague desire of amendment, showed itself in the people of God, the race from which the second Adam was to proceed, as a joyful sound, which all that had ears to hear might hear. He who is called " the Wonderful, and the Prince of Peace," was to appear in the land of the East, among the descendants of Abraham. " Of which salvation the prophets," during four thousand years, " have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you ; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of

* See Note G.

Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," 1 Peter i. 10, 11.

It is unnecessary to enumerate all the prophecies in which the voice of God was heard notifying the day which Abraham desired to behold,—of the day which was “to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy,” Dan. ix. 24. And what has been the result of this testimony? He, the Lord our strength and righteousness, who rested on the bosom of God, and beheld the countenance of our heavenly Father,—He, whom the prophets foretold should come as our Redeemer and Saviour, *has* come into the world to save sinners!

According to promise, the love and grace of God were manifested in his Son, “*that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins,*” and in these words Peter has expressed the most joyful truth that sinful man could have heard. This work of God’s compassion is called *redemption*. because by its means both the guilt and punishment of sin are removed, and man is no longer under the servile fear of his Creator; it is called *justification*, because with faith in the name of Jesus, the certainty of pardon is closely connected; it is also called *reconciliation*, because the wall of separation between God and man is now taken away, and sinners have free access to the grace and fellowship of God, and can now be received as his children.

Jesus Christ the only Mediator between God and man, has accomplished this mighty and gracious work ; for, although one with God, he became a man, like unto us in all things, yet without sin ; he subjected himself to the law, yielding to it the most perfect obedience ; was tempted in all points like as we are ; and, in his own person, as the second Adam, has sanctified human nature ; in short, he has borne our guilt, and, out of free love to our race, has offered up himself a sacrifice for us upon the cross. By this means only, decreed by God from all eternity, could his justice be satisfied and his mercy be manifested in the forgiveness of sins. God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself ; he no longer imputes unto them their sins, but vouchsafes unto them the word of reconciliation.

Jesus is the only ground of our salvation and happiness. As Peter formerly preached in Jerusalem, that no other name is given among men whereby they might be saved, so he now declares the name of Jesus to be the origin and source of the remission of sins. The name of Jesus does not betoken his nature and character, but his relation to our sinful world : it is also the name by which he desires to be acknowledged in spirit and in truth. It was given to him at his birth, because “ he shall save his people from their sins.” The dying Stephen exclaimed, “ Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit !” And the Scriptures inform us, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. The name of Jesus comprehends the great work and office of the Son of God in the

redemption and salvation of mankind, his incarnation, his suffering, and his glory ; while the name of Christ signifies “the Anointed One” promised and sent by God. Peter, in speaking of him to Cornelius, calls him by his human name, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

Oh ! what an unspeakable blessing is comprehended in this name ! but only to him who wears it in his heart,—to whom it has become the watchword of his soul, and who can utter it as a pious child would utter the name of his father !

The Apostle says, “*All that believe on him,*” or, literally, for the sake of the Gentile Centurion and his friends, “*whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins !*” Forgiveness is there ; the banner of the cross, with mercy inscribed upon it, has been unfurled in the presence of the whole world ; the mercy seat is accessible to every one ; and the Son of Man has been raised up before the eyes of all the human race, like the brazen serpent before the erring Israelites, in order that every one may be saved who will approach and look upon him with the eyes of faith. As soon as the gracious work of God, for the remission of sins, has taken place in thee, and the word reconciliation become the property of thy heart ; then thy sinfulness is done away with through repentance and faith, thy misery is cured, thy corruption rooted out, and the former dark aspect of life and death is illuminated by a light from heaven. Thou art born again into a new life, and a new creation is at work in thy soul,

—a new creation, similar to that first change which took place in the hitherto void and barren earth, when the Spirit of God descended upon its chaos,—when light was separated from darkness, and the firmament from the waters,—when our planet was placed in connection with the sun and the stars of heaven,—when the earth and the waters brought forth living creatures abundantly,—and when man was created in the image of God, to rule over all.

The new life which begins in thee, as soon as thou believest in him whom God has sent, is in no way inferior to the first creation, for it is also the work of God. It begins by the divine word and light descending into the depths of thy soul's darkness, in order to manifest the waste and desert aspect of thy ungodly character, and the confusion in which both soul and body are plunged, as well as make thee capable and worthy of receiving the blessings of thy heavenly Father. But thou resistest the light and the word, because they are sharper than a two-edged sword; and because thou must be tried in the furnace before thy regeneration from above can be accomplished.

Ye who, like Nicodemus, though desiring the light, are still walking in night and darkness, must first go out into the wilderness to the first preacher of repentance, that through his baptism the old man may be destroyed; and then come, consoled and joyful, unto him who is the way, the truth, and the life; for he will not reject you, but baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with the pure fire of heaven!

XIII.

GOD is light ! and God is love ! says the Holy Scripture,—thereby expressing, in the simplest manner, the highest and most joyful intelligence which could be conveyed to man, of the nature and character of God. Light and love cannot exist without manifesting themselves, without enlivening, illuminating, and creating new light and love ; and this is the very essence of their character. But what benefit do we derive from knowing the nature of God, if we do not feel and acknowledge both our dependence upon him, and the mighty influence he is constantly exerting upon us ? The word of truth has assisted us in this, by disclosing, in the mysterious name of *Trinity*, the three persons of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This revelation of three persons in one God, comprehends the whole of Christian doctrine, and is both the foundation and the distinguishing characteristic of our faith. Our Lord Jesus himself, after his work on earth was perfected, and before he re-ascended to his glory, expressly declared it in the following words, “ Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” Matt. xxviii. 19.

And John says, “ There are three that bear record

in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one," 1 John v. 7 ; and, indeed, all the Apostles bear witness to the same truth.

This truth, which it is impossible for human language clearly to express, is a mystery which, in its depth of meaning, is as far beyond human comprehension as heaven is higher than the earth. It is a secret which has been in part disclosed to us ; and has two aspects, one in relation to God, and the other to man. The divine aspect can as little be understood as the character of God can be comprehended ; and happily for us, it is not necessary for our salvation. We do not require to know the nature and structure of the sun in order to enjoy its light ; nor to understand the connection between soul and body, in order to believe in their existence. The three divine names, " Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," make known to us the whole history of God among the children of men ; they comprehend the mighty deed and manifestations of the love of God, which he decreed from the beginning for our salvation ; which he has begun in time, but which shall be accomplished in eternity.

In the one living God, we must acknowledge the Father, who chose us from all eternity, pre-ordained us to be his children, and created us in his own image ;—the Son, who became man for our sakes, and, by his sufferings and crucifixion, redeemed us from sin and death ; and the Holy Spirit, who, as the pledge of our redemption, sanctifies and renews us in the image of God ; in short, one God in three

persons, to whom we owe three inestimable blessings, election, redemption, and sanctification. The Apostle Paul comprehends all in his benediction at the end of 2 Corinthians “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all ! Amen.”

God’s great work of love, in the manifestation of himself in the flesh, and in the visible appearance of his grace, was accomplished in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit ; and it is only the power of that Spirit which can perfect the heart-felt union of the faithful with the Father through the Son. No man can call Jesus, Lord, without the Holy Spirit ; and this Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. This testimony the believing Cornelius was now to receive.

“ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”—Acts x. 44—46

This section describes the operation and consequences, both of the sermon of the Apostle Peter, and of the faithful reception of the Gospel by Cornelius, his relations and friends. In this simple picture we behold a regenerated life in Christ, awakened by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

When Peter had uttered these words, and, probably, would have continued his sermon, he was interrupted,—it was enough. He had preached the Gospel, and the man through whom God had announced peace in Jesus, the crucified and risen again; and in his name he had promised to all that believe on him forgiveness of sins.

His own commission was fulfilled; and the wish of Cornelius, “to hear words of thee,” was gratified. Cornelius and his friends had been deeply moved; they had listened to the words of the holy Apostle with increasing solemnity and devotion; and the Lord now opened the hearts of the little assembly, who, like Lydia the purple-seller, were seeking after peace and truth. The Word, the beginning and the instrument of every act of God, had, like an immortal seed, taken root in their hearts, and now needed only a blessing from above to be rendered fruitful by the Holy Spirit.

We behold here a new feast of Pentecost among the heathen, for why should not they also be baptised with fire? The time was come when the word of reconciliation was to spread through the whole world; when the wall of partition was to be broken down, the enmity abolished, and the Gospel of peace preached “to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” This was the purpose for which our Lord came, and for the accomplishment of which, he promised his disciples to send them the Comforter, the invisible representative of himself. He was to lead them in the way of truth, manifest to them still more

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clearly the Lord Jesus, and give them power and wisdom in the offices to which God had called them. In Jerusalem, at the feast of Pentecost, this promise was gloriously fulfilled. The Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, in the neighbourhood of Golgotha, and in the presence of the supreme council, preached Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified and risen one, as the Lord to whom all power is given, both in heaven and in earth. And the consequence of this wonderful act of the power of God was, that in one day about three thousand, and soon afterwards five thousand, souls believed and were baptized. In this manner the new birth of the world began, by the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in the Apostles. The Lord was the Spirit, and the Spirit was the Lord.

The promise of the Holy Ghost was made, not only to the disciples who had followed the person of Jesus Christ, but to all, far and near, who should repent and believe in his name. When Peter and John prayed, and laid their hands on those who had received the word of God in Samaria, they each received the gift of the Holy Spirit; but our Centurion and his household were deemed worthy of a peculiar privilege; for without prayer, or the laying on of the Apostles' hands, they received the Holy Ghost. Peter himself, when blamed by the Jews for preaching to the Gentiles, relates it in the following words: "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us, at the beginning," chap. ii. 15.

And this beginning, namely, that which took place among the disciples at the feast of Pentecost, was

the same which Cornelius and his friends experienced.

Here we must take the shoes from off our feet ; for the place whereon we stand is holy ground, and we are surrounded by the mysteries of the house of God.

It appears to us that we must not pass over, without consideration, the expression, "in the beginning," which the Apostle uses in relating the history of Cornelius. We find in our Bible, those words used three times over, on different occasions of the deepest interest. They commence the Holy Scriptures, "*In the beginning* God created the heaven and the earth." The disciple whom Jesus loved, uses them to commence his Gospel. And, thirdly, the Apostle who preached the first sermon, and led the first sheep into his Lord's fold from amongst the Gentiles, refers to the great work of God—the pouring out of his Holy Spirit upon men. These are *the beginnings* of the three manifestations of God's eternal counsel,—creation, redemption, and sanctification.

Every beginning, even those which take place yearly, in the steadily revolving course of nature, is completely withdrawn from our gaze—even the first development of a little seed of corn is concealed both from our eyes and our understanding, and if we try to discover it, we are lost in the maze of that invisible world from which the seed derives its life. We know nothing of the relation of cause and effect, except by our own experience, and the outward ap-

pearance of objects. God alone knoweth all his works, from the beginning of the world.

In nothing does the sinfulness and folly of man, and his proud, yet childish character, disclose itself more, than in the wish to be, and to know as God; this is the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but of the world. If our minds were not bounded and confined by the deceptions of the visible world—and if our characters were composed of the love of God, and of a true child-like humility—we would no longer divide nature and miracle, soul and body, the ordinary from the extraordinary gifts and manifestations of God. The single eye turned towards God, would recognize his power and grace as clearly in the customary way in which he sends bread to the earth, as if it pleased him to feed five thousand men once more with five loaves. We must acknowledge, in both cases, that man receives life from heaven, and that the power from above manifests itself always in signs and wonders, though we are often too blind to appreciate them.

While the Son of God was an inhabitant of this earth, that which he had foretold to Nathanael happened: “Hereafter thou shalt see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” The disciples, as well as all the inhabitants of Judea, witnessed his miracles, and beheld the proofs of his glory with their own eyes. Heavenly signs and manifestations belonged

as necessarily and naturally to that period, as the blossoms of the trees and plants, and the song of the lark and nightingale belong to the joyous spring, the season when God renews the outward form of the earth.

The greatest work of the love of God, which far surpasses human understanding, and which was to become the possession and everlasting blessing of all the races of men, had taken place in Judea, a narrow and obscure corner of the world; the Apostle Peter now related it, briefly and simply, and Cornelius and his household received it as a Gospel, or, in other words, as good tidings. For this reason the men who proclaimed it among the nations, were called Apostles, that is to say, messengers, or those sent. The Lord, whose words and miracles they were to preach, strengthened them by his Spirit, so that they were enabled to accomplish that divine work which he had begun; and, by the power of that Spirit, they performed as great, or, according to the promise of their Lord, greater works than he himself had done. The cause of God and its progress through the world, now demanded *spiritual miracles*.

As the Lord Jesus, in the days of his flesh, had principally and almost exclusively shown his power and glory on external objects, and by curing the diseased bodies of men. So he, or his Spirit, now manifested himself in the interior world, and in the spiritual and holy lives of those who believed in him. The scales were removed from the spiritual eyes of the Jews and Gentiles that were born blind; and that

which our Lord had said to the disciples of John, Matt. ii. 5, now took place, but in an inverse order. When the poor had the Gospel preached unto them, the Jewish and Gentile world first awoke from their sleep of death into a new life ; the deaf heard the word of truth—the impure were purified from their sins, and walked joyfully in a new path—and last of all, the blind received their sight, being illuminated by the perfect light of faith. Those disciples and Apostles to whom power had been given to work the same miracles as their Lord, and to whom even spirits were subject, were the first to experience visibly, at Jerusalem, during the feast of Pentecost, the manifestations and wonders of the Holy Spirit. These showed themselves by many outward signs, but principally in the descent of the cloven tongues, and the gift of languages. What they were to give to others, they must first themselves receive—and what they had received they must then impart. This happened also at Cæsarea.

“ *The Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.* ”—Here the Evangelist, and afterwards Peter, makes use of a very simple word, borrowed from material nature, in order to express that spiritual thing which happened to Cornelius,—the Holy Ghost fell on all. The Scriptures often use comparisons of the same nature ; as for instance, “ He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass ; as showers that water the earth,” Psalm lxxii. 6. The Bible is not like the human understanding, for it does not separate the outward and temporal, from the invisible and ever-

lasting Word ; but, on the contrary, regards both as the one work of God. When the Word which was from the beginning became flesh, why should not also the coming of the Spirit from above be described by a human word ? The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, but he that is spiritual judgeth all things. That work of God, which took place bodily in the man sick of the palsy, when Jesus commanded him to take up his bed and walk ; and also in the lame man, at the gate of the temple, who at the words of Peter and John, suddenly rose up, leaped, walked, and praised God ; the same now took place spiritually in those who listened to the Apostle's sermon. As a new bodily life commenced in those that were healed, so a new life in Christ, of which the former was the symbol, took place spiritually in Cornelius and his friends.

The Apostle who leaned on the bosom of our Lord, calls him the Life, and thus describes the person of Jesus : " That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life." The old covenant was only the preparation and promise of the word of life which was to come. In the new covenant, the word became flesh, and the life appeared which was to become the life of the world. A third manifestation must now take place, namely, the pouring out of life upon all flesh, and this is the history of God among men. Cornelius and his friends became the first fruits among the Gentiles when they received the

Holy Spirit ; it was indeed a most important moment, and a most important advance, which the kingdom of God now made upon earth ; it was the entrance of the Gentile world upon a new life. That which had happened to the Apostles at Jerusalem, now took place in this little community, their characters, so weak and lowly before, were now exalted to the heavenly ; and their hearts and lips were inspired, so that they overflowed with the praises of the glory of God. All this took place in Cæsarea, while the earth was still warm from the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, which had descended upon it, and while the footsteps of the anointed One were still visible.

“ *And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”—It happened here, as at the feast of Pentecost, the people were confounded and astonished at what had passed.

It was not so much the circumstance itself which excited the wonder of those weak Christians, so lately converted from Judaism ; as the fact, that the Gentiles also, who had never conformed to the law or the ordinance of circumcision, were esteemed worthy of the same privileges as the people of God. Although they had both heard from the mouth of the Apostle, and learned by their own experience, “ That God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation, he that feareth him ; and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him ;” yet their old prejudice, in all its power, rose up once more to darken their minds. Our his-

tory here shows us two things, the condescending mercy of God to weak unbelieving man, and the visible manifestation of his hand which was necessary to open a path for the entrance of the Word into the world. Sinful man is by nature inclined to worship the understanding, which certainly is an error quite as bad as the idolatry that seeks to confine the Lord, who fills heaven and earth, to a temple made with hands, or to an image made of iron or marble. This worship of the understanding seeks to limit the power of the living God, by the laws which govern nature, and by the ordinary course of history and events ; thus lowering the glory of the unchangeable God to the level of a thing created by their own imaginations. The first describes the method of the infidel worldly wisdom of our own era ; the second was the ground and foundation of the hatred with which the Jews rejected the Gospel, and refused it even to the present day. The astonishment of the believers who accompanied Peter, shows that a similar prejudice existed in their hearts. Let us hope that it was the last, and that, by God's grace, the pouring out of his Holy Spirit on this occasion, became the means of completing their change. Oh ! folly and blindness of man, which would persuade him that there is no other light than that which proceeds from the sun, moon, and stars, and no other history than the world's history, in which the Gospel can find no place ! Where would they place our history of Cornelius ? Would not the half converted Christians be astonish-

ed, and the unbeliever think that we spoke as if filled with new wine ?

Let us now return to our Centurion.—The day had now dawned in his house ; Christ, the morning star, had arisen in every heart ; and the place where darkness had formerly prevailed, was now illuminated by the light of the Lord. This day of salvation succeeded a long night of sighs and groans, and longing for the presence of the living God ; during it, the Lord had led this Abraham, out of the idolatrous land of his fathers, towards Canaan ; the faint twilight had illuminated his path, which had only increased without satisfying his desire for the full blaze of light. His fasting, prayers, and alms, his humble and prostrate reception of the man for whom he had sent, his earnest attention to the words of the Apostle, and the surrounding circle of his friends, servants, and soldiers, filled with the same aspirations as himself,—all bore witness to the righteous longing of these souls, for the good and perfect gifts which come from above. Could a father give his child a stone, when he asked him for bread ? And could he, who clothed the lilies in the field more beautifully than Solomon in all his glory, refuse the water from the living fountain to the thirsty soul !

For this reason, the day of anointing and baptising with the Holy Spirit, must as certainly come to Cornelius, as the morning light follows darkness and twilight. And as the Creator ornaments the beautiful spring-time, the silent commencement of a new life in the kingdom of nature, with many lovely

sounds, odours, and colours,—so must the beginning of the kingdom of God in the heathen world, be glorified by signs and wonders, songs and praises. Certainly those miracles soon ceased, like the angelic radiance on the countenance of Stephen, which was beheld by those who put him to death : but they were both the testimony of an internal, joyful, and peaceful life, which grew and increased in faith, hope, and love ; brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, and was in the hearts of the regenerated ; a living fountain of salvation and peace in life and in death, through time and through eternity.

Happy are all those on whom the Spirit has descended : they are the children of God, and bear the testimony of it in their hearts, as they utter *Abba* with their lips. Regeneration, or a new creation within us, can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God, from whom our spirit proceeds. The Holy Ghost must assist us in the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, and arm us with power from on high, that we may gain the victory, and be glorified from one glory into another.

There is no other way to attain this spirit of power, wisdom, and revelation, than the path in which Cornelius walked. We have naturally a feeling of disquietude, and a longing for the peace of God ; the world cannot give it, and still less can we attain it by our own exertions, for it must come to us from above. Cornelius did not find it by his own merits, by fasting or prayer, penitence or alms ; but, through the instrumentality of Peter's sermon, he

found peace in believing on Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. As sight was restored to the believing blind man at the word of the Lord, and as the man sick of the palsy took up his bed and walked, when our Lord said, "thy faith hath cured thee," so the word of the Apostle became light and life in the heart of the Gentile by means of his faith; and the Gospel became in him the power of God unto salvation. But in order to obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit, there is a nearer path for us than for Cornelius; we do not need to send, like him, to Joppa. The word spoken by our Lord, and evangelized by his Apostles, is close at hand and in our very dwellings; and as soon as we desire it, we can hear the voices of Peter and John, Paul and James.

If this wish is lively and ardent, and if we receive the word joyfully as the first of blessings, then the giver himself, the Holy Spirit, will come unto us, and we shall enjoy the fellowship of God. If we grasp it firmly, as the better portion; then more and more shall be given to us; if we are only willing to learn, the Spirit of God will teach us; if we will follow, he will guide us; if we open to him our troubled hearts, he will console us; if we remain faithful, he will strengthen and perfect us. Then shall we speak with tongues, and with thanks and praises, by word and deed, shew forth the goodness of him who has called us from darkness into his wonderful light. To him be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen!

XIV.

IF, following the example of the Holy Scriptures, we call them a covenant, and then divide it into the Old and New, we indicate thereby the divine origin, the character, aim and history of the revelations of God. The Bible is the glorious word, profound and true, which, rightly understood, reveals to us the mystery of the dependance of man on his heavenly Father, and the connection of God with man. The words of the prophet, “men have transgressed the covenant,” find their confirmation both in human feeling and in human history. Slavish fear, striving to reconcile the offended Godhead by self-chosen mediators, or by its own art to appease the divine anger, and quiet its own terror, has been the basis of idolatry in all ages, and in all nations. Every religion not grounded on revelation, is false, being a proof of sin and of apostacy from God,—tending, besides, to a perpetually increasing separation from Jehovah and his salvation. Man could only be reconciled to God, by means of a divine mediator; but this was beyond the power of man to conceive till God himself revealed it.

The history of that nation, which God chose from amidst the idolatrous world, to be his own peculiar people, amply proves how difficult it is for the na-

tural man to raise his faith, so as to comprehend the covenant of God with the human race ; simplicity and humility alone can do it. Therefore the Lord says, by the mouth of his prophets, " Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Is. xliii. 24, 25. " I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Jer. xxxi. 3. These words paint with striking reality, both the unwearied mercy of God, and the unceasing rebellion of men. The next step which the Jewish nation shall take, is deeply interesting to all mankind ; though God is also the God of the Gentiles, yet Israel is his first-born son.

It is unspeakably touching to observe how he, " which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night," how the Lord of Sabaoth condescends to draw men unto himself, and if they will humbly believe on him, covers their transgressions, showering blessings upon them. As the Lord, after the first judgment had been passed over the miserable earth, extended his bow in the clouds, as a pledge to Noah that he would keep his covenant and his promises ; so all the exterior forms and observances of the Old Testament had no other object than the visible ratification of his gracious words, " For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the

Lord that hath mercy on thee," Is. liv. 10. And the Apostle Paul says, "Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever!" Rom. ix. 4, 5.

After the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man had appeared, when the promises were fulfilled, and the eternal covenant was concluded, not by works of righteousness which we have done, "but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Baptism stands among the ordinances of Christianity, in wonderful simplicity, as the seal of the covenant of God, as a visible pledge of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the love of God, and of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Oh! that all would regard it as the glad token of a new covenant, like the bright testimony God stretched among the clouds, the footstool of him whose throne is in heaven! Oh! that Sion would hear his voice; lo, I shall be with thee, even unto the end of the world! "I have graven thee on the palms of my hands."

"Then answered Peter, can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."—Acts x. 46—48.

Peter had preached the Gospel to Cornelius and his friends; they had received the word of truth joy-
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fully, and had believed. A new life had commenced in their souls, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit, like the Apostles at the feast of Pentecost, so that they spake with tongues and magnified God. And now Peter asks, in the joy of his heart, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" One may well inquire how they that were born again by the Spirit of God, should require the ceremonial of baptism? Certainly not, if baptism were a mere outward form! But it must have been much more, or the Apostle would not have used it to conclude that work of salvation and blessing, for which he had been sent to the house of the Centurion; making it, as it were, the very crown of God's first manifestation to the Gentiles! Those young believers were to receive a blessing through the ordinance of baptism, the last good and perfect gift of which they stood in need.

Baptism seems, at the first glance, a mere outward ceremony. The person to be baptized must either be plunged into water, as was the custom in the East, or else, as among European Christians, be merely sprinkled with it, while the clergyman is pronouncing the name of the Holy Trinity. Nothing can be simpler than this, yet it is the seal of the greatest of God's gifts and blessings. God acts with simplicity; it is man alone that employs art. What can be simpler than the manner in which, for so many thousand years, he has poured out his light upon the earth, and has sent rain and dew from above? When the Almighty created man in his own

image, he formed his body out of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Sin, however, has transformed us, making that manifold which was formerly simple, and causing flesh and spirit to strive against one another.

But what is more, the Lord Jesus himself has appointed and ordained this sacrament. He who walked upon earth in the simplest and most obscure form of man, in order to seek them which were lost, and to save them from sin, he who, by his simple Gospel, has done away with the unnecessary forms of the law, and enjoined the worship of God in Spirit and in truth, he it is who has solemnly ordained baptism to be used by the church. His words are, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Baptism is the symbol of Christianity, of belief in the Gospel, and of reception into the community of saints. The Apostles, wherever they went, enjoined this command of the Lord, and baptized all who, renouncing either Judaism or Heathenism, professed their belief in the name of Jesus. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," are the words of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Cornelius and his companions must also be baptized, in order to be withdrawn from the dark regions of gentilism, and received into the congregation of the Lord. As a little infant, at its entrance into this world of tears,

stands in need of the swaddling clothes which are given to it, without its own co-operation ; so the new-born heavenly child requires baptism, the covering given to it from heaven for its spiritual man. Regarding it merely as an outward ceremony, it is honourable, for it resembles the anointing with oil, when kings and priests were consecrated.

As we beheld the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in the simple human form of Jesus of Nazareth, so, in like manner, baptism comprehends within itself a Spirit and life, a divine truth and promise. We shall see this, if we only consider its institution. It was practised in Israel by divine authority before Christ appeared ; but only as preparatory, in the same manner as the Gospel, before it was preached, was contained in the Old Testament. John baptized for them that was to come, and his disciples did the same. The Lord himself was baptized, complying with this ordinance as well as with the law of Moses ; after his resurrection also, when he had finished his work upon earth, and was about to re-ascend to his glory, he enjoined it in the most solemn manner on his disciples. It was then he uttered the glorious words, " All power is given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." In this manner the Lord of heaven and earth made baptism the

visible seal of his glory and power, and the token of his invisible presence unto all that believe in his name.

Our history shows us that the sermon of the Apostle had found in the hearts of Cornelius and his friends a good soil, which willingly received the indestructible seed of the word, and quickly brought forth fruit. Through the preaching of Peter, they had become believers in Christ, and partakers of the kingdom of God. There was only one thing more to be desired, namely, the sealing of this new life and covenant by the Lord himself, through whose servants they had come to the knowledge of the truth. Baptism was to be the seal and confirmation. Peter himself did not baptize, but probably commanded the brethren who accompanied him from Joppa to admit the believing Gentiles by this ordinance into the Christian church.

They had hitherto received the word and the Spirit in common; but now the pledge of the grace and fellowship of Jesus Christ was imparted to each individual, as the touching and laying on of hands was formerly done by our Lord. In like manner, the baptism of those children whom we bring to Jesus, is a repetition of the same condescending love which prompted him to say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God,"—and which induced him to take them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and bless them. Paul also compares baptism to the cloud which led the Israelites through the wil-

derness, and manifested the presence of Jehovah. He says, our fathers “were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea”—meaning by Moses, the covenant of the law, of which he was the mediator.

The Lord chose water for the seal and visible sign of those blessings which his presence imparts. He chose that common element, which is found even in the most desert parts of the world ; which, at the beginning, until the Creator appointed its proper bounds, covered the whole surface of the ground like one immense grave, and by which also he executed his first judgment on the corrupt earth.

“*Can any one forbid water?*” said the Apostle. He lets us know, by many comparisons and allusions, whenever he speaks of baptism, how important we must consider it, as a token appointed by our Lord. In his first Epistle, he compares the water of baptism to the waters of the flood, whereby only eight souls were saved, but the whole unbelieving world was destroyed ; Paul also compares it to the Red Sea, in which Pharaoh and his whole host were drowned, but Israel passed through dry-shod. Water can be deadly and destroying, but it is also purifying and enlivening. On account of its destructive properties, the raging sea is held within its proper bounds by the power of God ; but he also sends it down in the form of rain and dew, which, after descending into the ground, spring up again in the gushing rivulets, and quicken and enliven every living thing upon earth.

The water of baptism was to show itself in both ways on Cornelius and his house. He was by birth a Gentile, a child of wrath, without faith and hope, and utterly estranged from the character of God; in this respect he resembled mankind at the time of the flood, as well as the unbelieving Pharaoh and his host; but, in another, he differed from them, being aware of his sin and misery, and longing, from his heart, for grace and truth. He felt that he was under the bondage of death, and wished to become a partaker in eternal life and holiness. The Gospel, that word of peace and truth, was now sent, and opened to him a new world, the kingdom of God. He believed it with his whole heart, and desired to become a member of this heavenly kingdom—and, lo! he was solemnly received into it, body, soul, and spirit, through the baptism of regeneration. His old and natural man was, in the sight of God, annihilated and destroyed in the water of baptism;—he arose out of the dark flood, the symbol of darkness, as a new man, the child of light and truth; the freedom of the children of God, and a new and glorious life, far beyond the influence of time and of death, was now secured to him by the divine letter and seal. Cornelius, with his whole house, may be compared to Noah and his family, who entered into the ark, and, by its means, floated on the surface of the waters; or to the children of Israel, over whom the waves of the sea had no power. Baptism was to him a seal and token, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things

present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, should be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It is likewise a pledge of the same to us and our children.

Cornelius and his friends required a pledge of that forgiveness of sins which Peter had spoken of in the conclusion of his sermon, and also a perfect assurance of peace and happiness. This was secured to them by baptism, which is a cleansing from sin by the blood of the Son of God, and the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “Know ye not,” saith the Scripture, “that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,” Rom. vi. 3, 4. These Gentile believers were appointed to receive all the blessings of the Gospel by means of baptism. They came out of the water washed from their sins, by the blood of Jesus Christ, clad in the garments of his righteousness, and made by him kings and priests unto God and his Father.

“*They were baptized in the name of the Lord.*”—That is to say, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Oh! the depth and simplicity of those three holy baptismal words! They comprehend all the promises and revelations of God for our salvation, and, by their connection with the rite of

baptism, are humanized, or, in other words, are God in his relation to man.

As the word preached by the Apostles in the name of the Lord, so the miracles similar to his own which they performed, are and were his, in the fullest extent of the word; so when we contemplate baptism in the name of the Lord, we may regard it as done by God himself through the instrumentality of men. God's name is the Deity himself in relation to man; and he has disclosed it to us in order that we may name him "ours." In the rite of baptism, all that Jehovah is to man, is comprehended and imparted. The three works of the mercy of God; the adoption of man by the Father; his reconciliation and redemption by the Son; and his regeneration and sanctification by the Spirit—all combining to re-establish the divine image in his soul and body, are solemnly expressed, and divinely sealed and confirmed by the names of the trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The sacrament of baptism contains a mysterious treasure, greater and higher than either earth or heaven, for it contains the name of God and the whole of the Gospel. In its essence, it is a second incarnation of that Word which was from the beginning with God, and by whom all things were made. It is the sacrament, that is, the visible yet mysterious testimony of the covenant which the omnipotent God has entered into with man, in order to assure him of his adoption and blessing; and it is also the entrance of his name into the book of life. Therefore must baptism, in this instance, perfect and conclude God's work of mercy

to the believing Gentiles at Cæsarea, and be a testimony that their names were written in heaven.

What joy and happiness must Cornelius and his friends have experienced, and how must their souls have praised the Lord and his holy name, after they had been received by baptism into his church, for the living fountain was opened out of which they were to receive grace? We obtain no more by baptism, however, than what we can grasp by faith, for it is written, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." What advantage would it be to a man, to have a deed in his hands proving his possession of a large property, as long as he refused to assert his claim? What good would it do to an orphan child, though a rich and benevolent man said to him, "I will be thy Father, thou shalt be my child, and that which is mine shall belong to thee," if the child would not believe his words, that is to say, if he would not accept his blessings! The faith which we have in our hearts is the power of receiving, and as soon as we have received, it becomes a possession; but baptism is, and remains a gift, to which we may always have recourse, as to the mercy-seat, which is Christ Jesus.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."
—The ground of their salvation was laid, and a new life had begun in them; "buried with Christ in baptism," wherein they had risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who had raised him from the dead; they henceforward contemplated the things which are from above, and no longer

that which is earthly. Their souls, clad with salvation, and covered with the garments of righteousness, now became joyful in the Lord, and magnified God. Having been baptized into Christ, they had put on Christ, and full of thankful love towards their glorified Redeemer, they sought, by the joyful confession of his name, and a faithful imitation of his example, to dedicate to him their whole life, body, soul, and spirit, and to become more and more worthy of his kingdom of grace, and his future glory. Baptism in the name of the Lord, which he himself had appointed immediately before his ascension, was a symbol, a seal, and a pledge of the glorious future, when they should be freed from the prison of their mortal body, and the imperfections of their earthly life, and when they should behold him whom their soul loved, face to face, through all the ages of eternity. In order to renew and quicken this eternal covenant, and to strengthen their relation with God and Christ, they were now permitted access to the Lord's Supper, that by receiving his body and blood into their souls, they might become partakers of eternal life. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, that he may have more abundantly.

XV.

WE are now at the conclusion of the beautiful and remarkable history of the Centurion Cornelius. When the narration of any occurrence causes it to be vividly depicted in our minds, we may be said to live it over again ; in this manner we have experienced in our own persons much of what is described by the Evangelists, and beheld Cornelius and his friends as in a mirror. It was for this reason that the conversion of the first Gentile family was transmitted to us in writing, as a most important part of that Christian belief into which we are baptized. We see in the history of Cornelius, that he was acquainted with the existence of the one true God, and Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, by means of the manifestation of the old covenant, in the sacred writings of the Jews ; and also that it was not a mere cold conviction, but an ardent belief, and a heart-felt longing after the fellowship of the only source of salvation and happiness. We behold also in our history, the path which God takes, in order that all may come to the knowledge of the truth, and that he may be found by those that seek him. We hear the Apostle describing the person and character of the Mediator and Saviour Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the Son of God, and his wanderings upon earth,

his death on the cross, his resurrection and ascension, his glorification, and return again to judgment.

We then see and understand how Cornelius and his household heard the word preached unto them with humility and child-like faith, how they received forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then, as a seal and testimony of the fellowship and grace of God, were renewed by baptism into the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and into the community of his saints.

The history now concludes, and we might perhaps expect it to relate something more ; for instance, the progress of the new life in those so lately awakened from sleep and risen from the dead, and the manner in which Christ continued to illuminate their minds ! Presumptuous idea ! The Holy Scriptures are even silent with regard to the remaining history of the young man at Nain, and Lazarus of Bethany, both of whom our Saviour recalled to life. After Nicodemus' visit by night and conversation with our Lord, his history is lost, like a rivulet amidst the sand ; we do not ever behold him rise up and depart, and scarcely are told how long he hearkened to the Master in Israel.

He came, but, unfortunately for himself, he also departed before that flower had opened, the germ of which was in his soul ; yet the Evangelist twice alludes afterwards to the nightly visit of this Pharisee and ruler among the Jews. It is otherwise, however, in our history. The rays of the rising sun had suddenly opened the hearts of the little household at

Cæsarea, and in their joy they could now say, “Lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.” Song of Soloman, ii. 11.

“Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”—

Acts x. 48.

These concluding words of our history do not seem intended for our particular consideration; indeed, similar expressions may be found in any letter or narrative of a journey; nevertheless they are hallowed by the connection in which they stand. On this account, we must observe who made this request; to whom it was made; and what was obtained by it. It is true that the narrative might well have concluded with the words which we have already considered, “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord;” but we should have regretted this abrupt termination, in as far as we had sympathized in the joy of this converted household at receiving the new life through the grace of God.

We should have asked, almost with grief, why Peter and his companions, after fulfilling their office and divine commission, had left the grateful Gentiles so speedily? Ought not the messengers and servants of the Lord to show themselves as friends and brethren to Cornelius and his household, by passing

a short time of confidential fellowship with them ? And is then the life of faith as different and distinct from the customary and social life of man as the act of going to church is from week-day occupations ;

Our history answers these questions, when it thus concludes : “ *Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*” The Evangelist is silent ; nevertheless it is understood that their request was granted. Our Lord himself, though uninvited, entered the house of the tax-gatherer Zaccheus, because the latter earnestly and from his heart desired him to do so. Peter and his companions tarried certain days. Golden days, are the words of a pious commentator now deceased ; golden, in the same manner that the morning’s dawn and the rising sun are termed golden. Here the day was breaking, here the Sun of Righteousness was shining with healing on its wings, and here the Lord was descending like the soft dew, and refreshing the hearts of his children.

We behold in the house of Cornelius a holy family, who are “ fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,” Eph. ii. 19.

Our Evangelist relates nothing farther concerning what took place during these days, in the house of the Centurion at Cæsarea. We do not require it, however. He has already circumstantially described, in the Acts of the Apostles, the appearance

and character of the first assemblage of Christians, after they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It must have been an occurrence somewhat similar at Cæsarea, for both had the same origin; the faith of the converts was founded on the same grounds, and they both rejoiced in the same grace and heavenly blessing. In both cases there were a number of believers, and, although very different from each other in outward circumstances, the character and form of their minds were similar, and their hearts and souls were closely knit together.

Let us now enter the house of the noble Roman. We here behold a company consisting of men of different station and country, different education and calling. The two principal people are Simon Peter, the guest, and Cornelius, the host and proprietor of the house; the first is by birth a Galilean, his early occupation was that of a fisherman at Bethsaida, but now he is an Apostle of Jesus of Nazareth; the second is a soldier, by birth and education a Roman and a Gentile. With the Apostle Peter there are classed the believing brethren who accompanied him from Joppa to Cæsarea, who had received the Gospel, but who had not laid aside all their Jewish prejudices, and were astonished when they beheld "that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." With the Centurion we may rank his family, relations, and friends, his servants and the devout soldier, along with "many that were come together." They were probably all Gentiles; no doubt women and children would be among them, and participate in the divine blessing; although, according to the

custom of the Scriptures, they are not mentioned, because it was unnecessary. Thus we behold an assemblage of men of the most distinct races, manners, and customs.

All those walls of separation are taken away. According to the words of the Apostle Paul, here "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but ye are all one in Christ Jesus." "All children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized unto Christ have put on Christ," Gal. iii. 28, 26, 27. We see here an assemblage and household of our heavenly Father, joined together in the closest manner by one spirit, through Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man, who offered himself up a sacrifice for the redemption of all. Baptism, the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, has taken away the walls of separation. What a glorious sight it must be, and what joy and pleasure it must cause the angels of God, when in such a spirit the believing sons of Shem, Ham, and Japhet, though outwardly divided by variety of colour, language, time, education and country, join together in brotherly love over the word of God, and under the cross, the victorious banner of our Lord! This can only be effected by the power of the Gospel, the word of peace and love. It neither destroys human relations, nor those outward observances which keep a right distance between the different classes of society; the Centurion remained not only a Centurion, and his servants and

soldiers were subject to him as formerly ; but the light which now illuminated all, established more strongly and closely human ties and relationships. In this manner it afterwards joined more intimately than ever, both in the flesh and in the Lord, Philemon and his run-away servant Onesimus, whom Paul had converted, and sent back to his master. As the hand and foot serve the eye, and the eye serves the hand and foot, so the Gospel joins many together in one body in Christ, which is the head ; “ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love,” Eph. iv. 16.

Our assemblage at Cæsarea, in prayer and praise, and reception of the divine word, are the picture of the first Christians who met together on the day of Pentecost, and here also there is in the sight of the Lord neither rich nor poor, great nor mean, master nor servant ; but love, which is the bond and tie, connecting all together. A similar mind and spirit should accompany us, both in our churches and in our social and domestic life, and transform our working days into days of the Lord.

On what was this heart-felt bond of union grounded, which joined together in one spirit, such different men ? Our history replies, “ On Jesus Christ the Lord.” Here also we may quote the words of the Apostle, “ For other foundation can no man lay than

that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. Peter had preached to those Gentiles Jesus Christ, the Lord over all, whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good ; who had been crucified and slain, but whom God raised up the third day, and ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead, and to whom all the prophets bear witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins. This Jesus of Nazareth was the one theme of the Apostle's sermon ; and Cornelius, and all they who heard it, believed the word, and this faith became the invisible bond which united their hearts and souls into one family of God, and, as his children, joined them together with the ties of brotherly and sisterly affection. They all had received the Lord Jesus Christ, faith had taken firm root in their hearts, their house was built upon a firm rock, and they were all penetrated with gratitude, reverence, and love towards their heavenly Father ; they had all been baptized in the name of Jesus, and through him received forgiveness of sins, and access to the Father, through the Holy Spirit ; by him they had also received the pledge of their adoption to be children of God, and the lively assurance of a future perfection in eternal happiness and glory. Thus we see the fulfilment of what the Apostle writes, " One body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Eph. iv. 4—6. As by the word of salvation which God has presented to us through Christ, men are reconciled to their heavenly Father, so they are joined together in the bonds of affection one to another, in the same manner as the angelic inhabitants of heaven.

A union with God in faith, is at the same time, a union of men amongst each other in love; for the one is the natural and necessary consequence of the other. For this reason, our Lord makes use of the strongest expressions and the most striking parables, to show that gentleness, forgiveness of sin, love to our neighbour and even to our enemy, are the signs and tokens by which we may know his disciples and followers. In the Lord's prayer, he says, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," and afterwards in the same chapter, adds, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." This is the spirit of the new covenant, the spirit of peace and of love, which the prophet alludes to when he prophesies of the time when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; when, instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; when God will put a new spirit into man, take away the stony heart out of his flesh, and give him a heart of flesh. As the sun enlivens and quickens the animal and vegetable productions of nature, so Jesus Christ, the Lord over

all, perfects that love which is the highest species of life, both in mankind as a whole, and in each individual. "For he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace," Eph. ii. 14, 15. In every one, into whose heart he enters and dwells, he creates a new man, and removes every partition and separation, of discord, selfishness, envy, and wickedness, planting instead, unity, peace, joy, and love.

Among all who receive Jesus as the one Mediator between God and man, there arises a new covenant in the Lord, like that of David and Jonathan; the multitude that believe are of one heart and soul, like the first assembly of Christians at Jerusalem, and the little community at Cæsarea;—most beautiful union, grounded on the one rock and corner-stone, on which we are built together in one household of God through the Spirit. The brotherly love and fellowship of the members of our church is also grounded on the faith in the one man, by whom, God having loved the world, reconciled it to himself, and by whom all mankind shall be judged at the last day. By Jesus alone can the church be united to the Lord, and become a community of saints, over whom the gates of hell shall have no power.

When we look upon the little household at Cæsarea, we are inclined to ask the question, "How did they

employ those days which the Apostle passed in the midst of them?" Certainly the grateful Centurion would strive to entertain the Apostle and his other guests in the most hospitable manner; and they, in return, as was afterwards made a matter of reproach to Peter by those of the circumcision at Jerusalem, would sit in the same circle, and eat at the same table with the believing Gentiles, eat their bread with joyfulness, secure in the approbation of God, and sanctify his gift by praise and thanksgiving. The first Christians, as long as their communities were so small as to bear the character of social life, used to hold Agapae, or love feasts, in which the rich ate along with the poor, and partook of the same food; but this was the first time when Jews and Gentiles ate of one bread and drunk out of one cup. Peter certainly would now call to mind the parable contained in the vision of the linen cloth let down from heaven, as well as our Lord's parable of the marriage supper, to which the lame and the cripple were invited; he would also remember the words of Jesus, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them," Luke xii. 37.

The Apostle stands here in the place of his Lord and Master, and, as the steward of the spiritual gifts of God, administers the heavenly food which conducts to eternal life unto those friends with whom he is residing. Without doubt, in this family of God,

there were, as in the present day, gradations in knowledge and faith,—fathers, young men, children, and infants ; it would be the Apostle's care to strengthen the weak and lead them on to higher steps in spiritual life, and to feed them with milk or stronger food, according to the necessity of each. He would now more fully relate what he had only cursorily mentioned in his sermon, the incarnation and character, the works and miracles, the sufferings and glory of our Lord, and would impart to them, by the words of his mouth, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for as yet it had not been written. If Cornelius, and his friends also, brought any children to him, the Apostle would not fail to caress them, lay his hands upon them and bless them. We can imagine the new-born believers at Cæsarea, like Mary of Bethany, sitting listening at the feet of Peter, and receiving from his lips the words of eternal life ; and we can also imagine them, because they believed in the same God, and were grateful for the same blessing, praising and glorifying, along with him, the immeasurable grace and goodness of their heavenly Father. They would most certainly communicate to each other their joyful hopes and feelings,—strengthen each other in their most blessed and holy faith,—raise their hearts together in prayer, intercession, supplication, and thanksgiving unto the Lord, and praise him with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Before the Apostle left them, they would, most assuredly, as a seal and perfecting of their covenant with God, par-

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take of that holy supper which commemorates the love and the death of their Lord and Master ; and, having spiritually eaten and drunken his glorified body and blood, pledge themselves to unchangeable fidelity towards their great Shepherd, and constant brotherly love towards each other. O golden hours and golden days, in which the love of God was poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and the heavenly dawn which proceeded from the light of the world, illuminated every soul !

These descriptions and traits are by no means created by the imagination ; on the contrary, they are taken from the Holy Scriptures, and even from the testimony of those persecutors and enemies of the name of Jesus, who lived in the primitive ages of the church. The nearer the first communities of Christians stood in point of time to the manifestation of the Lord, and the more closely they were bound in spirit to the author and finisher of their new life, the more did their fellowship with one another resemble a silent though joyful family-circle, filled with faith, hope, and love, as the house at Bethany was with the sweet smelling savour of the precious ointment. We, however, whom the Lord called while we were afar off, ought now to contemplate this spiritual Eden, untarnished by the world, acknowledge our distance from the original simplicity of "the elect of God holy and beloved," and strive to regain it, that it may be developed both in our domestic and social life.

The little flock at Cæsarea was the first which the

good Shepherd had gathered together from among the Gentiles. They were all children of God, clad with the righteousness of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a source of joy to the angels, a light amidst darkness, a rose amongst thorns; one heart and one soul was in them of the highest, noblest, and most glorious description, and though their characters were as various as the flowers in the field, yet they were all bound together in the closest manner, never to be disunited through time or through eternity. The friendship of David and Jonathan is beautiful and great, but it is still more beautiful and still more glorious to lie with John on the bosom of our Lord; friendship and love are imperfect, if this resting on the heart of Jesus is not connected with them, and if the brightness of his countenance does not illuminate them.

O blessed covenant, whereby all who hearken unto his Gospel are made one with him, as he and the Father are one! He who has the Son has the Father also.

Can we imagine any thing more joyful or more exalting than the consciousness that we are the children of God, through faith in Jesus Christ? Even in this world it is a highly delightful thing to be the children of pious and dearly beloved parents; but how much more delightful must it be to be called both in heaven and earth the children of that righteous Father who is above all; to be permitted to address him by the sacred name of Abba, to be named as the brethren of Jesus, the glorified one who sits at the right hand of God. To share this grace and

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blessing with our brethren, and mutually to strengthen and confirm each other in faith ! How beautiful, consoling, and joyful is the fellowship in heart and soul of those who, whether near or afar off, are bound together with us in faith, hope, and love, who walk in the same steep and difficult path towards the same goal, who struggle and fight, suffer and hope, sing praises of joy and thankfulness, pray and beseech along with us ; no more as guests and strangers, but as citizens with the saints and of the household of God !

The little community at Cæsarea experienced in the highest degree, during those days which the Apostle passed in the midst of them, the joy of this blessed fellowship ; it resembled the day of the marriage feast at Cana, when the Lord first manifested his glory.

Their lives henceforward, however, were not to pass so smoothly ; after they had received the word of the cross, they must, like the Apostles and faithful confessors of our Lord of every age and country, bear his cross and suffer much for his sake. Then must the consciousness that their brethren who are in this world are exposed to the same temptations and afflictions with themselves, strengthen them in faith, truth, and love. Peter's words are, in speaking of the devil, " Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." 1 Peter, v. 9.

The community of the faithful upon earth, stands

in the closest relation, not only to Jesus Christ, their now glorified head, but to the inhabitants of "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 22, 23. To this community belong all who in ages past, having believed in the Lord, and having fallen asleep in Jesus, have become through him, partakers of eternal life ; whether they lived during the time of the old covenant, or after the incarnation of their Lord, whether they had with the eyes of faith, joyfully looked forward to him as the promised one, or had seen and loved him as the manifested Saviour.—All those multitudes belong to the community which is above. As we now walk by faith and not by sight, let us regard them with the most joyful love ; for much more do they, who having conquered, and are now become like the angels, take part in our daily conflict, and in the course which it behoves us to run. We whose mental vision is obscured by the walls of flesh which surround it, can have no conception how near they may be to us in spirit. What a blissful thought that we belong to the heavenly host of glorified spirits, who at this present moment are full of love towards us, and anxiously looking forward to our speedy re-union ! And what a joyful thought for us, that we shall soon be with them through all eternity ! Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” As we ourselves live here below in a mortal and imperfect body, and as our knowledge, even that which we derive from prophecy, is but imperfect; so also is the church of our Lord upon earth. Although as an everlasting covenant of peace, it is grounded upon the unchangeable grace and mercy of God our Saviour, and preserves this truth as its most valued treasure, yet while here it is only the beginning, and not the fulfilment, although it looks forward to eternal life, yet outwardly, it is subjected to all the changes and chances of this mortal life; although secure of victory, yet it must always be struggling to attain it. The saints are commanded to perfect themselves here, till they “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” Eph. iv. 13. He that has commenced this work is able to accomplish it, for “we know that when he shall appear, the believers out of every nation shall become like unto him, for they shall see him as he is.” If the Lord, according to his promise, “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body,” how much more shall he change and glorify his church, which is his own body! Then shall it become the church triumphant, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God illuminated by the glory of the heavenly Father. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son,” Rev. xxi. 7.

We behold in the house at Cæsarea which was blessed with such grace and peace, a beautiful picture of the community of the Lord, which he has gathered together upon earth, and built upon an eternal foundation, as well as of that future church, which the Lord by means of his messengers, shall gather out of every nation, and tongue, and people, to praise him in heaven with unspeakable joy and happiness, for ever and ever. And we may well apply to this first congregation of God amongst the Gentiles, the words which Paul uses in comparing the law with the Gospel: “For if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious,” 2 Cor. iii. 11.

NOTES.

NOTE A.—p. 4.

Augustine and Theophylact, with most of the modern commentators, think these to be the same person; and, accordingly, the word *ὁ παῖς*, Matt. viii. 6; which Krummacher supposes to mean *child*, is rendered, in our authorised version, *servant*, a signification which it frequently bears in classical Greek; from the great similarity between the attendant circumstances, there is every reason to believe the miracle as related in Matt. viii. 5–13, and Luke vii. 1–10, to be the same; on the part of the author there seems to be some slight confusion between the two narratives, which, however, can only be discovered by referring to the original.

NOTE B.—pp. 4 and 69.

Another translation of this passage (1 Cor. i. 26,) has been proposed, which makes it much more consistent with the Apostle's argument, by merely substituting the active for the passive voice in the case of the words in Italics, (*are called*), which are not in the original, and which must, therefore, be supplied according to the translator's view of the context. St. Paul had been speaking of the sin of the Corinthian Christians in causing divisions by following "Paul, and Apollos and

Cephas," as leaders of parties, and affirms that there was nothing to recommend the Gospel either in the mode in which it was preached, as not being "with wisdom of words;" nor yet in the preachers of it, such as the fishermen of Galilee," and he adds, "for ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, call you; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," &c.

NOTE C.—p. 5.

British Theologians are divided in opinion as to Cornelius being a proselyte or only a devout Gentile; in Townsend's Arrangement of the New Testament, there is a very learned dissertation appended to Acts x. to prove that the Gospel was preached first to the Jews in Palestine; secondly, to the proselytes; and lastly, to the Gentiles:—to the second of which classes he supposes Cornelius to have belonged. Krummacher, however, thinks differently, and the reasons advanced by him are not without weight. Had he been a proselyte, Peter would not have hesitated to receive him into the community of Christians by baptism, nor would he have been called in question by his Jewish brethren for so doing, as the multitude said of those filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, "We hear *proselytes* speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God," Acts ii. 10, 11.

NOTE D.—p. 35.

"In this circumstance, we may perceive, how Peter continued faithfully to observe the rules and customs of Judaism; little aware that they were soon to cease and give place to the wor-

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shipping of God in spirit and in truth." Many of the rites of Judaism doubtless terminated with the destruction of Jerusalem, but it is manifest from Scripture, that God does not intend that the national distinction between Jew and Gentile should ever cease, nor is it the case that the observance of Jewish customs is inconsistent with worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. St. Paul, although the Apostle of the Gentiles, made great exertions to keep the Jewish feasts at Jerusalem. In the latter part of Ezekiel's prophecy there is a minute account of the Temple yet to be rebuilt; its situation and ornaments are described, and its priesthood appointed. In their present dispersion the Jews, as suffering under the judgments of God, are for "a sign and a wonder," Deut. xxviii. 46, and in their restoration they will be a miracle of mercy, but in neither case could God's purpose be accomplished, unless by their being preserved a distinct people.

NOTE E.—p. 35.

This was the highest and most excellent way of all other, of revelations, when a man was rapt even from himself into heaven, and was wholly in the spirit; being for the time, as it were, out of the body, and in the very next degree to souls departed, enjoying God. Seven manner of extraordinary ways did God use to reveal himself and his will to his people in ancient times; 1. By dreams; 2. By apparitions, when they were awake; 3. By visions, when they were asleep; 4. By a voice from heaven; 5. By Urim; 6. By inspiration or revealing of the ear; 7. By rapture or ecstasy; and this last the most excellent as to him that did enjoy it.

LIGHTFOOT on Acts, ch. ix.

NOTE F.—p. 78.

In the original there is a Paronomasia or play upon the expression, “the word or the wonderful gift of speech,” which runs through several passages—a practice very common with German writers: to this it is impossible to do justice in a translation. At one time the author seems to refer to the Logos, or Eternal Word, (John i. 1.) at another to human speech; and sometimes both ideas seems involved in the same expression. The thoughts which appear to have been present to the mind of Krummacher, while writing this passage regarding the value of language, have been very elegantly expressed by Dr. Blair, in his Introduction to his Lectures on Rhetoric:—

“One of the most distinguished privileges which Providence has conferred upon mankind is the power of communicating their thoughts to one another. Destitute of this power, reason would be a solitary, and in some measure an unavailing principle. Speech is the great instrument by which man becomes beneficial to man; and it is to the intercourse and transmission of thought, by means of speech, that we are chiefly indebted for the improvement of thought itself. Small are the advances which a single unassisted individual can make towards perfecting any of his powers. What we call human reason, is not the effort or ability of one, so much as it is the result of the reason of many, arising from lights mutually communicated, in consequence of discourse and writing.”

NOTE G.—p. 154.

“Even the heathens had their prophets, who unconsciously, and against their own will, prophesied, like Balaam of old, of the One that should come.”

The same sentiments have been expressed by Bishop Horsley, in a very elaborate Dissertation “On the Prophecies of the Messiah dispersed among the Heathen,” from which the following extracts are taken:—

“ For the more perspicuous arrangement of my argument, I shall divide it into two parts.

“ First, I shall prove the fact from historical evidence, that the Gentile world, in the darkest ages, was in possession not of vague and traditional, but of explicit written prophecies of Christ. When I have established the fact, and by that means shewn the immediate cause of the expectation which so generally prevailed, I shall then produce the more remote and higher cause, and prove that these written prophecies were the remains of divine oracles of the earliest ages.

“ First, for the fact that the Gentile world, in the darkest ages, was possessed of explicit written prophecies of Christ, I shall found the proof of it on the contents of a very extraordinary book, which was preserved at Rome, under the name of the Oracles of the Cumæan Sibyl, which was held in such veneration, that it was deposited in a stone chest in the temple of Jupiter in the Capitol, and committed to the care of two persons expressly appointed to that office. I shall take my idea of the contents of these books entirely from the testimony of heathen writers,” &c. &c.

“ From the extreme depravity of the times, and from the wickedness of Balaam’s own character, it has been doubted whether he was properly a prophet. The difficulty of conceiving that true prophets should be found in an idolatrous nation, if I mistake not, I have already removed by the analogy which I have shewn to subsist between ancient and modern corruptions. The difficulty of conceiving that the gift of prophecy should be imparted to a wicked character, will be much softened, if not entirely removed, if we recollect the confessed crimes of some of the Jewish Prophets, and the confessed indiscretions of some persons who shared in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the primitive Churches.

“ Balaam’s impiety at last ran to the length of open rebellion against God; for he suggested to the king of Moab, as the only means by which the fortunes of the Israelites could be injured, the infernal stratagem of enticing them to take a part

in that idolatry for which, by the tenor of his own predictions, the Moabites were destined to destruction. But this apostacy of Balaam was subsequent to the prophecies that he delivered to Balak, and was the effect of the temptation which the occasion presented, the offer of riches and preferment in Balak's Court.

“ In this Balaam set the sun of prophecy in the horizon of the Gentile world, and yet a total night came not. For some ages a twilight glimmered in the sky, which gradually decayed, and became at last almost insensible, but began to brighten again during the captivity of the Jews under the Babylonian monarchs, and from that period continued to gather strength, till at length the morning star took its station over the stable at Bethlehem.”

THE END.

R. MARSHALL, PRINTER, EAST ROSE STREET.

THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
ST. JOHN,
THE EVANGELIST AND APOSTLE,

BY
F. A. KRUMMACHER, D. D.

A WORK CHIEFLY INTENDED FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

WITH
A PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION ON GERMAN THEOLOGY,

BY THE
REV. JOHN W. FERGUSON, A. M.
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PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION

ON

GERMAN THEOLOGY.

IN the history of Christianity, it is deeply interesting to observe, how human nature has presented the same obstacles to its doctrines and its precepts, at every period of time, while the character of its opposition has varied according to the circumstances of the age or country. It is with nations and communities, as it is with individuals ; they have a youth, a manhood, and an old age which steals on apace :—besides, whatever error may be mingled, either with the creed or the discipline of a church, although at first it may appear of little moment, it is, as it were, evil seed sown, which in process of time produces a luxuriant crop of poisonous fruit, and terminates in consequences from

which the original authors would start back with horror and surprise.

At the period immediately preceding the Reformation, even on the admission of the Roman Catholic priesthood, the corruption of manners was extreme. The lofty requisitions of Christianity were disregarded, while its doctrines were so interpreted as not to disturb the peace of its professors; and what men anxiously wished to believe, they had little difficulty in proving, at least, to their own satisfaction. It was then, when the intellect of Europe was comparatively dormant, that several master-minds arose; enlightened by the Spirit of God, they saw through the surrounding evil; emancipating themselves from a state of thralldom and corruption, they leavened much of the mass of society with their own principles; and while they purified the church, they prevented it from passing to the opposite extreme of lawlessness and insubordination.

More than two centuries later, a very different spectacle was exhibited in revolutionary France: during the intervening period, the principle of freedom of inquiry, which arose at the Reformation, had communicated itself to that kingdom, and, at an early stage, a portion of the people had thrown off the Romish yoke, but the greater number continued attached to the

Church of Rome. Their minds, however, being in a state of great activity, both in science and politics, they, when led to investigate the claims of Christianity, were unable to admit them in the only form in which it was presented to the great majority of the nation, and, by one bold measure, they declared the whole to be a fiction, and rejected Revelation altogether.

In Germany again, the cradle of the Reformation, a very different course was pursued. A host of writers appeared in the 16th century, who, being exposed to severe sufferings for the truths they taught, partook deeply of the genuine spirit of Christianity, and were thus enabled to perceive the meaning of the inspired penmen, and to speak with authority to the consciences of men. The primitive Christians, in contending with Pagans, appealed to the broad features and fundamental principles of Christianity. On the other hand, the Reformers were involved in endless controversies within the church, and were occupied in determining what was truth among the conflicting opinions of opposite parties. Such a position was a perilous one for a church to hold, in so far as vital godliness was concerned: occupied with minute points of difference, they were apt to forget the weightier matters of the law; and being daily called upon to fight for the truth, they were in danger of fostering the

spirit of contention rather than love. That generation passed away, and was succeeded by one that was distinguished for the same disputations about the orthodoxy of their abstract creed, but not for the same attainments in spiritual vigour: the Church, accordingly, made an idol of the letter of Scripture, in many instances drew unwarrantable inferences from insulated passages,* introduced a forced system of interpretation, and thereby paved the way for rejecting the idea of its inspiration, and bringing it down to the level of a mere human composition.

The Reformation gave an impulse to the German mind, which it has never lost; their speculations on this, as on all other subjects, partake of a degree of boldness not to be met with in any other nation. France discarded the Scriptures altogether; the Germans, on the other hand, continued to study them, but denied that there was any thing supernatural in their composition, and maintained, wherever miracles are related, that they could be explained by natural causes. This is what has been long known under the name of Rationalism. It is generally admitted that such opinions have been long and widely prevalent

* For examples of these, see Pusey's learned *Historical Inquiry into the causes of the Rationalist Character*, lately predominant in the Theology of Germany. Part II. pp. 55, 56.

among the theologians of Germany, but not, as some would maintain, universal. Here, as elsewhere, God has never left himself without a witness : there never have been wanting defenders of the truth equal in learning to their opponents, though inferior in numbers : they have in this, as in many previous portions of the history of the Church, been a little flock ; but it is to this very circumstance we are indebted for many an able defence of the truth, that would otherwise never have existed. It was the attacks of the heathen philosophers that led to the composition of the ablest Apologies for Christianity in the primitive ages : it was the erroneous view of the Church of Rome on the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith alone, that led Luther to set forth this precious truth in all its fulness. In like manner, the objections of infidels in Great Britain to Christianity have given rise to many of the best defences which the Church possesses.

The same analogy holds in German Rationalism. Tossed amid a sea of perplexities, many were compelled to turn inwardly on their own spirits ; and finding how exactly Christianity was suited to their fallen nature, they hailed it as the gift of God, and thus were enabled to stand firm upon a rock from which no sophistry could dislodge them.

God has been pleased to reveal himself in a great variety of forms,—in creation, in providence, in his written word, in miracles, and frequently to the minds of men directly. The mode of manifestation is in these cases different; the result is the same. The man who listens to a voice proceeding from one of these sources, will doubtless know some portion of truth; he who is favoured with more, or with all of them, will know it in greater fulness. It is thus that while there may be much speculative error in some one department, God's voice may be heard through some other channel, and preserve the mind from total ignorance of himself.

The following extract from a work by Drechster, published at Leipsic in 1837, will shew the justice of these remarks:—

“It has pleased God to suffer the kingdom of darkness to reveal itself in all forms and degrees, but at the same time to follow it step by step, and always to oppose and conquer it. In our day, it is under the form of knowledge that the kingdom of error and wickedness contends against the light. It is therefore the armour of knowledge by which that dark undertaking must be exhibited in its utter worthlessness. We are apt to cultivate the field on which we are placed, not lightly and superficially, but with

probity and earnestness. Were we then to give to the world discussions which we do not, in our inmost conscience, consider as true and satisfactory, we should not be faithful householders of our Lord. That our Lord himself triumphs is his own care, for which He will best provide. That we be found true, *let that be our care.*"

The same writer afterwards observes, that the inquiries and labours of the Rationalists are nothing but the onward movement of a prejudice against miracles and prophecy, which is the basis of their procedure, and has for some time past usurped the name of criticism. Of the effects of this prejudice, in leading to absurd interpretations of Scripture utterly inconsistent in themselves, he gives several striking illustrations from the works of his countrymen.

In the Rev. Hugh Rose's very able account of "the State of Protestantism in Germany," there are several remarks confirmatory of the views just stated. That learned author observes, "Latterly a more healthy spirit of religion has grown up in Germany. The reign of that voluptuous mysticism which expended itself in the mere passive indulgence of the affections is passing away, and a true and genuine Christianity is, I trust, beginning to take root in Germany, which, although, like the mystical system, it addresses itself

to the affections and feelings, does not stop there, but seeks to confirm and establish the dominion of vital and practical religion by an intimate knowledge of the system of the Gospel, and a bold and unhesitating assertion of the truths it proclaims..... We may discern everywhere strong marks of improvement. In the first place, I would mention the different and improved character of the theological works which have latterly appeared,—a fact well known to all readers of German divinity. Nor is there a less favourable change in other quarters. The aspect of science and of historical inquiry, is no longer hostile but friendly to Christianity. I believe, indeed, that there is scarce an University in Germany which has not one, or more, professors of really Christian views. But one of the most direct, though perhaps at first sight not very cogent proofs of improvement, is the fact that the orthodox party are so far advanced in strength, that they have recently established more than one Journal on their own principles.

“ There is likewise, in one respect, a great improvement in the philological labours of even the Rationalist divines. I cannot indeed say that they are become Christians, but some of them are become, what they were not before, scholars..... Some, I trust, though still in intellectual error, have feelingly perceived that

their path was not the path of peace for themselves, or of godliness for their people: some are ashamed of their absurdities: some find that the assertion of their opinions does not obtain the same applause which it did a few years ago: and finally, some find that the hand of power is against them."

There cannot be a stronger proof that a better state of things has commenced in some parts of Germany, than the fact, that in 1828 the Synod of Elberfeld deposed a pastor from his office for denying the doctrines of Original Sin and the Atonement. But it may be asked, in what way has this been brought about? to which we reply, that the very magnitude of the evil has itself led to the cure. It was the rejection of the external evidence of Christianity that led the Germans to examine more narrowly its internal character and its sanctifying influence; a department of investigation to which the German mind is peculiarly adapted. It is to this, doubtless, that many of their writings are indebted for that spirit of deep piety that is so completely interwoven with them; and, as has been forcibly observed by a Reviewer of Jung Stilling, * "we state it as a notorious fact, of which no student of German literature can be ignorant, that

* Foreign Quart. Rev. July, 1838.

there is infinitely more of a deep, earnest, searching spirit of true piety in that literature than in our own; that though it may sometimes be difficult to state in so many words wherein the exact creed of each German man consists, still his piety is there, feeling and felt, colouring, interpenetrating, informing all things; you cannot touch it, but you feel sensibly that there is a soul present, that you are not far from the influence of God and good things."

These remarks may be applied with great truth to many religious publications, besides biographies, which have been lately translated from the German. Where, however, there is such a conflict between truth and error, between intellectual light and darkness, as in Germany, and especially where the imagination is allowed such free scope, and many are able to clothe their speculations in such glowing and captivating imagery, it is impossible to watch with too jealous an eye every professedly religious work which comes from such a quarter. It cannot be expected that every individual, in searching after a system of truth for himself, should at first discover what has been the creed of the church from the earliest ages. In soaring to the great Fountain of light, he will doubtless frequently deviate from the straight course, and follow some earthly meteor, and not improbably lead others

astray after him. The danger is, lest men imagine that because an author is orthodox in his views of one truth, and has been an able expositor of it, that therefore his opinion may be adopted in others: but as no one can take the conscience of another for his own guide, nor walk in the light of another, so must he, in the consideration of every article of faith, bring it to the bar of Scripture, and there, as in the sight of God, judge of it for himself. In like manner, to judge correctly of any work, the same course must be adopted; each must stand or fall by its own merits; and, however much the name of an author, who has written according to what is regarded as orthodox views on some single point, may afford presumptive evidence that he has done so on another, it cannot be taken as an infallible guide, and least of all in German theology.

In the writings of Dr. F. A. Krummacher, there are everywhere traces of a creed in exact conformity with that of the Reformed Church of the British Empire, on all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and, what is of equal importance, there is also the indication of a soul imbued with vital godliness, and a mind richly endowed with spiritual discernment. It is this which enables him, in "Cornelius the Centurion," and in his "Life and Character of St. John

the Evangelist and Apostle," to pourtray in vivid colours the peculiar character of each. No man can accurately describe the character of another, and trace it in his life, unless in some measure his own resemble it. The Author of these works is evidently possessed of the singleness of eye, and of the desire for truth, which characterised the Gentile centurion, and of much of the simplicity and love for which St. John was distinguished. Such, indeed, is the reputation he bears in his own country, and this is fully evidenced by his writings.

In following the progress of the mind of Cornelius through all its windings, until blessed with the full blaze of Christian light, he has presented an invaluable gift to the Church. A truth stated abstractly, is an idea of what may be; the same exhibited in the life, is the reality of what hath been,—a thing which human nature has performed, and which human nature may perform again. The one is the seed of godliness, which has yet to stand the proof of the world's ungenial climate; the other is the harvest which has stood all weathers, and proved the capacities of the soil. And when any frail mortal has been enabled, by the light of God's word and his Holy Spirit, to witness a good confession for truth, and, in the midst of trial and difficulty, to maintain his fidelity to Him, he has

presented the most acceptable offering to the Author of his being, and one which the world should ever keep in remembrance. It is on this principle that the Episcopal Church, in her Liturgy, directs the attention of her members on the various Saints' Days, to those graces for which they were distinguished, as what may and ought still to be attained by those who follow in their footsteps; and in her Communion Service, "blesses God's holy name for all his servants who have departed this life in his faith and fear; beseeching Him to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of his heavenly kingdom." The church gives God thanks for these, as being victories gained over the powers of evil, as trophies reared in the land of a common enemy, and as examples held up for present imitation.

In Cornelius we behold a man placed in the most unfavourable circumstances in human estimation, obtaining a faint glimmering of divine light, and acting so faithfully in following wherever it directed him, that he is at length honoured by God to be an Abraham among the Gentiles. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. iv. 18. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether

it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John vii. 17. Krummacher has a very clear perception of the character of God, as a God of light and of knowledge, and as desiring to impart it to his creatures, so that he may cease to be an unknown God; at the same time he is deeply impressed with the responsibility of man in using the means God has put within his reach, as implied in the passages just quoted; his favourite illustration on this point, both in the case of St. John and of Cornelius, is that of a seed of corn deposited in the ground, which, although it has within it a living principle and is acted upon by the solar heat and the rain from heaven, still requires the culture of man to make it bring forth fruit. He states very forcibly how valueless is a mere barren conviction or speculative notion of the truth of Christianity, where that is not accompanied with a corresponding practice; and traces, with much clearness, to its true source, the Rationalism of some of his countrymen, as the following extracts will show:

“ * We must on no account compare the doubting and deliberating Apostle with those Rationalists who, blinded by pride and selfishness, oppose human wisdom to divine revelation, as if they were of equal

* Cornelius the Centurion, p. 43.

authority ; while their true reason is an unwillingness to obey the commands of God, and embrace the only belief which unravels the stupendous mystery of the human mind..... * Sinful man is by nature inclined to worship the understanding, which certainly is an error quite as bad as the idolatry which seeks to confine the Lord, who fills heaven and earth, to a temple made with hands, or an image made of iron or marble. This worship of the understanding seeks to limit the power of the living God by the laws which govern nature, and by the ordinary course of history and events ; thus lowering the glory of the unchangeable God to the level of a thing created by their own imaginations. The first describes the method of the infidel worldly wisdom of our own era," &c.

He evidently considers here, that Rationalism has its root in the *will*, not in the *intellect* ; and that the only cure for it is, that a man should be made willing to be taught of God ;—and, as he observes with much truth, † “ Why should we, in the foolish manner of men, place *in opposition to each other* those words, but imperfectly understood, natural and supernatural ? They both mean the same thing in the kingdom of God,—that

* Cornelius, p. 170.

† P. 46.

He from whom, to whom, and by whom, all things are, sends rain and snow as well as the word which issues forth out of his mouth, makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flaming fire ; and transforms fiery flames into his servants, and storms into his messengers." Nothing could be more explicit for vindicating him from any tendency to Rationalism, or to reject any manifestation of the power of God, merely because he could not comprehend how it was effected.

On the essential doctrines of the corruption of human nature, the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the love of God to man lost and ruined, the forgiveness of sin through the atoning blood of Christ alone, and the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, his views are perfectly orthodox. "This revelation of three persons in one God," as he beautifully observes, "comprehends the whole of Christian doctrine, and is both the foundation and the distinguishing characteristic of our faith. The three divine names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, make known to us the whole history of God among the children of men ; they comprehend the mighty deeds and manifestations of the love of God, which He decreed from the beginning for our salvation ; which He has begun in time, but which shall be accomplished in eternity." He speaks

here, and elsewhere, of this doctrine of the divine nature in connection with corresponding blessings in redemption,—a circumstance which makes a great and important difference between the Scriptural statements of the Trinity, and those frequently found among human writers, who rather represent it as an abstract subject for discussion, than a delightful and edifying truth, which contains all that is dear to the heart of a sinner in the revelation of mercy, and without which indeed Christianity becomes but an empty name. From the manner in which the various truths are stated by him in these works, it is evident that they have become the source of divine life to his own soul; from a conviction of their tendency to promote the same in others, and with the humble hope and prayer that they may thus be blessed by the great Head of the church, they are now submitted in their present form to the public.



DEDICATION.

I WRITE this little Book for you, beloved Christians, whom I, during six-and-twenty years in Kettwig, Bernburg, and Bremen, led to the table of our Lord and Saviour. I dedicate it to you, to remind you of the time when we beheld each other face to face, when we prayed together, and sought with one accord to establish our faith on the eternal Word of Truth; trusting that it may remind you of that holy covenant to which we belong, and which, I earnestly hope, when earthly things have passed away, may unite us all in heaven above.

That God may grant this both to you and me, is the prayer of your fondly attached pastor,

F. A. KRUMMACHER.



LIFE OF ST. JOHN.

JOHN'S FORM AND APPEARANCE.

No biography could have been more interesting than a minute history of John the Evangelist and Apostle, from his childhood until his death. We are anxious to hear particulars concerning his youthful years, his behaviour towards his parents and under the paternal roof, his outward deportment, character, and appearance. This, however, has neither been given us by himself, nor by the other Evangelists. They have not even described to us the human form of their Lord and Master, the fairest among the children of men. If it is asked, wherefore? I should answer, Of themselves they spoke nothing, because they thought nothing of themselves; and they were silent concerning their Lord's outward appearance, out of reverence for that glory which they were deemed worthy of beholding. Have we not enough, when we see the splendour of the sun when he goes forth as

a bridegroom from his chamber, and as a strong man to run a race,—or do we require more? The Evangelists do not write a worldly history, confined within the mere bounds of outward circumstances.

For this reason we cannot have a true representation of the Apostle John: although painters have often delineated, and sculptors moulded his form, they must all have been far from the truth, as they had no other guide than the peculiar bent of their own character and imagination. Whatever we particularly admire and love, our soul imperceptibly blends with all the creations of our genius.

We can, however, form a picture of the Apostle in our minds, if we observe him wherever he appears in the Gospel; but particularly if we study those writings which he himself has left behind. We can recognise the singing bird everywhere by its beautiful tones. The picture which is taken from occasional glimpses and detached circumstances, must certainly be imperfect, and far from comprehending the whole character of the holy Apostle. Nevertheless, a single glance, a single word, or action of such a man, is a testimony of his internal life; for the purer the heart's simplicity, the more do trifles express what is passing within it. And in all cases, the representation, imperfect though it be, of that which stands high above us, tends both to humiliate and exalt us.

Our Apostle also has his history. He, like other men, did not become what he was instantaneously; but by degrees, in the society of his Lord and Master, and afterwards by the assistance of his Holy Spirit,

he came to "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." He walked in the same path which is appointed for us, the path of contrition and self-denial, and fought the same fight of faith and patience.

The holy Apostle John thus stands before us, showing us an example how to imitate the Lord Jesus, and seems to say in the words of Paul, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Philip. iv. 9.

JOHN'S CHILDHOOD.

The gospel history has told us little of the childhood and domestic character of John. This is the custom of the Evangelists—what is merely human they generally pass over, if it does not stand in intimate connection with the kingdom of God. Their biographies seldom begin with the natural birth of the individual, unless where it has been glorified by peculiar and divine manifestations; on the contrary, they generally commence with his regeneration.

We do not even know with certainty where John was born, and can only conjecture, with some appearance of probability, that it was in the little town of Bethsaida, situated in Galilee, on the banks of the sea of Gennesareth; the birth-place also of Peter, Andrew,

and Philip. Who would have thought, that out of this unimportant fishing-town, so many and such distinguished men of God should arise? But in the kingdom of God, every thing, like the work of redemption itself, begins obscurely and insignificantly, and may be compared to the seed of corn resting in the dark bosom of the earth.

The father of John was called Zebedee, and his mother Salome. Of the former we know little more than the name, and that he was a fisherman in the lake of Gennesareth, or sea of Galilee. The latter, Salome, was one of the women who afterwards accompanied Jesus during his wanderings, and ministered to him and his disciples. The parents of John were not poor, for they earned enough by the labour of their hands to supply their necessities. Zebedee had men to assist him in his occupation; and John possessed a house in Jerusalem, in which he received the mother of Jesus, when our Lord on the cross recommended her to his care. John was not the only son; there was another, named James, who afterwards became an Apostle of the Lord, and ten years after his Master's ascension, at the instigation of the Jews, was beheaded with the sword by king Agrippa. Happy parents, to whom God had given two such sons! Their youngest was named John. The Israelitish nation, as the people from whom the Saviour of the world was to proceed, were always looking joyfully towards the future; and on this account attached great importance to the names which their children received. No nation of the ancient world regarded the blessing of

children so much as the Jews ; and none valued, like them, a numerous posterity, as the best gift God could bestow. In the 128th Psalm, amongst the blessings promised to him that feareth the Lord and walketh in his ways, it is said that his children shall be like olive plants round about his table, and that he shall see his children's children. The ground of this lay in the mysterious hope of that joyful future, to be brought about by one of the descendants of Abraham, of whom all the prophets had prophesied. The Israelites were most peculiarly an expectant people ; and as they were at present sighing under the law, the birth of a child reminded them of the blessed future, and was a joyful circumstance closely linked with the hope of a new and a better time. Eve had that idea ; for, when her first-born son came into the world, she believed that he was the Saviour, and on that account named him Cain, that is to say, "the desired one."

The pious parents of John did not fail to look up to God in faith and hope, when they gave their child his name ; and in doing so, were no doubt influenced by the Holy Spirit. They called him John, that is to say, "blessed, or favoured by God ;" and this name beautifully expresses the character and life of the Apostle, as well as his relation to his God and Master, for he was the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Of his youthful life, we know nothing more than that he was brought up under the eyes of his parents, in a simple and pious fisherman's family, far removed from the luxury and corruption of the capital. His father destined him to the same occupation by which

he supported himself and his household ; for he seems to have rented, along with others, the fishery on the sea of Gennesareth. Both parents belonged to that class who, like Simeon, waited for the Anointed of the Lord and the consolation of Israel ; and it is certain, that Salome, like the mother and grandmother of Timotheus, instructed her son from his childhood in the Holy Scriptures. As a mother speaks the first words to her child, first draws out his affections, and first teaches him human speech ; so it is her duty, also, to sow the first imperishable seed of the divine word in his heart. O what a blessing can such a mother extend even to her most distant posterity, who, as Peter writes, being endued with “ the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price,” early directs the waters of the word of life into the soft heart of her child, and instructs him in the way of salvation ! Thus the mother’s blessing provides for her children houses, not merely upon earth, but a house of God, eternal in the heavens. John, whom the Lord loved, had such a mother. And the only book which was read in Israel, out of which pious women instructed their children, and to which all the valleys and mountains of the holy land bore testimony, was—the Book of books, the book of the covenant and the promises.

JOHN'S YOUTH.

We are unable to describe particularly the youthful years of our Apostle, for the Evangelists have related but few circumstances concerning them. Like David, he was probably of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon ; and, without doubt, he was modest and gentle, earnest, contemplative, and of a generous disposition.

He pursued the same occupation as his father, that of fishing ; for it is possible to serve God in every labour and calling, and no rank is so low that men ought to despise it. The bee is one of the least of winged creatures, and yet its labours produce the sweetest fruit. Each useful employment is ordained by God, and none is incompatible with the highest of all, which is seeking after the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Yet some occupations conduce more than others to serious contemplation on the aim and destination of human life,—on time and on eternity ; for this, the employment of a fisherman seems particularly suitable.

We must now endeavour to depict to our minds John, as a fisherman upon the Galilean sea. The fishery was generally carried on during the night ; and how often must he in lonely silence have gazed upon the midnight sea, bounded on all sides by picturesque mountains ! Above him, the blue eastern sky with

its sparkling host of stars ; under him, the clear watery mirror, in which the starry heaven appeared at his feet, the glittering constellations seemed to tremble on the moving billows, and the near though dusky mountain ridges were reflected in its bosom. Around him the deepest silence, only interrupted by the noise of the rudder and the rippling of those waters, which, at times agitated by the wind, roared louder than the storm ;—an emblem of the vicissitudes of human life.

Would not the nights, passed in this manner, raise the soul of the highly gifted youth to the most exalted thoughts and feelings, hopes and wishes ?—but particularly during that important time when all the faithful in Judea, and indeed the whole people, awaited the fulfilment of the predictions of the prophets, and the advent of the promised heavenly King and Saviour ?

John the Baptist had now appeared, in the form of Elias, on the banks of the Jordan ; and the fame of him resounded through the whole land, as the preacher of repentance, who chastised the sins of the people, and announced the near approach of the kingdom of God. The name of the Baptist, the same as his own, would probably touch the heart of the youth. Might not, also, the fame of that which had been done in Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem, have penetrated even into Galilee and Bethsaida, and opened the hearts of those who had understanding to behold the twilight or dawn of a new day ? Must not John have imparted his holy feelings and hopes to his brother James, his friends Simon and Andrew, the sons of

Jonas, and to the other youths who were his companions? And, in the quiet circle of pious household life, would not the subject of conversation often be the consolation of Israel, and the precious promises of the divine word?

Nothing is unimportant in the youthful life of any man, but particularly in that of one like John, whom the Lord had chosen for such a high destiny. Let us remember, for example, that coat of many colours which Jacob presented to his beloved Joseph, which exercised such an influence on his future career; and also the life which David, the shepherd boy, passed amidst his flocks, when he played upon his harp, and overcame bears and lions.

The occupation of a shepherd shines with splendour from the writings of the prophet Amos, who in his youth was a herdsman; and the circumstance that Martin Luther's father was a miner, had probably a powerful influence on his temper, spirit, and character. The birds of the air, and the flowers of the field, the gentle dove, and the wise serpent, all minister to our instruction in that school wherein we are placed; and why should not the sea also, that mirror of the starry heavens, do the same?

JOHN WITH THE BAPTIST.

Now that the light had dawned in the soul of John, he could no longer remain in Bethsaida. He left his father's dwelling, his ship, and his nets, and betook himself to the river Jordan, where his namesake was preaching and baptizing. The desire to attain that kingdom of heaven, whose near approach the Baptist was announcing, had grown stronger than ever in his soul, and now urged him onwards. He therefore joined himself to this new Elias, and became his disciple. Our history is silent, however, with regard to the manner in which this took place, and the time during which he remained with him. The smaller light fades and becomes imperceptible in the splendour of the greater, as the morning star grows dim when the sun arises.

John thus describes the Baptist in the first pages of his Gospel. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John i. 6, 7, 8, 9. Wherever the Baptist is mentioned in the Gospel of John, it is done in such a manner that one can perceive how highly the Apostle esteemed and loved his first master. We see that he

was connected with Jesus in the most intimate manner, though yielding and giving place to him in deep humility. "I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose," is the sum and substance of the testimony which John bore to our Lord. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom ; but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." The Apostle John repeats this as the Baptist's own words ; and by thus depicting the joyful character of his first master's humility, it is evident that he both loved him as a teacher, and knew his heart intimately. It is a testimony that the two Johns were friends and confidants ; for love only has those clear-sighted eyes which can discern the secret character of the beloved object.

JOHN WITH JESUS.

After John the Baptist had baptized Jesus in the waters of the Jordan, and had acknowledged him to be the only Son of the Father, from seeing the Spirit descend upon him like a dove ; he continued to preach him as the greatest of all, the Messiah and the Son of God,

the light and Saviour of the world. With mighty power and joy, though in deep humility, he spoke from day to day of Jesus the Christ, and referred his disciples to Him, as the great and the only Saviour.

It happened one day that Jesus passed by while John was baptizing and preaching repentance at Bethabara on the Jordan, and when his two disciples, John, and Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, were standing by his side and listening to his words. The Baptist, looking upon Jesus as he walked, saith, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" What must have been the feelings of the two youths, when those mysterious words were uttered, when they beheld the promised Saviour face to face! Our Apostle adds, "And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." They did so with reverential awe; for they desired, like Zaccheus afterwards, to behold the face of one, of whom they had heard from their teacher such great and glorious things. The two humble and youthful disciples must have regarded the Lord Jesus with still more veneration, because their master had called him greater than himself, and told them he was unworthy even to unloose the latchet of His shoes.

They, therefore, followed him with reverence and awe. But, lo! "Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, what seek ye?" Was the question strange? Oh, no. It was an answer to that which was passing in their hearts, but which they had not ventured to utter. "They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where

dwellest thou?" His reply is but a proof of their childish confusion and timidity.

According to Jewish reckoning, it was about the tenth hour, that is with us, four in the afternoon; so the day was beginning to decline. The modesty of the two youths would not permit them to rob our Lord of the remaining part of the day; and their question, "Where dwellest thou?" might be interpreted, "Is it lawful for us to accompany thee to thy abode?" or else, "We desire to speak with thee—do thou appoint the time and place where we may visit thee." How beautiful and appropriate is modesty to the young! Where this flower is wanting, there can be no good soil.

The Lord Jesus saith unto them, "Come and see. Come to my habitation—accompany me now." They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with Him that day.

What benignant kindness on the part of Jesus! He knew well what they sought,—He penetrated their hearts, and saw what was in them. Therefore, he turned and spoke with them, took them with him, and entertained them many hours before He let them go. And what was the fruit of all this? A new life began in the two disciples, the morning star arose in their breasts, and they expressed it in the simple words, "We have found the Messiah!"

Let us now look back once more to the early life of John. His own words are, "*We have found the Messiah!*" Truly the Apostle had been all along searching for Him, though without being aware of it. And

why was this? Was he not satisfied with the distinguished teacher sent from God, of whom our Lord himself said that he was greater than the prophets who had come before him? No. The Baptist could not, and ought not to satisfy his soul. He was only, as he himself confessed, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the servant and forerunner of Him who should come, whose path he was commanded to prepare. In his own person he represented Moses and the prophets; and that salvation which John sought could not come from them, but only from Him of whom all the prophets did testify.

But "no man can come unto Him, except the Father draw him." John had been from infancy a child of grace; for Jesus had loved him, even before he beheld him. Our Lord's training and discipline were silent and gentle, like the beloved disciple's own character. The imperishable seed of truth had unfolded itself by degrees under the eyes of his pious parents, as well as in the solitude and simplicity of the fisherman's life. Even the silent nights passed on the sea of Gennesareth, when his heart, moved by admiration of the works of nature, adored their God—all would tend to turn his mind inwards on himself, and prompt him to solve each inexplicable mystery by the study of the Holy Scriptures.

As soon as he heard of the second and long-promised Elias, who had announced the descent of the Christ from heaven, and the approach of the kingdom of God, he left his father's house, and became a disciple of the holy man. But the Baptist, as stand-

ing on the boundary between the old and new covenants, chastised the sins of the people, and preached the law and repentance; for his baptism signified merely the death of the old man, and not the resurrection of the new; it was not regeneration, or "the answer of a good conscience towards God." "This new life," said the Baptist, "I cannot give you; I only baptize with water, but He that cometh after me, and is greater than I, He shall baptize you with fire, and with the Holy Spirit."

Our Apostle had also been baptized with this baptism of repentance; but he had not found in it that peace which he sought. The law and repentance, the Baptist and his baptism, could not impart it; for He alone can give it who is called "Wonderful" and "the Prince of Peace."

And, lo! He to whom John had referred his disciples, and to whom he bore testimony as the Anointed of God, and the light of the world—He had appeared, and a voice from Heaven had declared him to be the Son of God; and the two young men, Andrew and John, sought Him and found Him.

"What seek ye?" are the words with which Jesus accosted them. He that had come to look for those sheep which were lost, knew better than they did themselves that which they sought. All men are seeking; they seek the lost Eden, that is to say, the salvation and peace of God, the good and perfect gifts which come down from above. Few, however, clearly understand what they seek, and what they have lost; and the number is still smaller, of those who seek

where they ought. Instead of turning towards the Creator and fountain of all salvation, they lower themselves to his creatures. Some, notwithstanding their own corrupt nature, seek for salvation in themselves, as if they by their own power, will and understanding, could perfect and create themselves anew ; others seek for it in the acquisition, possession, and enjoyment of the perishable wealth and pleasures of this world ; others in fame, honour, and the approbation of men.

They all find themselves in error and delusion ; for they resemble the thirsty wanderers in the deserts of Arabia, who fancy they espy water in the distance ; eagerly they hasten towards it, but they soon become aware of their error ; for what they imagined a clear streamlet, proves to be only the glitter of the sunbeams on the glowing sand. The search after peace and happiness in the world and its pleasure, is but a species of idolatry, which never can obtain the kingdom of heaven.

David describes the true search, in the most powerful language, in the 42d Psalm. “ As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ? ” Or, in other words, “ When shall I see his face ? ” Jesus, the only Son of the Father, who, as the Son of man, dwelt among us full of grace and truth, may be described as the face of God turned towards man. It is only in Him, and through Him, that we can see God, and become partakers of that peace which endureth for ever.

David and the pious fathers of the old covenant longed for this; and Simeon and Hanna praised God in the temple at Jerusalem, because their desire had been fulfilled. This desire, also, was fulfilled in the hearts of the disciples. "If any man thirst," saith our Lord, "let him come unto me, and drink." Then were the words of the holy Psalmist realized, "Your heart shall live that seek God."

JOHN CALLED TO BE A DISCIPLE OF THE LORD.

We are all desirous of knowing what Jesus said to the two disciples, during those evening hours spent in confidential intercourse. John most probably repeated it to his parents, but he has said nothing of it in his Gospel. He wrote the latter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, at a late period of his life, and after he had known and beheld the glory of Jesus, as the only Son of the Father. This glory he has faithfully depicted in his Gospel; and why should he not also have described the beginning, or, in other words, the infancy of his knowledge, faith, and love towards his Master? The Gospel of John, however, has this peculiarity, that his name and person are invariably concealed, whenever it is possible to do so. Perhaps, also, after he became a man, he might, like the Apostle Paul, consider his first search after truth among the thoughts and incidents of his childhood.

On the part of Jesus, the first conversation with the two disciples was, without doubt, full of the same condescending grace and love which He always manifested to those who sought Him. The fruit of this personal acquaintance with our Lord was, that they both joyfully exclaimed, "We have found the Messiah!" And the new disciples, namely, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, joined the followers of Jesus.

Did our Lord, at this first meeting, take John and Andrew from henceforth into the number of his disciples? No. He permitted them to depart, after they had remained one night with Him. This was most peculiarly the custom of Jesus. He would not open the fruit until it was ripened: it was enough that the imperishable seed of truth had been sown in their hearts, and He now awaited its development. He acted in the same manner with Nicodemus, that Pharisee full of his own wisdom—with the rich young man, who imagined he had fulfilled the whole of the law—in short, with all who came asking Him questions. In the heart of Nicodemus the word of truth, which our Lord had sown, did not penetrate the hard soil until Jesus had expired on the cross,—and in many others it first became quickened on the day of Pentecost, when the gospel was preached by the Apostles.

Thus our Lord did not wish that John should separate himself from the Baptist, although the latter declared Jesus to be greater than he, and referred his followers to Him. In this, the Son of man did not act like those human teachers who wish to see the fruit immediately after it is sown; but, according to His

own comparison, He desired first the blade, then the stalk, and afterwards the full ear. He did not seek His own glory, but the glory of His Father, and the salvation of those who believed on Him.

Months elapsed probably between John's first conversation with Jesus, and his being enrolled in the number of his disciples. After Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael had acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, our Lord left Bethabara and went to Galilee, where he was present at the marriage in Cana, and there manifested his glory by the performance of his first miracle. Thence He travelled by way of Capernaum towards Nazareth, the place where He had lived, in silence and obscurity, from his twelfth until his thirteenth year; but from this place he was driven out by its inhabitants. He then went to Jerusalem to keep the feast of the passover, and it was at this time He cast the money-changers out of the temple, and had the interview with Nicodemus by night. He afterwards returned through Samaria and Galilee. Several disciples who had acknowledged the Lord as the Messiah, accompanied him on this his first journey. History is silent on the subject, yet John probably belonged to this number; and thus had an opportunity of becoming more and more acquainted with the character and the glory of his Master, although, properly speaking, he was not as yet one of those disciples who had received a peculiar call.

This call to be a disciple, and at the same time to the future office of Apostle, did not take place until

John the Baptist had been thrown into prison by Herod, at the instigation of his wife Herodias. Matthew relates the circumstances in the fourth chapter of his Gospel. Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee saw two brethren, Simon Peter and Andrew, casting a net; as they had toiled all night and taken nothing, He commanded them to cast their nets once more into the sea. They did so, and inclosed such a multitude of fishes that their net brake. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke v. 8. Jesus now chose the two brothers to be his disciples, addressing them in the words, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Our Lord now came to another part of the sea, where Zebedee and his two sons, John and James, were in a ship mending their nets. He called to them also, and they immediately left their father in the ship, and followed Him. They continued henceforth to be his disciples, and afterwards became his Apostles and his witnesses over the whole earth.

The disciples chosen first by our Lord were fishermen,—of the simplest habits of life,—and employed in a trade which is one of the natural occupations of uncivilized man. The words of Jesus are symbolical;—from henceforward they were to cast their nets into the great sea of the world, struggle with the stormy waves, and catch men for the kingdom of God. The choice of the Lord was simple, like his own words; and equally simple were the hearts of those who were chosen. Truth and sublimity lie in simplicity; and

thus began the greatest and most blessed work of God, for the salvation of the world.

We must now look back once more to the first acquaintance of our Apostle with the Lord Jesus, and to the commencement of his spiritual discipleship. This may be dated from the time when the Baptist, seeing Jesus coming to him, uttered the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Great and mighty, wonderful and mysterious sentence!

Were John and Andrew able to understand it? Yes, they understood it, that is to say, in their hearts they felt and acknowledged its height and depth, its consolation and blessing,—in the same manner as a childish, though pious mind, feels and comprehends the words, "Love, Heaven and Happiness," perhaps almost without the aid of reason. Thus the two youths understood, or we should rather say, felt the importance and the blessed signification of the Baptist's words. Their minds also had been prepared for it by his preaching. "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Repentance is the earnest acknowledgment and deep conviction of the sinfulness and unworthiness of man in the presence of a holy and just God; and this was the substance of his preaching,—this was the voice in the wilderness. In this path only, the path of self-knowledge, sorrow for sin, contrition, and desire of salvation, can man attain the blessed fellowship of his Redeemer. For this reason Jesus himself, as well as his Apostles, invariably began their preaching by exhorting mankind to repentance.

John also must walk in this path ; from his youth upwards he had been instructed in it by his pious parents, who waited for the consolation of Israel. For this reason he did not require the same mode of treatment as Peter and Nathanael, and still less the same as the self-righteous Nicodemus, and the rich young man, proud of his virtue and fond of this world ; nor yet that which was experienced by the pharisaical and haughty Paul. Nevertheless, the plough must pass through his soul in order to bring to light the roots of the weeds ; for it is only by this means they can be extirpated. The Baptist was to the Apostle that living law, that burning and shining light, which, consuming all that is selfish, illuminated his inmost soul. The first of Apostolic epistles, written at a more advanced age, corroborates this idea ; for he declares the knowledge and confession of our sins to be the first condition of our entrance into the kingdom of God. “ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” Thus far, and no farther, could John the Baptist lead him,—to poverty of spirit, grief for his sins, and hunger and thirst after righteousness.

When he had guided him so far on his path—at the proper hour Jesus passed by, when the Baptist exclaimed, “ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !”—that taketh away thy sin ! These were the most glorious and the most consol-

ing words which our Apostle had ever heard from the mouth of the great preacher of repentance. When they were uttered, John probably remembered the prediction of the prophet, which describes the great Shepherd of the human race as the lamb to be offered up a sacrifice for their sins.

Thus his path was opened, the course of his life was decided ; he found what he sought, and publicly acknowledged what he believed. John as the Apostle, was but the completion of that work which the Baptist had begun.

THE DISCIPLES.

After John had beheld the Lord, and heard his voice, he became his disciple, and a sheep in his fold. The word disciple is a beautiful word ; it signifies nearly the same as scholar or pupil, but it has also a tender and a more comprehensive meaning ;—it implies a spiritual and almost a childish connection. As a child grows, and gradually unfolds into manhood under the eyes and guardianship of his parents, so also did the disciples of Jesus. When he said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,” he stepped at once into the relation of their parents, in order to lead them towards the kingdom of heaven. As every development takes place by degrees in visible

nature ; and as the earth itself, being at first without form and void, was gradually prepared by the Creator for the residence of man,—so Jesus in the same manner prepared his disciples for the kingdom of heaven.

A disciple, however, was not an apostle ; and even in discipleship there were various grades. Sometimes those are called disciples who, without being expressly called by our Lord, accompanied Him in his wanderings ; who heard his words, and saw his miracles, though without believing on Him as the Anointed of God ; and who, after a time, as is mentioned in John vi. 66, “ went back and walked no more with Him.” Others, on the contrary, more and more openly acknowledged that he possessed the words of eternal life ; they joined themselves to Him more closely, and were the same as his chosen disciples, to whom He, their benevolent Master, manifested his glory by word and deed, sign and miracle.

Our Lord afterwards separated seventy from the rest of his disciples, who should go before Him, two by two, to the towns and villages, in order to prepare the inhabitants to receive his doctrine, and perhaps also, to exercise themselves in the preaching of the gospel. These were named “ the seventy,” to distinguish them from the others. The family of Jacob consisted of seventy souls, when they took up their abode in Egypt ; seventy elders were appointed, by God’s command, to assist Moses in the arduous duties of his office ; and seventy men formed, along with the high priest, the supreme council in Jerusalem. It was a

consecrated number, employed by God in the guidance and government of his people. Thus, when the time of the seventy weeks of Daniel was fulfilled, a new government took the place of the old, though under a very different form. The seventy did not stand by the side of our Lord as counsellors, nor yet did they sit round Him as being the true High Priest; but by two and two they prepared his way before Him, in every town and village of the Jewish land; and afterwards, as His messengers to every creature, preached Him in all countries, as "He that hath come and shall come." So these disciples labouring in Judea, and during this peculiar condition of the people of Israel, were the type and picture of those missionaries who, in countless multitudes, should go forth to evangelize the world. And most wonderfully has that eternal work of God spread and increased, which began then in such simplicity.

THE APOSTLES CHOSEN.

In the third chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark, the choice of the Apostles is related in the following manner: "And He" (Jesus) "goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would, and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them

forth to preach ; and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." The Evangelist repeats the names of the twelve, and adds that Jesus gave Simon the surname of Peter, and James and John the name of Boanerges, that is to say, the sons of thunder.

This solemn consecration to the Apostleship took place upon the mountain to which Jesus had conducted them. It is worthy of remark, that God through every age had chosen the mountains and high places of the earth from which to manifest his grace and truth unto men. On mount Ararat, in Armenia, He renewed his covenant with Noah ; Abraham must make a two days' journey, in order to undergo upon mount Moriah the severe trial of his faith ; on Sinai, Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, received the law ; from mount Ebal he uttered the curse, and from mount Gerizim the blessing upon Israel. For a thousand years the tabernacle of God rested upon mount Zion, the only place upon earth where, during that time, the only true God was worshipped ; and on mount Horeb, Jehovah manifested to the persecuted prophet the mysteries of His grace and truth in the government of the world. It happened, in like manner, during the time of the new covenant. It was on a mountain that the Lord Jesus first preached his heavenly doctrine, and expounded the law to his disciples and the assembled people ; on the holy mountain He was glorified before the eyes of his three most faithful disciples ; Golgotha was the mountain on which the Lamb of God that taketh

away the sin of the world was offered up a sacrifice for us ; and it was from the Mount of Olives that our eternal Prophet, High Priest, and King ascended into heaven.

Thus the mountains and high places of the Holy Land are of great importance in the history of the kingdom of God, and are, like geographical charts, closely connected with it. This is another sign of the condescending grace and love of God towards men. Do we not all feel a secret instinct impelling us, a mysterious attraction drawing us towards our home above ? And when we are on the summit of a high mountain, it seems as though we were nearer heaven, and more susceptible of divine influences ; for the earthly heights are a type and symbol of the glorious heavenly mountains. It is for this reason altars were usually erected upon high places ; and our churches, with their towers, are symbolical of the elevation of our hearts, eyes, and hands towards Him who dwelleth in the highest.

Thus the Lord led his disciples to that mountain where he had passed the night in prayer and communion with his heavenly Father. Elevated far above the noise and tumult of the world, they stood near the clouds, with the earth at their feet ; for silence and solitude were most appropriate to the holy work which was about to be performed. It is interesting to observe how the Son of Man condescended to employ the aid of outward circumstance, in order to impress more vividly that which is holy on the minds of his followers. Well might the Apostles henceforward say,

“ On this mountain hath He chosen us ;” and Peter writes also in his second Epistle, “ This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”

The words of the Gospel are, “ And calleth unto him whom he would,” that is to say, those He had chosen from the number of disciples to be his apostles. “ And they came unto Him, and he ordained twelve,” or, in other words, solemnly set them apart as his Apostles, “ that they should be with Him,” and be connected with Him in the closest manner, never to forsake Him. He now sent them forth to preach ; and, as witnesses of his glory, gave them power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.

Here we behold the works and signs by which we may recognise the apostolic office. They must be called and chosen by the Lord himself,—they must have seen and heard Him,—be joined with Him in the closest fellowship,—preach the gospel to all the world, wherever their Master should appoint,—and lastly, they must have received the gift of miracles.

Our Lord first chose the eldest of his disciples, Simon Peter ; then the two sons of Zebedee, John and James ; the three before whom He was afterwards transfigured, and of whom St. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Galatians, ii. 9, “ who seemed to be pillars.” The others were “ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed Him.”

BOANERGES, OR THE SONS OF THUNDER.

Our Lord distinguished his three favourite disciples in a peculiar manner, when he gave them their surnames. The name of a man betokens his character and personality. As each person has his own peculiar appearance, so each has his peculiar name, which distinguishes him from other men, and shows his personality as a human being, endued with reason and freedom of will. In every nation, and in every age, it has been customary to give a child a name, on its entrance into the world, whereby its parents and relations, and afterwards the wider circle of its fellow-citizens, may distinguish it. Among Christians the name is given at the same time as the rite of baptism is administered; and thus our name is calculated to remind us, not only of our value in the eyes of men, but of our moral dignity, as beings renewed and regenerated in this holy sacrament.

There are innumerable examples in the Holy Scriptures, of parents giving their children significant names, sometimes on account of the divine promises, or the peculiar circumstances under which they were born, sometimes on account of the hopes and expectations which they entertained regarding them. Thus the names which Eve gave her children had their peculiar meaning; the name of Moses, also, has its sig-

nification, "taken out of the water;" and Rachel, when she was on the point of death, called her son Benoni, that is to say, "son of my sorrow." But how much more important must it be, when God himself gives new names to those whom He has chosen to be the instruments of his grace. Thus God changed the name of Abram, which signifies great-father or arch-father, into Abraham, that is to say, father of a multitude or of many people,—a symbol of the promise, that through him the blessing should come unto all men. Joshua had formerly been called Hoshea; but when he was chosen to be the representative and successor of Moses, to lead the people into the promised land, he received the symbolical name of Joshua, which signifies hero or saviour, (the Greek of which is Jesus.) The patriarch Jacob received from God the additional name of Israel, by which also his descendants are designated to the present day. The name of the forerunner of our Lord, as well as that of the Messiah, to whom he bore testimony, was made known to their parents by a heavenly manifestation.

Jesus also gave some of his disciples appropriate names, when he constituted them his Apostles. Simon he named Peter, or, as in the Hebrew, Cephas, which signifies a rock, or a man of rock. It did not imply that he had been that already, but that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was to become the rock on which the Lord should build his church. The two sons of Zebedee also received a most expressive and powerful name; He called them Boanerges, that is to say, the sons of thunder. A mystery lies hid in this

appellation, of which there have been various interpretations.

Our Lord had certainly some far-seeing view, in giving the two brothers a name so full of meaning ; it probably referred to nothing external, but to the spiritual and internal character, the peculiar disposition and future usefulness of the two disciples. In the same manner, the name of Peter betokened the bold and strong character of Simon, and signified not what he was, but what he should afterwards become. The name of Boanerges, or sons of thunder, had a similar signification ; that the natural ardour and concealed fire in the hearts of the sons of Zebedee, unless it were purified and directed by the Spirit of God, might become like the destroying tempest ; whereas, if it were sanctified by the power of God, it would resemble the fructifying rain. Thus, in the Holy Scriptures, the word of God is frequently compared to thunder, its power to lightning, and its efficacy to rain and dew.

The gospel merely destroys sin and sinfulness in the heart of believers, and not the peculiarities of their mind and character, although it certainly purifies them from all that is bad and wicked. It does not, however, do this by constraint ; but gently, and by the cooperation of their own powers and talents. For this reason, we find in the Gospel that the minds and tempers of the disciples are variously represented, and their dispositions well contrasted. Can any characters be more unlike than those of Peter, John, and Paul ? Their writings also bear each their peculiar stamp ; for God gives one Spirit, but various talents and graces.

John and James were truly sons of thunder ; their souls were filled with a fire and power, which rendered them equally capable of a deep and silent love, and of a fierce and burning anger, raging like a storm between heaven and earth ; Peter, on the contrary, resembled a rock, firm and steadily fixed to the ground on which it stands. To prove this trait in the character of John, we shall select three of the most remarkable anecdotes regarding him, which the Evangelists have preserved to us.

The disciples having disputed among themselves which should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, “ Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Upon this John seems to have been touched in his heart, for he confessed, “ Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us ; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us.” John and the other disciples manifested here an untimely zeal, harshness, jealousy and envy towards a man who, being probably a follower of John, performed miracles through faith in the Lord and by the power of his name, and whose only difference from themselves consisted in not being one of the disciples. John himself appears to have been the originator of this action ; but it is beautiful to observe, how he now candidly confesses it to his Mas-

ter,—certainly impelled by a feeling of repentance, awakened in his bosom by the words of the Lord with regard to the child.

The next example we shall cite, is where our Lord was refused admittance into the Samaritan village, while journeying towards Jerusalem to keep the pass-over. “When his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

What fiery zeal, on the part of the sons of thunder! To destroy a village, with every one of its inhabitants, on account of its refusing to receive them! Yet love towards their Master can be discerned, even in the untimely ardour of the two disciples; although it was not a proper love, nor were they moved on this occasion by the spirit of the gentle and lowly Jesus. The two brothers, probably, never afterwards forgot the mild yet earnest reproof of their Lord; yet we perceive symptoms of a holy indignation against the contemners of Jesus and his truth, in John’s second Epistle, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that bid-deth him God-speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.”

The third instance we shall mention, is when James and John, with their mother Salome, entreated our Lord to exalt them above the other disciples, and permit them to sit in his future kingdom, the one at his right hand, the other at his left. Jesus, with fatherly wisdom and gentleness, showed them the folly of their wishes, and disclosed to them the mysterious future ; that He had not come in order to serve himself, but in order to serve, and give his life a ransom for many.

It is not to be denied, that the bold request of the sons of Zebedee and of their mother Salome, disclosed an ambition most inconsistent with the character of disciples of that lowly Jesus, who sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him. Yet this petition proves them to have been possessed of a soul which, contemning earthly things, strove after the highest and best gifts, and was ready and willing to sacrifice all in order to attain them. When Jesus said, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able."

This narrative proves in what a kind and benevolent relation our Lord stood towards his disciples ; although shining in the midst of them, as the sun amidst the planets, yet condescending to converse with them graciously and parentally. They, on the other hand, full of the deepest veneration, seeing and admiring his glory, yet with child-like confidence opening their hearts to him, enjoying the light of

his countenance, and concealing nothing from him, like sons without guile in the presence of a strict though tender Father. Well might our Lord address them in the words, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

JOHN, THE DISCIPLE WHOM THE LORD LOVED.

John, as we have seen, was by no means free from human faults and errors. And, why should we expect him to be so? The Son of man came to seek that which was lost, and to save sinners; and as his disciples stood in the nearest relation to him, they first experienced his saving power, as they were also the principal witnesses of his glory. Though our Lord called John to be his disciple, he had been born and conceived in sin like other men; and was far removed from that perfection of character which the disciples, after the ascension of Jesus Christ, were enabled to attain by means of the Holy Spirit. Certainly he does not except himself when he writes in his first Epistle, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And again, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." History proves that, like Peter, though perhaps in a different

manner, he had to strive against his own flesh and blood.

But whatever might be his errors and imperfections, there was a principle in his soul which was destined, in time, to overcome all human weakness ; and like the breath of life, penetrating through body, soul, and spirit, to purify and sanctify all. This principle was his heart-felt love for his Master, the leading spring of his existence. In reference to this love, and looking back to the period when Jesus walked amongst them, and they beheld his glory, John styles himself in his Gospel, "the disciple whom the Lord loved."

By this designation John did not wish to raise himself above the other disciples, nor to assume a superiority over them, as if Jesus had either loved them less or preferred him before them. Such an intention could not possibly have entered his soul, when he wrote such a glorious Gospel. No, it was only a child-like and humble, though joyful and thankful spirit, which led him to do so ; the same which prompted him to rest on the bosom of Jesus while they sat at meat, and to listen earnestly to his words. And, does not the latter circumstance imply a sort of child-like relation between the youngest of the Apostles and that beloved Master, of whom John alone, in describing his communion with the Father, uses the expression, "which is in the bosom of the Father?" John i. 18.

Some have also supposed, that his calling himself "the disciple whom the Lord loved," is in reality a

paraphrase of the name John, which literally signifies one favoured by the Lord. But, in short, had not John a right to call himself so, when he was the disciple who remained with Jesus on the cross till the last, and received from him the charge of his mother, as the dearest possession he could bestow? Was not this indeed a proof that He loved him?

The love which he felt towards his Master, and which his Master's love towards him had created and cherished, empowered and gave him courage to appropriate to himself this glorious title. And the more this love unfolded itself, the more was the soul of the beloved disciple purified by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and the more did it shine with a lustre like that of his heavenly Master.

Let us "love him, because He first loved us," is the spirit and soul which pervades all the writings of our Apostle. But far be it from us to characterise this love as a mere human attachment, formed to our Lord as a man full of gentleness, simplicity, and kindness. This was not the love felt by John, for it was manly, sincere, and ardent, nay, even upon some occasions fiery; as a flame of the Lord consuming that which is unholy; stronger than death, and faster than the grave; "which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it; and if a man would give all the substance of his house for this love, it would utterly be contemned." Our disciple proved it to be thus, while our Lord hung bleeding in shame and in agony upon the cross.

JOHN IN HIS INTERCOURSE WITH JESUS.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life ; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.....And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

With these words our Apostle commences his first Epistle to the Christians ; and we may well wonder at his strange style and frequent repetitions. But when the heart is full the mouth overfloweth, and the style becomes exuberant. The moment he begins to write, he seems to behold the form of him whom his soul loved ; and he is overpowered by the remembrance of his three years' intercourse with the Messiah, when he was deemed worthy of beholding “ his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” All this rises once more in vivid reality before the soul of the disciple whom Jesus loved ; and he seems to renew his youth while he describes what he has heard, seen, and his hands have handled of the Word of life. How inexpressibly blessed must this period have been to a heart and spirit like that of

John!—when, along with the other disciples, he constantly accompanied Jesus during his wanderings; when he was a witness of his preaching and miracles; and when the glory and majesty of his Lord and Master were daily unfolded to his wondering eyes. With noble simplicity he expresses himself in the words, “He dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.”

Yes, what a glorious time must this have been for our Apostle! Three years passed in the society of the incarnate Redeemer, of the Son of God walking upon earth in a human form. Each day seemed a year, so rich in word and miracle, such as ear had never heard and eye had never seen!

Although John in his Gospel describes but few of the actions of our Lord, in comparison of the other Evangelists; yet, it is generally supposed, he was present at most, if not at all the miracles performed by Jesus,—from the marriage at Cana of Galilee, down to the resurrection of Lazarus. For is it improbable that the disciple who was present at his beloved Master’s seizure, and who remained with him even to the end, should have left him even for a short period, and not accompanied him everywhere? The other Evangelists also seldom make mention in their writings of their fellow-disciples; quite as seldom as John names and speaks of himself in his own Gospel. Little even of that which he said on various occasions is recorded; and in this we see his character and disposition; for we take it for granted that he spoke but little, and that seldom. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;” but there is also a fulness of the

heart in which the mouth is silent. Thus it might be with John ; deep, silent admiration and love filled his soul in the contemplation of him on whom his whole existence depended. For the more calmly a rivulet flows, the more clearly are the heavens and the flowers on its brink depicted in its watery mirror ;—so it was with the soul of the disciple. It was otherwise with Simon Peter, who had always words and the boldest language at command, sometimes even at improper times. At Capernaum, when many of the disciples went back, and walked no more with Jesus ; and when He turned to the twelve, and said, “ Will ye also go away ? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” John, however, was silent, but preserved in his heart those precious words which Peter had spoken, and afterwards wrote them down in his Gospel.

It is interesting to observe how the sacred history delineates each individual, according to his peculiar fashion and character, describing him exactly as he lived and acted. By its very simplicity, it attains the highest object of history, namely, that of resembling a faithful mirror.

JOHN, THE CONFIDENTIAL FRIEND OF OUR LORD.

The Gospel history shows us the various human relations in which the Lord Jesus manifested himself, or as Paul writes in the Epistle to the Philippians, that He was "found in fashion as a man," "and was made in the likeness of men." Thus He took delight in the varied forms of nature, in plants and trees, in the ears of corn, and the fruitful seed, in the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field ; and employed them all, by means of parables, to bear witness to his truth, and to illustrate the mysteries of his glory. He also showed peculiar love for little children, took them in his arms and blessed them, and made use of them in his sermons as living examples to explain his doctrine. At the marriage in Cana of Galilee, He rejoiced with the joyful guests, and increased their pleasure, while He manifested his glory. In the hospitable house at Bethany, He participated in the happiness of the family circle : and He disdained no more to enter the dwelling of a despised publican, than to sit as an invited guest at the feasts of the chief of the Pharisees. But particularly in the circle of his disciples, He seemed the father of a family surrounded by his children ; and attending to the peculiarities in the character of each, and bringing them all up in wisdom and love. The Evangelists have described this in pious simplicity ; and the union of

the divine and the human in the character of our Saviour, shines forth as distinctly from their writings as though it were reflected in a calm lake.

Our Lord now chose from amongst the twelve three confidential disciples, namely, Simon Peter, and the two brothers, James and John. They were hereby rendered superior to the others; perhaps on account of their riper understandings, or of some peculiarity in their very different characters, which might distinguish them from the remaining nine; at all events, our Saviour in electing them must have had far-seeing views into the future. Peter was the eldest of the apostles, and had often been addressed by our Lord as their representative; he generally took the lead, and at the feast of Pentecost preached to the multitude. John, the youngest of all, was distinguished by the fervour and silent depth of his character. James seems to have been something between the two, resembling Peter in zeal and fire of disposition, and his brother in devotedness and fervour. He was the first among the apostles who sealed the truth with his blood; for Herod Agrippa caused him to be beheaded in Jerusalem, at the instigation of the Jews.

These three stood in the closest relation to our Lord, during his pilgrimage on earth. All the disciples regarded him as their illuminating Sun; but these three, in particular, seemed to be influenced by the light which proceeded from him, and in their lives reflected the image of their Master. For this reason He chose them to be his confidential friends; probably, also, with reference to the government of

the future Christian community ; which the disciples, as planets revolving round the sun, at that moment represented.

THE THREE APOSTLES CHOSEN BY OUR LORD TO
WITNESS HIS GLORY.

There are three instances mentioned in the Gospels in which Jesus chose Peter, James, and John to be the witnesses of His glory. The first was the raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead. Although the miracles of our Lord, taken merely as proofs of his divine power and character, are all equal, and no one is greater than another ; yet in the eyes of men they are not so : and curing the blind, or those sick of the palsy, is not so remarkable as raising a man from the dead. Perhaps because death is in itself so mysterious and terrible, being utter annihilation in appearance, against which no human power can avail ; and because such an action, on the part of our Lord, proved him to be the conqueror of what is termed in Corinthians “the last enemy.” Perhaps, also, because the awakening from their sleep of those who are in their graves is closely connected with that great judgment which is to be the last action of God in his government of the world. Taking it in this view, we may say, that

raising from the dead is a greater and more important miracle than any other performed by our Lord Jesus. He who can overcome death must, according to human ideas, be able to overcome all things.

The daughter of Jairus being restored to life, was the first miracle of the kind performed by Jesus Christ; it was afterwards followed by two others, that of the young man at Nain, and of Lazarus of Bethany. After the sorrowful Jairus had petitioned our Lord to come to the help of his sick daughter, they received the intelligence when on the road towards his house, that the maiden was dead. Jesus then turned to him, and said, "Be not afraid, only believe." On their arrival at the mansion, suffering no one to follow him save the three favoured disciples, Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the damsel; He said unto the mourners, "Why make ye this ado and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." He then stepped towards the corpse, and in heavenly accents uttered the words, "Tabitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." And immediately the damsel arose, and walked, and He gave her back to her parents.

John, who was present along with Peter and James, does not relate this occurrence in his Gospel; but, on the other hand, he has narrated in the most circumstantial manner the resurrection of Lazarus, which is not to be found in the writings of the other Evangelists. If it should be asked, why the latter do not mention it, when all the four have related together many facts far less important. I should answer, that

a feeling of propriety probably induced them to leave the description of this miracle, and the words of Jesus connected with it, to that disciple whom the Lord loved, and who probably on this occasion stood nearest him. The narration of this miracle distinguishes John from the other Evangelists, for it is a bright testimony of the glory of the only Son of the Father, who is the resurrection and the life; it preceded the deep humiliation and suffering of Jesus, imbibbered against him the tools of hell, and hastened the execution of their projects; in short, it was the deed, above all others, which, before this night of darkness commenced, manifested the glory of the Prince of Life.

Another occasion on which the three chosen disciples only were present, was the glorification of our Lord upon the holy mountain;—when “He was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;” when Moses and Elias came and conversed with him; when a voice was heard out of the bright cloud which overshadowed them, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” It is almost to be wondered at, that John does not allude in his Gospel, by a single word, to this glorious manifestation. I am of opinion, however, that this peculiar silence on the part of our Apostle proceeded from a degree of delicacy, which induced him merely to relate those occurrences in the life of Jesus which are historical and circumstantial, and leave the rest to be mentioned by the other sacred writers; particularly

those events in which our Lord appears more as a passive agent than speaking and acting. To this class belong the transfiguration; the history of our Lord's baptism, which John repeats from the mouth of the Baptist; the temptation; and that which most nearly resembles the transfiguration, namely, the ascent of Jesus into heaven. The transfiguration upon the holy mountain was also a type, though perhaps but a feeble one, of that future and heavenly glory, into which our Lord had entered when our Apostle wrote his Gospel. Certainly John was thinking upon what had passed on the mount, when he wrote the words, "And dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.)" John had been in the Island of Patmos before he wrote his Gospel, and beheld, through the Spirit, not only future times, but the Lord of glory himself; why, then, should he not yield to the other Evangelists the honour of describing the transfiguration upon the mountain, which was but the shadow of those great things which he himself had seen? The four Evangelists, however, in composing their Gospels, did not make an agreement as to what each should write; they were led by their feelings to suit them to the various necessities of those to whom they were addressed; and at the same time, were enabled by the Spirit of God to write them with such wonderful simplicity and uniformity, that we may even term them miraculous.

The third occasion on which Jesus selected the three disciples to accompany him, was during his suffering in the garden of Gethsemane. They who

had beheld his transfiguration on the mountain were now to be the only witnesses of His deep humiliation in the dark valley of the shadow of death, where He was to receive that cup which the inexplicable counsel of his Father had appointed him to drink. The Lord himself compares his sorrows to a cup, and thereby expresses that all the sufferings which his soul was to undergo were now at hand ; it was as if a vessel had been filled, out of which he was compelled to drink. Indeed, our Lord had already asked his disciples, " Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of ? " The Scriptures, in order to express an overflowing quantity, often use the term " cup ; "—for instance, " cup of joy," " of salvation," " of anger," " of suffering," " of sorrow," &c. In the latter case, it was a cup of gall and bitterness which Jesus beheld in spirit,—a symbol of his deepest humiliation, and of that fearful death which he as the Lamb of God was to suffer, for the sins and for the salvation of the world.

John does not mention in his Gospel that severe and mysterious passion, of which he was a spectator ; he merely alludes to the garden, and the path which led to it over the brook Cedron ; the same which David crossed, accompanied by his weeping friends when he fled from his son Absalom. Our Evangelist is silent respecting the mysterious conflict of the Son of man during the dark midnight hour ; perhaps because his spirit failed when he attempted to express in word and writing what he had witnessed. There is a silence which is sacred ; and to whom was it more suitable than to the disciple who leaned on the bosom of our

Lord? John has left the other Evangelists to describe this severe conflict, which was the last temptation of the prince of darkness, as well as the first temptation in the wilderness of Judea. On the other hand, he alone has preserved to us the high-priest-like prayer which Jesus uttered ; and thereby shown us the inexpressible greatness of the suffering Redeemer, and the love wherewith he loveth his own even unto the end.



JOHN A WITNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS.

We are now come to that part of our history which describes the presence of our Apostle, and the part which he took, during the sufferings of our Lord. As he had hitherto been constantly at the side of the Son of David, so he must also remain there until the end.

Peter and John, the eldest and the youngest of the disciples, were those whom Jesus sent before him to Jerusalem, in order to prepare the feast of the pass-over. Our Lord conferred on them a great distinction in thus assigning them an active part in preparing for an institution, which, as a memorial of his love and of the sacrifice of himself, was to be of the highest importance to all faithful believers even until the end of the world. The Lord gave them for a sign, that on

their entrance into Jerusalem they would meet a man bearing a pitcher of water ; him they were to follow into whatever house he entered, and say to the good-man, " The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished ; there make ready." In the style of the commission which the two messengers received, there seems a sort of intimation that our Lord was about to add something new, of an important and mysterious nature, to the solemnization of the paschal feast. This was even implied by the choice of the two disciples.

John relates little concerning the last passover which Jesus held with his disciples, and does not even allude to the institution of the Lord's supper. This need not astonish us when we consider that John wrote his Gospel for advanced Christians, who long had enjoyed, and viewed the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist as institutions appointed by God. It is for this reason also, that John nowhere refers to the institution of baptism. There is another view, besides, which we must take ; the historical account of those holy institutions, and the appointment of outward signs of the covenant, seem by no means so suitable to the spirit of John's Gospel as those other subjects which were constantly present before his soul, namely, the glory of the Lord Jesus, and of that other Comforter whom he promised to send to his disciples.

On the other hand, John alone has transmitted to us the beautiful account of the washing of the dis-

ciples' feet. One might almost imagine that the other Evangelists had silently yielded to him the honour of describing this act of our Lord, or, perhaps, expressly enjoined it. It is a history from the very heart of Jesus; and therefore most particularly belonged to that disciple who leaned on his bosom. It begins with the beautiful words, "When Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." John then interrupts himself; but afterwards continues, "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poured water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." He washed all, one after another, until He came to Peter, who showed his self-sufficient humility by striving against him, not even omitting the traitor Judas, for he washed his feet also, and dried them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

During the feast, John, like another Benjamin, lay on the bosom of Jesus; and Peter, beckoning to him, made signs that he should ask his Master of whom He spake, when He said that one of them should betray him. Jesus then pointed out to him Judas Iscariot, by giving him the sop of bread which he dipped in the dish; thus giving the beloved disciple a proof

of his confidence, which he himself has related in the end of his Gospel.

John takes the same opportunity of relating the presumptuous self-confidence of Peter, and the prophecy of our Lord concerning his three-fold denial; as if none of the Evangelists dared to omit this testimony of human weakness to the divine foreknowledge of Jesus; for they have all described in their writings both the self-reliance, and the fall of this apostle.

We shall not now enlarge on the precious words uttered by our Lord during these mysterious days, passed among his disciples immediately preceding his death: John has preserved them, particularly the prayer of Jesus in his character of High Priest. We shall only say, that the beloved disciple was chosen by Jesus, and endued with the fulness of his Spirit, that he might preserve his last words as a precious treasure, for the benefit of every Christian; and in what a blessing are we hereby enabled to participate!



JOHN IN GETHSEMANE, AND ON GOLGOTHA.

They now passed over the brook Cedron into the garden of Gethsemane; and here began our Lord's passion, of which John, and the two other chosen apostles, were the nearest witnesses. As we have al-

ready seen, he is silent concerning this mysterious and inexplicable circumstance, which the other Evangelists have related so minutely; perhaps, because they were not eye-witnesses of it. It was a terrible and awful hour, when, as Paul says, the eternal High Priest "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death." The Gospel which John wrote is principally a testimony to that glory of Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth, which he himself had seen; while the other Evangelists seem to follow the thread of history; and their Gospels merit this praise, that in them the hand of man is scarcely discernible. In John's, on the contrary, we see everywhere the character of the man appearing, and the heart of the disciple may be discerned throughout. He must, however, finish the history of the sufferings of Jesus, and that in his own peculiar manner; so that, through the darkness of hell and death, the light and life of the Lamb of God may shine forth.

John, like his companions Peter and James, was overpowered by fatigue and sleep during the suffering of his beloved Master; and to him, along with them, was addressed the reproof, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" as well as the words of excusing love, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." In him also the words of prophecy were fulfilled, "They shall smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered;" for he fled with the other disciples when Jesus was taken prisoner, and led away bound.

But when the first terror was over, John and Peter followed the multitude from afar, even to the palace of the high priest. John, who was acquainted with the high priest, went into the inner-court of the palace; but Peter had remained without, until his companion had persuaded the keeper of the gate to admit him. Here is now related the three-fold denial of Peter, after which he went out deeply humbled, and wept bitterly. John, in comparison with the other Evangelists, relates this event with peculiar forbearance. Errors ought to have no place in the history of our Lord's sufferings; and this is only mentioned because Jesus had prophesied it, and because it is intimately connected with his history. John relates it in the most simple manner; and the crowing of the cock, which had been foretold, ends the recital with the words, "And immediately the cock crew." The Evangelist concludes by announcing the break of day, and the dawn of the morning-star, in the heart of his humbled brother. It is as if he felt there was no need to allude to Peter's bitter and tearful repentance.

John remained with his beloved Master during all the terrible circumstances which took place. He accompanied him from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, and from Herod again to Pilate; beheld him clad in the purple robe with the crown of thorns upon his head; and followed him along the fearful path which led to the death of a malefactor. Thus we find him at last under the cross upon mount Calvary!

The love which animated the heart of the beloved disciple was of wonderful constancy and fervour, for

it endured and suffered all things. Near to John stood the mother of Jesus, who now experienced the words of Simeon, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Beside her, though at a greater distance, stood the other women who had accompanied and ministered to Jesus during his pilgrimage.

Their love appears almost to equal that of the sorrowing mother, who, in this fearful hour, cannot bear to leave her son ; for the ties which bind them together are now far stronger than ever. Jesus acknowledged the faithfulness of his disciple, and even on the cross rewarded it in the most touching and expressive manner. "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 !" Thus, while intrusting the blessed Virgin to the care of his disciple, He enjoined upon him the tenderest of all human relations, that of a son towards his mother. Could John have received a more sacred possession, a better consolation, or a stronger proof of his Master's love ?

"And from that hour," writes he himself, "that disciple took her unto his own home," from the moment when he received the command of the Lord Jesus, and from the beginning of the three hours of darkness during which our Lord in silence hung upon the cross. In all probability, the other women accompanied the mother of Jesus ; and John afterwards returned to Golgotha.

An old tradition states, that John maintained the

Virgin in his house at Jerusalem until her death, which took place fifteen years afterwards ; and we can well imagine with how much tenderness and love.

The Gospel of John relates nothing more concerning the mother of our Lord ; the other Evangelists also are henceforward silent, with the exception of Luke, who, in his Acts of the Apostles, mentions her once as joining with the disciples in prayer and supplication. This is the last time that her name is mentioned in the New Testament ; and it is strange that such a silence is maintained on the subsequent history of the holiest among women. Her holiness, however, did not proceed from herself, but from him whose name is “ called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”



JOHN AT THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF JESUS.

Let us now picture to ourselves the beloved disciple standing immoveable under the cross of the Redeemer ; the two bleeding criminals on either side ; and our Lord hanging in the midst. Before him are the rude heathen soldiery ; and round about are multitudes of people of every class, mocking and reviling ; among the rest the exasperated, though now triumphant priests and scribes. With what feelings of indignation and sorrow do the eyes of John now rest

upon him whom his soul loved, and whose glory he had beheld! He now watches him as he dies—He who had said, “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 up again”—He who had so shortly before proved himself to be the resurrection and the life, and the Prince of Life. John received the last words of his mouth, and then beheld him bow his head and give up the ghost. In his Gospel he has preserved his Master’s last words, “It is finished;” but he has not written down the prayer of humanity, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

When the corpse was hanging pale and bloody on the cross, John remained by its side, unheeding the noise of the earthquake or the rending of the rocks asunder. With what anguish he must have watched the soldiers, while they brake the legs of the two malefactors! And with what joy does he now relate, “But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not his legs.” “For these things were done,” he continues, “that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.” Another circumstance took place which appears to him of deep importance; one of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus with a spear, upon which there ran out blood and water: John then continues, “And he that saw it bare record, and his record his true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.” All that took place in the history

of our Lord had, in the eyes of our Apostle, a deep and mysterious meaning; and this circumstance not the least so, for the words in his first Epistle evidently refer to it, "And there are three that bear witness in earth; the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." The Spirit is what is formed in man regenerated through the preaching of the gospel, the water is the sacrament of baptism, and the blood that of the Lord's supper. John also applies another prophecy to this circumstance, "They shall look on him whom they pierced."

When Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who had hitherto in secret been worshippers and followers of our Lord, took down the body from the cross, and having embalmed it, buried it in the sepulchre cut in the rock in which never man had been laid; John, without doubt, was present, and assisted them. One may see from his circumstantial narration, that this last honour which they showed to their beloved Master at his death was well pleasing to the heart of his favourite disciple. It was the sacrifice of reverence and of love, which the circumstances of the most shameful death had not weakened, but, on the contrary, had increased.

And how joyfully could John now name him, whom the other Evangelists neglected to mention,—Nicodemus, as a decided believer, who no longer was ashamed to confess his Lord!

JOHN AT THE RESURRECTION.

While Jesus was resting in the grave, the disciples, and the women who had followed him, were like sheep that had lost their shepherd. With what anguish their hearts must have been torn, when they no longer beheld that beloved Master in the midst of them, whose intercourse they had enjoyed for three whole years! Their grief and sorrow were so much the greater, for they had been connected with him in the closest manner; He was the vine, they were the branches; they had received from him their spiritual and renewed life, and had constantly been nourished and instructed by him. Well might they now be termed orphans, and well might they now mourn.

Certainly our Lord Jesus, when he prophesied beforehand of the sufferings he should undergo, had told them also that he should rise again from the dead on the third day. But the incomprehensible and astounding nature of those events which had recently taken place, might partly have extinguished their remembrance of it; and perhaps, also, they classed the prophecy concerning the resurrection on the third day among the words of our Lord which they were not to take in their literal sense, because they shadowed forth the future; or they said in their hearts, like Martha, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection

at the last day," John xi. 24. In short, they neither thought nor believed that He would rise again now in a bodily form. Why should they not then mourn? Even Thomas, who was one of the twelve, fell into a state of doubt and despair, separating himself for several days from the rest of the disciples.

The holy Scriptures unreservedly describe the state of mind in which the disciples were, and in no way conceal their timidity and fear of the Jews, that is to say, of the supreme council, who had by their artifices effected the death of Jesus. Can we wonder at this, on the part of the followers of our Lord? Had they not lost in their blessed Master the support of their existence, the object of their hope; and must not the cause of Christ, which in their eyes was indissolubly connected with his human existence, now appear completely hopeless? Thus the wicked violence and oppressive power of those men who had slain Jesus now hovered like a dark thunder-cloud over their souls, and filled the dispirited disciples with fear and trembling. As in times of dread and danger, when the earthquake shakes human dwellings, and the rafters of the houses crack, even after tranquillity is restored, timid man continues to fear, and the slightest sound fills him with terror. So it was with the disciples; although their love towards him who had fallen asleep was in no degree diminished.

As soon as the Sabbath was over, the pious women, who had accompanied and ministered to the wants of our Lord and his disciples, prepared to show the last tokens of their love and veneration towards his dead

body. Thus the days had passed ; it had been evening and morning, the evening had come again, and now the third day was dawning ; and they still mourned and feared on account of the Jews.

Lo! then came Mary Magdalene, full of sorrow and anguish, to Simon Peter and John, and said unto them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." At break of day she had gone out of Jerusalem, along with the other women, to anoint the dead body ; but having hastened before them, found the grave open and empty ; and deeply grieved by the idea that the beloved corpse, which she still named "the Lord," had been taken away, she had run back with the tidings to the two disciples. These hastened now to Joseph's garden ; "they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." Thus the Gospel history mentions the smallest traits in the lives of the saints ; the formerly rash and precipitate Peter now remained behind, as if he had been carrying a burden ; and certainly his heart must have been heavy, for he had denied his Lord.

John came first to the grave ; he remained standing before it, looked in and beheld the linen, the linen clothes without the body ; but he did not go in. This he himself describes, though he does not mention the feelings of his heart. Peter came after him, and, without thinking, entered the sepulchre ; he saw the linen clothes, which had bound the body of Jesus, lying in order, and the napkin, which had been about

his head, wrapped in a place by itself. This did not appear like a robbery. When Peter had described to John the appearance of the things, he who had arrived first at the sepulchre went in, and "saw and believed." John writes this himself, and adds, "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." Thus John began to believe in the resurrection of the Lord; faith awoke in his heart, and the expressions of Jesus with regard to it now recurred to him, and suddenly became clear. John appears, according to his usual silent custom, to have concealed within his own breast his dawning faith; and concludes his narration with the words, "Then the disciples went away again unto their own home."

Our Lord soon after this manifested himself to all his disciples, and, as Luke relates in his Acts of the Apostles, "shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." It is very evident that John was present at those manifestations of his risen Master, as he had formerly been at his sufferings; but it must have been with deeper, and, at the same time, with more exalted feelings. Jesus was the same as formerly, but now He had overcome death; humanly, but yet in a superhuman manner, he walked in the midst of his disciples; still a pilgrim upon earth, He ate and drank with his followers, shewed them his wounds, and the marks of the nails on his hands, and yet, what splendour and glory shone around him!

The Evangelists are silent here, as elsewhere, concerning his personal appearance ; but how often, during the forty days, must the heart of the beloved disciple have burned within him, when he beheld the countenance, and listened to the words, of his beloved Master ! And yet he is silent ! He mentions himself, however, twice after this, in the 21st chapter of his Gospel, which seems to be a sort of appendix, added after the rest had been completed.

That the apostle had at first intended to close his Gospel with the 20th chapter, is evident from its concluding words, “ And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book ; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.” What induced him at a later period to add the supplement contained in the 21st chapter, for want of sufficient information, we cannot explain. That Gospel which the ancient Fathers of the church have in a peculiar manner designated as the spiritual one, combines, with wonderful depth of meaning, a child-like simplicity of recital, whereby the mind and temper of its holy writer everywhere shines forth. This we can more peculiarly discern in the supplement to his Gospel, in which he and Simon Peter, in conjunction with our Lord, appear to be the chief actors.

Peter and John were bound together by the ties of love ; and at the time the latter wrote the supplement to his Gospel, it is probable the former had al-

ready glorified the Lord by the manner of his death. John now remembered that occurrence at Gennesareth, in which Peter was so deeply concerned. He had already related his fall, but not his repentance and tears ; and for this reason he now describes his reconciliation with the Lord. The touching recital in the 21st chapter may be compared to a monument erected by one Apostle in memory of another. It is also a full acknowledgment of the love entertained by Peter towards our Lord, which was now sanctified and strengthened by his deep humiliation, and which, according to his Master's prophecy, he was to ratify by his death.

The history is as follows : The first manifestation of Jesus after his resurrection, took place in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood ; after which the disciples, according to his command, went to Galilee, near the sea of Gennesareth. Here they awaited further disclosures from their heavenly Master. One evening, as they sat together, Peter who, from temperament, could not long remain inactive, said, " I go a fishing ;" the other disciples replied, " We also go with thee." In this manner, they returned probably for the last time to their early occupation. They fished during the whole night, but caught nothing. In the twilight of the morning, they beheld a man at a distance standing on the bank ; it was Jesus, but they did not recognise him. The unknown one called to them, " Children, have ye any meat ?" that is to say, fish ; which, next to bread, is the most general food in the East. They replied, " No ;" upon which the unknown

one advised them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship ; they did so, and caught such a multitude of fishes that they had great difficulty in pulling them in again. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, " It is the Lord ;" and Peter, who was only half-clad, hastily threw on his fisher's coat, and girding himself, flung himself into the sea, and swam across, the other disciples following him in the ship with the heavy laden net. On the land they found a fire of coals, fish laid thereon, and bread. This was the meal prepared for them by our Lord ; He now said to them, " Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Peter stepped into the vessel, and, along with the others, brought the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty-three. The words of John are, " And for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." At that time they lived in a world of miracles.

Jesus now summoned them to the simple meal which He had prepared, saying unto them, " Come and dine." He then took of the bread, and the fish, and gave it unto them ; but no one durst ask him, " Who art thou ?" knowing that it was the Lord. How well our Apostle knows how to express the deepest meaning in the most child-like language ! The disciples knew that He was their Master, but no one had courage to ask him ; they knew that He was the same Jesus who had formerly walked in the midst of them ; and yet that he was different, for since that time He had risen from the dead. A reverential awe, arising from being in the presence of a superior being,

prevented them addressing him as formerly. Thus the Evangelist describes, in simple words, the impression which our Lord made upon them after his resurrection.

The disciples receive their meal from the hands of their Lord, and enjoy it in silence and reverence, as if it were a holy supper; for, like the last supper, it was full of the deepest signification to the apostles. How could any thing which was done by the Lord of heaven, in his human form, and after his resurrection, fail to be of mighty importance? Had not all which He had done upon earth, a divine signification? His miraculous cures, and raising men from the dead, were not merely acts of compassionate love, but were visible testimonies of his power to free mankind from the bonds of sin and of death.

Thus this last meal of which our Lord, now risen from the grave, partook along with his future messengers of peace, was a symbol, pledge, and seal, both of their fellowship with him, and of the happy future which he had promised them. This wonderful draught of fishes was a counterpart to the former fishing upon the same sea, at which all who had been present were seized with terror, and Peter, falling at the feet of Jesus, had cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" when Jesus had said to the newly chosen disciple, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men;" and when, after having brought their ships to land, they had forsaken all, and followed him.

The last fishing had a reference to the sending forth

of the disciples into the world, where, without the visible agency of their Lord, they were to catch men. It took place at his word, and nearly in the same manner as the first, though on this occasion he remained at a distance, and they did not immediately recognise him. It was only from the miracle which followed that they discovered him, whose power had so blessed their labours, to be Jesus; for they had toiled during the whole night, and had taken nothing. He now led them to the meal which he had prepared for them; this and the miraculous draught of fishes, were as much as to say, "Without me ye can do nothing; but be comforted, for I come at the hour when ye require me; ere you imagine it, I am there, and fill your nets. The world will henceforward be the great sea in which you will catch men, of every degree, for the kingdom of heaven. Do not despair though you toil during the whole night in vain; but let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord; and when He cometh, verily I say unto you, that He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

Thus the simple history of this manifestation of our Lord has a deep and mysterious meaning, referring to the efficacy of the apostles in their calling, to the blessing from above, and to that heavenly marriage-feast, after their labours are finished, of which Jesus had so often spoken to them. The actions of our Lord are humble and simple, like his character, preaching

and parables ; but, at the same time, are, like them, full of divine signification.

Now commences the conversation of Jesus with Simon Peter ; we may regard it as a court of judgment held by our Lord over his disciple, out of which the latter comes forth justified. Our Lord calls him Simon son of Jonas, which is the name he bore before he became an apostle, and before he received the surname of Peter. Three times he asks him, " Lovest thou me ? " because three times he had denied Him. He even asks him more pointedly, and referring to the other disciples, " Lovest thou me more than these ? " for Peter had said unto him, " Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. " Such a humiliation of the fallen disciple by the Lord himself whom he had denied, was necessary in order to re-establish him in the faith, and confirm him for ever in that covenant which he had violated.

This was done with earnestness, but with wonderful mercy and lenity. The deeply abased Peter had now ample opportunity to pour out the feelings of his heart, and acknowledge his love to his Master ; and He, the searcher of hearts, graciously received this acknowledgment, and confirmed the renewed covenant of love by the commandment, thrice repeated, " Feed my lambs, feed my sheep ; " at the same time adding the prophecy by what death Peter should glorify God. " When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. "

Peter, whose heart had now been lightened of its

burden by his reconciliation with his Master, and who had now regained his former boldness, was induced by the prophecy of Jesus to ask the question regarding John, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Upon which he received the evasive answer, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

This reply of our Lord spread itself afterwards among the Christians who believed, that Jesus had said that John should not die, but remain till the return of the Lord to judgment, when his body should be changed. John himself, in the childlike simplicity of his heart, contradicts this opinion, when, repeating the words of our Lord, he writes, "Yet Jesus said not unto him he shall not die, but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" This was uttered in contradistinction to the prophecy concerning Peter, "Another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not;" the word another, signifying an enemy of the gospel. John, on the contrary, was not to die the death of a martyr. And so it happened,—he died a gentle and natural death; for his exit from this world was peaceful, like his actions and character.

JOHN IN JERUSALEM AFTER THE ASCENSION
OF OUR LORD.

We can easily imagine that our Lord spoke much during the forty days succeeding his resurrection to his beloved disciple, of which nothing has been preserved. As Luke relates in his Acts of the Apostles, during this time he gave them commands and promises, instructing them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Probably John had already heard much of this in those conversations which Jesus held with his disciples during the short period before his sufferings, when he withdrew himself from the world into the immediate circle of his faithful followers. What glorious, and at times prophetic words, are contained in John's Gospel, after the 13th chapter! And what he says, at the conclusion of his history, regarding the signs and wonders which Jesus did, but which he has not written in his book, might well be applied to the words of the Saviour also. The Apostle has transmitted to us as much of the words of our Lord as we require, in order to acknowledge and believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name." And, in fact, in every single chapter of this precious Gospel we have so rich a treasure, that we may well wonder at the splendour of the whole.

It is self-evident that John was a witness of our Lord's ascent into heaven, and was present at all that was done during the ten days at Jerusalem, and on the feast of Pentecost; although he himself has not mentioned it. With respect to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, he is distinguished from the other Evangelists as the one who has preserved most of the prophecies of our Lord concerning it, and who has spoken most of the offices and future efficacy of the Comforter, the invisible representative of his glorified Lord and Master. How gladly should we have read the description of that disciple's joy whom Jesus loved, when the fulness of the Spirit descended upon him, and the power of the Highest streams down upon his soul. This, however, is not granted to us; and in the history of that day in which the baptism of the Holy Ghost took place, the name of John is not even mentioned.

As far as we can learn, John remained in Jerusalem after the feast of Pentecost, and became a witness of the mighty deeds of God which took place. He had a small dwelling here, where he watched over the mother of Jesus with faithful love, until the day of her death, which took place fifteen years after that of her son.

The next time we read of our Apostle is in the beautiful history when he and Peter go to the temple to pray at the time of the evening sacrifice, where they meet the lame man asking for alms. "Look upon us," said Peter, who, along with John, fixed his eyes upon him. He did so, expecting to receive alms; when Peter, reading his thoughts, said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give

in thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up ; and immediately his feet and ancle-bones received strength. And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God." Thus, Luke detailed the circumstance in his Acts of the Apostles. It made a powerful impression upon the astonished people, who now crowded round the apostles. Peter then stepped forward, and, addressing them, preached Jesus Christ the crucified and risen Lord, the way, the truth, and the life. The consequence was, that many of those that heard the word, believed, and the Christian community increased to five thousand souls. But the enemies of truth, the high priests and scribes, who had slain the Lord of glory, could not rest in quiet, but made the two apostles be seized, and, as it was evening, put them in prison until the next day. Accordingly, on the morrow, they were led before the high council to receive their sentence. Peter, now filled with the Holy Ghost, began to speak, and preached to the high priests and rulers of the people Jesus of Nazareth, whom God hath raised from the dead. In his name, and by his power, the sick man had been made whole ; for in none other is salvation to be found, and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved. The rulers were astonished when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, for they knew they were unlearned and ignorant men, and knew also they had been with Jesus. They now looked at the

man who had been made whole, who was standing before them ; but they could say nothing against it. The report of the miracle had already spread through all Jerusalem ; so they closed their judgment with threats, and the command that henceforth they should not speak of Jesus to the people, and nowhere teach or preach in his name. But Peter and John, the history continues, answered and said unto them, " Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye ; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

This is the first occasion on which John appears after the feast of Pentecost, that morning of the new creation dawning on man ; and this, as he so often had done before, in the company of Peter. *Together*, thus writes the sacred historian, they were the instruments of the miraculous cure of the lame man ; *together*, they preached to the people the gospel of Jesus, the crucified one ; and *together*, they underwent the same punishment. Peter, however, is represented as the chief speaker and actor. In this, also, we see the silent and gentle temperament of John, who, as the youngest of the apostles in relation to the eldest, regarded Peter as a father ; on every occasion gave him the precedence, as the apostle most distinguished by our Lord ; and as he seems to have had eloquence at command, always permitted him to speak. It is extremely probable that Jesus himself, who recommended his mother to the care of John, who was the most childlike of the disciples, may also have recommended

him to the care of Peter ; for as he was the disciple whom the Lord loved, he must have been most accustomed to receive love. Thus we see the most silent of the apostles bound in the closest ties to the most active and eloquent ; and as John is seldom mentioned in the Evangelical histories, it is the same way at the commencement of his apostolic office. There lies, if we may so express it, a holy mystery, a shadowy veil over the disciple beloved by our Lord, like that which envelops Lazarus raised from the grave, of whom it is only said, that Jesus loved him. Even over the writings which John has left behind him, there is a faint cloud in which he envelops and conceals himself. As he felt deeply, and loved ardently ; so his spiritual ear seems on that account more open to receive and to hear spiritual things. It was for this reason that, in the solitary island of Patmos, our Lord revealed to him distant futurity, and conferred on our Apostle the honour of being the last of the prophets. Who is it that is able to follow the depths of such a spirit, and of such a heart ?

JOHN UNDERGOING PERSECUTION IN JERUSALEM,
ALONG WITH THE OTHER APOSTLES.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out at the feast of Pentecost, the first Christian community was the beginning and type of the subsequent Christian church upon earth. Thus the saying of the prophet was fulfilled, that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;" and also, the expression of Jesus to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, "Salvation is of the Jews." Therefore the Lord had commanded the disciples, that they should commence the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem, and afterwards be witnesses unto him in Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. This took place amidst great struggles and persecutions; and the apostles were the first who were destined to drink the same cup as Jesus drank, and be baptized with his baptism. As the number of the faithful was daily increased by the preaching and miracles of the apostles, they were seized, by command of the high council, and put into prison. But the angel of the Lord came by night, opened the prison-doors, and let them go forth; upon which they once more began to teach and preach the words of life. They were now summoned before the council, scourged, and commanded to preach no more in the name of Jesus. They then,

as Luke relates in his Acts of the Apostles, “departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name; and daily, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” It was a glorious time for Zion; for it seemed as if the tree was now about to bud, and bring forth fruit. But, alas! it did not happen.

The enemies of truth were hereby still more embittered, and the Lord, in the person of his saints, was still more hotly persecuted. Stephen, a faithful witness of the gospel, was torn from the council-chamber, and cruelly stoned by the raging populace; thus being the first martyr who sealed the truth of the Christian religion with his blood. As the rage of wild beasts increases after they have tasted blood, so the persecution now became more violent; and many Christians being constrained to leave the inimical city, took refuge in Judea and Samaria, carrying the seed of the gospel into those desert lands, where it sprung up and bare much fruit.

The conversion of the Samaritans was the commencement and preparation for casting down the wall which had hitherto separated the Jews from the Gentiles. In the kingdom of grace, as well as in the kingdom of nature, every development takes place by degrees, and generally in the midst of struggles and tempests. Thus it happened with the progress of the kingdom of heaven, through the persecutions in Jerusalem. Samaria was like the entrance through which the new faith was received by the Gentiles;

and the Samaritans, who, on account of their self-chosen worship, had been regarded as idolaters by the people of God, were the first-fruits of the heathen.

The apostles remained in Jerusalem, protected by the Lord, who had commanded them to abide here and take care of his flock, waiting till He should call them to a distance. Samaria was assigned as their first field of labour; for, when the gospel had taken root here, Peter and John were sent by the rest of the apostles to lay their hands upon those Samaritans who had been converted and baptized by Philip; in order that their reception into the Christian community might be sealed by prayer, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit. They travelled, at the same time, through Samaria, preaching the gospel in many places, and then returned to Jerusalem.

Our Apostle now spent several years in the capital of the Jewish land; but we have no information either concerning the length of this sojourn, or the blessings attending it. This, however, need not surprise us. Luke might have given it to us in his Acts of the Apostles; but this is no worldly narrative; on the contrary, it is the history of the spreading of the kingdom of heaven, after the disciples of the Lord had received the Holy Spirit and the command to preach the gospel to all nations. The sacred history first describes the planting of the tree of life in the hallowed soil of Judea, and its prosperity in spite of storms and tempests; it then hastens to relate how it took root in all parts of the earth, and in the Gentile world particularly, through the labours of Paul

and his companions. This, however, is not done in order to exalt the names of the messengers of Christ, and to recount the simple fruits of their ministry ; on the contrary, the one Name in whom alone is salvation, and the one Man whom God has appointed to judge the world, far outshines, and, by the splendour of his glory, extinguishes the lustre of every other. On this account, John and his labours for the community in Jerusalem are not brought into the foreground ; we may, nevertheless, with truth conjecture, that the soft and gentle spirit of the beloved disciple would be shown in calming and consoling the first Christians during their afflictions. Thus the Lord made him whom He loved tarry the longest for him in the place which had been the chief seat of his earthly pilgrimage, where He had found his cross, his grave, and the scene of his glory.

The following we gather from scattered passages in the sacred writings : When the apostle Paul came to Jerusalem, in the third year after his conversion, he found the apostles still together, or at least in Judea. Paul did not see John during his fourteen days' sojourn in Jerusalem ; but he saw the two apostles Peter and James, the brother, or to speak more correctly, the cousin of our Lord ; for he was the son of Alpheus and the sister of the mother of Jesus. Probably our Evangelist was then with his brother and the other apostles and disciples, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. For the servants and messengers of the Lord never passed their time in inactivity ; and it may be inferred, both from their characters and their

history, which is preserved to us, that they continued preaching the gospel round about ; at the same time, always extending their circle of usefulness. It appears also, that Paul's principal object in coming to Jerusalem, to which he was probably moved by divine impulse, was to converse with Peter, who had been the first of the apostles, to open the gate of heaven to the heathen world, and who had immediately preceded the Apostle of the Gentiles in his great work. The Lord doeth all things well ; He changeth the times and the seasons ; in the kingdom of God there is no less order and gradation, than in the kingdom of nature. The great work of the calling of the Gentiles was to be commenced by the oldest Jewish apostle ; and it took place in the conversion of the centurion Cornelius, and his house. But the apostles might well be astonished, when they heard from Paul how God had appointed him to preach the gospel to the heathen.

Ten years later Paul came from Antioch, with his assistant Barnabas, to attend the assembly of the apostles at Jerusalem ; when it was agreed, that the Greeks, that is to say, the Gentile Christians, should be freed from the observance of the Levitical law, Acts xv.—which was another step in the gradual emancipation of believers in the new dispensation, from the thralldom of the old. John is not expressly mentioned as being present at this meeting ; yet it appears that he was, from Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, ii. 9. “ And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was

given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship ; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision." The expression, " seemed to be pillars," denotes that they were distinguished from the other apostles by their character, wisdom, and the gifts with which God had endowed them. The James who is named here was not the brother of John, for the latter had been beheaded some years before by the command of king Herod Agrippa : this James was the son of Alpheus, and appears to have been the minister and director of the little community at Jerusalem. Our Evangelist is not mentioned again in the Acts of the Apostles ; for they are henceforward exclusively occupied in narrating the extension of the gospel amongst the heathen, by means of Paul and his assistants.

JOHN LEAVES JERUSALEM.

The time which John passed in Jerusalem cannot be exactly ascertained. Soon after the assembling of the apostles, Peter left the city and went to Antioch, the capital of Syria, where he found a considerable congregation, and from which he travelled in the service of the gospel through the neighbouring lands and provinces of Asia. Perhaps John made a missionary tour at the same time ; although the tradi-

tion that he preached the gospel in Parthia is not sufficiently attested. When Paul came to Jerusalem for the last time, he visited James, the son of Alphaeus, also called "James the younger" and "James the just." John, however, is not mentioned, as would probably have been done if he had still remained in Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 18. James soon after died the death of a martyr; he was condemned to death by the supreme council on account of his bold testimony for Christ—was stoned by the people—and, after he had uttered the prayer for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," he was put to death by the blow of a club. This took place soon after the departure of the Apostle Paul, who, by his appeal to the Roman Emperor, had withdrawn himself from the rage of the Jews; about sixty years after the birth of our Lord.

The time now approached for that judgment which the Lord had pronounced over Jerusalem, and the Jewish people. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." The Jews themselves hastened this fearful judgment. The more the gospel of Jesus Christ prevailed, and the power of God manifested itself in a thousand hearts, the more obstinately did these deluded ones resist the word of truth, and seek to stop for ever the progress of the gospel. As the

Lord had prophesied, many false Messiahs now arose, who attracted numerous followers,—a proof that the time had arrived which Jesus had compared to the spring whose approach may be known by the blossoming of the trees. But as they had misunderstood the times and rejected the true Messiah, God sent them strong delusion that they should believe a lie. Everywhere, excited by the arts of those deceivers, rebellion and uproar were heard, and hordes of plunderers ranged through the country, and wasted the land of their fathers. This compelled the Romans to use means of restraint and harsh oppressive measures, which still farther embittered the Jews, and excited them to resistance. At length a Roman army, under the command of Cestius Gallus, governor of Syria, invested Jerusalem, where the rebels were now arming themselves for a vigorous resistance. But this was not the time appointed for the judgment to take place; the Roman general withdrew his army; it was like the respite of mercy before the flood, while Noah was building the ark: but no one gave heed.

Many Christians had long before this quitted Jerusalem, remembering the prophecies and warnings of our Lord; and the others who had remained behind now followed them. Thus the believers, obeying the warning of Jesus, escaped that fearful judgment which shortly after burst upon the devoted city; the records of which are perhaps the most terrible preserved in the history of the world.

About this time, towards the end of the reign of the emperor Nero, that cruel persecutor of the Christians,

probably in the year of our Lord 66, when the apostles Paul and Peter suffered martyrdom, John quitted Jerusalem. He was perhaps the only apostle who survived the destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the Jewish people; the type of that great coming, when He shall appear amidst the clouds of heaven as the shepherd dividing his flock, and as the righteous King, "glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

JOHN IN EPHEBUS.

We have little or no account of the life and actions of our Apostle after he quitted Jerusalem. It is certain, however, that he passed the latter part of his life in Asia Minor, principally in Ephesus. We have no means of knowing exactly what time he spent there; but the ancient tradition, which says he preached the gospel in Parthia and India, seems to me improbable. John was neither called nor appointed to undertake such far extended journeys as Paul, Peter, and the other apostles were; besides, his temper and character do not seem to have been suited to it. After he had resided for some time in the Jewish land, and, following in the footsteps of his Master, had manifested his glory in characters of silent love, another

dwelling-place was appointed to him, namely Ephesus and its environs.

Meanwhile, we cannot doubt that during the intermediate time his days were spent in works of mercy and love, actively fulfilling the duties of his high calling, and wherever he went dispensing the bread of life. He sought not his own glory, but that of his Master.

Ephesus was peculiarly fitted for being an apostolical residence,—a far-famed commercial town, the capital of Lesser Asia; it lay on the Mediterranean Sea, almost in the centre of the three great portions of the then known world. It was the most convenient point whence to travel towards Egypt, Syria, or Greece; on which account it was the resort of an immense number of men from all parts of the globe. Ephesus was to Asia Minor what Antioch was to Syria, or Alexandria to Egypt; and thus it became the place in the kingdom of God whence the light of the gospel shone over the whole earth.

The Apostle Paul had founded the church in Ephesus, and afterwards sent thither his beloved Timotheus, in order to confirm the believers in the faith. Paul had died the death of a martyr, and Timothy does not seem to have been long in following him. Thus this most important church required an apostolical head; and this the more imperatively, because the rich and luxurious Ephesus was the seat both of heathen worldly wisdom, and of Judaism; so the gospel was in danger of being either choked among the thorns of persecution, or obscured by the

errors of sophistry. Here, therefore, our Lord placed the disciple whom He loved.

Ephesus now became to John another Jerusalem. As he had formerly preached the gospel through Judea and Samaria, so he did not now confine himself to Ephesus, but travelled through the neighbourhood, confirming the existing churches, and founding new ones. In this manner the labours of the Apostle resembled the three years' ministry of our Lord, who, going out from Jerusalem and returning to it as a central point, with unwearied diligence enlightened the benighted regions of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee. In his Gospel also, John takes the sacred festivals of the Jews, particularly the passover, as the eras that mark the principal events of his Master's life; exhibiting them as the beacon lights, which governed his course; or as the tropics of that Sun of Righteousness, which was to spread light and salvation over the whole earth.

In Asia Minor, at various distances from Ephesus, lay many cities in which there were Christian churches, such as Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamus, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, &c. where also the holy Apostle laboured. The early Fathers of the church speak in the most glowing terms of the power and love with which he served his God; and his name lived amidst the blessings and praises of the Christians, in the beautiful land of Asia; until, as in Jerusalem, their candlesticks were removed out of their places, because they had left their first love, and ceased to value the happiness which had been preached to them in the

name of Jesus. And because they had rejected the Sun, a dull and gloomy crescent arose, striving with its faint beams to dispel the darkness of the barren and desert waste.

JOHN IN BANISHMENT.

The history of the lives and actions of the holy Apostles becomes generally dark and gloomy, as we approach the termination of their career. In the writings of the New Testament we find little information regarding them, and that little is scattered at wide intervals; for example, throughout the numerous Epistles of the active and far-travelled Apostle Paul. Many names of those first messengers of the gospel, such as Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, &c. are never mentioned again; and why should they be so, if the extension and prosperity of the kingdom of God do not demand it? They preached not themselves, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. The sum of their history is comprehended in the injunction of our Lord, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" and in the prophecy, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake," Matt. xxiv. 9. "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh that whosoever

killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." John xvi. 2, 3. These soldiers of the cross did not wish to be accounted worthy in their own persons ; but, as the representatives and messengers of Jesus Christ, were well content that they themselves should be eclipsed by the brilliancy of that light with which they illuminated the surrounding darkness. Their life on earth was hid with Christ in God, and has now been long manifested with Christ in glory. Yet in those places where they dispensed the blessings of divine light, they were regarded with love and thankfulness as the instruments of the Holy Spirit ; and many traditions regarding their glorious deaths were preserved and transmitted to posterity. In this manner we have much intelligence regarding them, collected by the Fathers of the church during the first century, which has been treasured up in their writings.

Although these traditions are not always of sufficient authority, yet they serve to prove that the names of the apostles stood in high estimation long after their decease ; and they serve also to throw considerable light over their lives, actions, and writings.

One tradition informs us that John, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, travelled from Ephesus to Palestine, and there held a meeting with several of the apostles and kinsmen of Jesus. Although there is nothing improbable in this account, and although we know enough of the character of our Apostle to believe that he felt the warmest sympathy in the suf-

ferings of his unfortunate country, and would do all in his power to assist the exiles both by deed and by counsel, yet the occurrence is not sufficiently authenticated.

There is another anecdote of our Apostle to which the same remarks may be applied: it is said that during the reign of the cruel emperor Domitian, being at Rome, he was thrown by his command into a caldron of boiling oil, out of which he was drawn unhurt, and afterwards banished to Patmos. The latter circumstance is undeniable, since the Apostle mentions it in his Revelation; but the miracle which preceded it is unsupported by the same testimony. The tradition of the boiling oil, in all probability, took its rise from the wish to signalize the Apostle by a martyrdom and wonderful deliverance, of which he most certainly did not stand in need.

Thus John came to Patmos, a desert and rocky island in the Egean sea, now called Patino, which the Romans made use of as a place of banishment for criminals. He was banished here, as he himself relates, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. i. 9. We cannot be exactly certain regarding the time when this took place, but most probably it was towards the end of the reign of the cruel emperor Domitian. Here he received the holy revelations of God, which are contained in the last and only prophetic book of the New Testament. As John has described in his Gospel the glory of Jesus as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth; so he was also deemed worthy to represent to believ-

ers, in prophetic imagery, the conflict upon this earth of the heavenly kingdom with the kingdom of darkness, and its final victory and glory. It is a book full of deep and mysterious things, the greater part of which are still veiled in impenetrable secrecy, but which shall one day be revealed, for the consolation of all true believers during the time of their affliction, and in order to strengthen them in faith and love.

Thus our Lord gave the disciple who had been banished for his sake a new proof that He loved him, by opening his eyes while on this desert island, and enabling him to behold in spirit his future kingdom, and the new and heavenly Jerusalem. He can transform the desert wilderness into a paradise for his faithful servants; and thus John did not feel burdensome the lonely time passed in inactivity and in separation from his flock. We know as little regarding the exact duration of his imprisonment in the island of Patmos, as we do about its commencement; the most authentic records of the ancient Fathers agree, however, in stating that after the death of Domitian, when the emperor Nerva came to the throne, and all those exiled by the former emperor were recalled, that John also was set at liberty, and returned to his residence in Ephesus. How must the faithful in that city, and those of the neighbouring communities, have rejoiced, when God restored to them their beloved father, John the Apostle, and they enjoyed once more the privilege of listening to his instructions!

THE LATTER TIME JOHN PASSED IN EPHEBUS.

How gladly would we possess a circumstantial account of the life of our Apostle during his latter sojourn in Ephesus until the time of his death! How much that is beautiful and edifying would strike our gaze in the picture of such an old man's closing scene! I even think his countenance must have appeared glorified and illuminated during this period, after the visions and revelations which God had vouchsafed to him in Patmos.

Our very natural wishes on this subject, however, have not been gratified. The holy men of God have proved themselves in truth to be messengers in Christ's stead, when they withdrew themselves, after having fulfilled their divine commission, and entirely disappeared from our gaze. Most faithfully did they preserve in their hearts, and practise during their whole lives, the words of the Lord, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." They did not describe their own works and characters, but preached and declared to the world that one Man, who had called them from darkness into his marvellous light. This was their occupation and calling, for which they lived and died; and those works of humility, which they did by the power of God, have as-

cended up after them, like a sweet-smelling savour, to the place where their names stand inscribed.

Do not the character and actions, nay, the very person of John, still continue to dwell in the midst of us? Can we not experience the thoughts of his exalted spirit and the sensations of his pure heart, and can we not quicken ourselves in faith and love, by looking at his example, and listening to his words? If we have eyes to see, ears to hear, or a heart to feel, does he not speak to us in all that which he has written with his immortal pen? May God enable us to appreciate the costly gifts of the Evangelist and Apostle!

The Gospel of St. John was called by the ancient Fathers of the church, in order to distinguish it from the other three, "the Spiritual Gospel," and also "the Heart of Christ," the depth of which no one can comprehend who has not lain upon the bosom of our Lord. And certainly, while the other Evangelists who also accompanied Jesus in his wanderings merely transcribe his words and actions, and circumstantially relate them as they took place, apparently without any ulterior object; the glory of our Lord seems ever to be hovering before the soul of John while he is writing. The three former describe the human pilgrimage of our Lord upon earth; but John reveals the divine form and glory of the Son of Man; they depict the body, John depicts the soul. Thus the fourfold history describes both the God-man and the Son of man; and as the New Testament is the key of the Old, so the Gospel of John is the key and keystone of the rest.

What a simple and wonderful foundation, on which the eternal structure of the kingdom of God is erected into a holy temple of the Lord, and a habitation of God through the Spirit! Truly, the four Gospels are a miracle, humble in outward form, like our Lord himself, but inwardly full of glory, grace, and truth.

John wrote his in Ephesus, whether before or after his banishment is immaterial, though the latter is the more probable. He bore it long in his heart before he began to write it; when it was done, however, it took a place exalted far above all time and change. Many old Fathers maintain, and it is besides extremely probable, that John, in composing it, had in view the refutation of the errors of certain heretics and unbelievers. There were then men in Lesser Asia, who sought to crush or falsify Christianity; and if John referred to them in his Gospel, he certainly took the best means of refuting their errors by developing the truth in the most masterly manner, and by eloquently representing it in all its heavenly simplicity. So when one brings a light into a dark chamber, the darkness disappears; and when the tints of the morning cast their roseate hue, the night fades away from the heavens.

In his three Epistles, but particularly in the first, he makes particular mention of those false teachers; while he earnestly warns Christians against their deceptions, and admonishes them to try spirits whether they are of God, and to remain steadfast in the faith. These Epistles are perhaps the last of those writings which the Apostle has left behind him. The first

seems to have been a circular, or pastoral letter, addressed to the numerous congregations of Lesser Asia, who probably forwarded it from one to another. For this reason, it wants the form of a letter, as well as the superscription and the benediction at the conclusion. The Apostle, also, addresses his readers in a peculiar fatherly manner, calls them his children and little children, and with benevolent condescension often makes use of the confidential "we," instead of using the admonitory "you." They all knew the beloved and still youthfully-minded old man, who had often prayed in the midst of them ; and they were all personally known to him. They required no address, and no salutation ; it was enough that the Epistle was from the disciple who had leaned on the bosom of our Lord. It bears in every line the impress of his spirit, and is full of holy earnestness and love, child-like, yet manly.

The two other short Epistles are directed to single individuals. The first, addressed to a Christian lady of the name of Tyria, contains a friendly exhortation to remain steadfast in truth and love, and to beware of false teachers and deceivers. The other Epistle, which was written to a friend of the Apostle, of the name of Gains, both contains his praises and a recommendation to show love and hospitality to those Christians who had been persecuted on account of the faith, and exiled from their homes. The particular occasion on which it was written, as well as the relation of Gains to the Apostle, are unknown to us. If we had known it, we might perhaps still better per-

ceive and admire the peculiar union of tender love towards Christians, with righteous anger against the enemies of truth, so peculiarly developed in the character of John. The preservation of those short letters to mere individuals, is another proof of the high estimation in which John was regarded, both by his contemporaries and their immediate descendants. They would not permit even a single page of his writings to be destroyed; and thus, those simple Epistles have survived the lapse of centuries, and the destruction of mighty kingdoms. In the two latter Epistles John named himself "the elder," or bishop, which has a similar but more pleasing signification than teacher or director of the Christian community; for it seems to refer to his personal connection with it. It is also more lowly than if he had named himself "Apostle;" for he now no longer travelled about, but visited at intervals the Christian churches from his dwelling-place, which he had fixed in the midst of them.

JOHN AND THE ERRING BUT REPENTANT
YOUNG MAN.

Ephesus was now, as Jerusalem had formerly been, the residence of the Apostle; whence he visited the Christian churches in the neighbouring towns and villages, appointed the ministers and teachers, and carefully preserved the purity of faith and doctrine.

The manner in which he laboured here, and the struggle he maintained with the numerous enemies of Christ, particularly with those teachers of error who mingled the pure truths of the gospel with earthly traditions, has not been transmitted to us. Nevertheless, there is one anecdote belonging to this era, which Clement, bishop of Alexandria, one of the Fathers of the church, has circumstantially related; not as an uncertain tradition, but as a history well known and faithfully remembered. It is as follows:

After John had returned from Patmos to Ephesus, he visited the neighbouring congregations, in order to appoint bishops, and to arrange the church government. On one occasion, when he had preached the gospel in a town not far from Ephesus, admonishing and encouraging the brethren, he beheld a young man of distinguished appearance, and of a countenance which betokened both a fiery spirit and pre-eminent mental talent. The Apostle turned to the bishop of

the church with the words, "In the presence of Christ and this assembly, I solemnly commend this young man to thy care." The bishop, upon this, undertook the charge of his education, promising to do all in his power for him. He took him to his house, entertained, educated and instructed him, until he judged him worthy of receiving the rite of baptism.

Afterwards, however, when the bishop had somewhat relaxed in his superintendence, the young man fell into bad company, where he was enticed into drunkenness and immoral practices, and afterwards into midnight robbery and theft. Thus he progressed in wickedness; and, as a fiery horse that starts aside from the mountain path falls into the abyss, so his violent nature, after he had once quitted a virtuous course, plunged him into destruction.

He now began to despair of the mercy of God, and no longer hoped for salvation; in order, therefore, to execute greater and bolder misdeeds, he united his companions into a robber band, of which he became the captain, and rendered the whole neighbourhood insecure.

Some time having elapsed, John was again summoned to visit the same flock; and when every thing had been set in order, he said to the bishop, "Where is the pledge with which I intrusted thee in the presence of the Lord and this congregation?" The bishop at first was alarmed, lest some one had falsely accused him to the Apostle, of breach of faith with regard to some earthly possession. But when John said, "I demand from thee the soul of thy brother,

the young man with whom I intrusted thee!" the old man sighed, and weeping, replied, "Alas! he is dead!" "Dead?" asked John, "of what death did he die?" "He is dead to God," replied the bishop, "he is lost to Christ, he is a robber. Instead of being now a member of the church, yonder mountain is infested with his banditti!"

When the Apostle heard this, lamenting bitterly, he exclaimed, "Alas! to what a careless watchman have I intrusted the soul of my brother?" Upon this, he hastily left the assemblage, and procuring a horse and a guide, proceeded to the neighbourhood where the robbers were encamped. He was soon arrested by some of the gang, and led into the presence of the captain. When the latter beheld the aged Apostle, his first impulse was to fly, but John held him back, called him his son, and promised him forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. He then took him under his own superintendence, giving him spiritual instruction, and afterwards led him back to the congregation, an example of true repentance and regeneration.

We cannot doubt that in many instances John showed similar faithfulness as a shepherd, and equal zeal in leading back to the paths of truth and holiness those who had been seduced from the right way by the numerous temptations of that corrupt age. The numerous admonitions and warnings, contained in his Epistles, prove how near this subject lay to his heart, as well as the joy which he took in those who walked in righteousness, and proved themselves to be brethren in the truth.

THE MIRACLES WHICH JOHN PERFORMED.

In the life of a man of God such as John, nothing can be unimportant ; for this reason we may well ask, what miracles he performed ? Supernatural occurrences necessarily belong to the character of a divine manifestation ; for a manifestation of God is of itself a miracle, being a disclosure from the invisible world. The miraculous powers of Jesus Christ were necessary proofs that He was the promised Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord and Saviour of men. He himself refers to them as a testimony of this fact ; and John says, in his Gospel, that the Lord by those signs of divine power and might manifested his glory. They were proofs and tokens that He had power to loose men from the bonds of sin and of death, and to remove the barrier that separated earth and heaven ; they were also necessary to perfect the picture of Jesus Christ, as the image of God, and as his Son born of a woman. As He calls his own miracles the works of his Father, so he imparted to his apostles power and strength to perform the same miracles in his name which He himself had done. These powers necessarily belonged to the apostolic office, as being the sure means of proving to mankind that they were the messengers of Christ ; for no apostle ever made use of them to glorify himself, any more than our Lord did.

There is no doubt that these divine gifts had been imparted to our Apostle ; yet we never read in the Scriptures of John performing any miracle. Even at the cure of the lame man in Jerusalem, he appears to have stood by as a silent and inactive spectator ; all being done through the medium of Peter's words and actions. This is the only circumstance of the kind at which he is described as being present ; for the fact of his imparting the Holy Ghost to the converts made by Philip in Samaria, by means of laying his hands upon them, was but the consequence of his apostolical office. In the silent usefulness of the beloved disciple, as it is depicted to us in his Gospel, without the brilliancy of miracle, there seems to be another indication of the peculiar modesty of his character, in which we behold the mild lustre of the moon veiled by the evening cloud.

Meanwhile antiquity, in her reverence for our Apostle, appears to have been of a different opinion, and to have considered miracles indispensable in the history of St. John. Among other things it is related, that on one occasion John and several of the brethren drank out of a poisoned cup ; the latter fell on the ground in the agonies of death, while he not only was unharmed but was the means of restoring them to life and vigour. Although this history contains nothing improbable in itself, for our Lord had promised his apostles that they should drink poison uninjured ; yet it is not grounded on sufficient testimony, and we cannot place it in the rank of undoubted truths. It is for this reason that painters have generally represent-

ed the holy Apostle with a cup in one hand, out of which a serpent is raising its head. Were our history symbolical, we might with truth say in the same manner, that John must have drunk many cups full of deadly poison; namely, the poison of lying and deceit, presented to him by the enemies of Christians and falsifiers of the truth. But as Paul escaped unscathed from the viper in the island of Crete, so John also was unharmed by the poison of heretics and slanderers; and, if we may believe his testimony, a life in Christ can never be said to be in danger. For this reason the anecdote, as well as the manner in which painters represent the Apostle, may well please us; although, for want of sufficient evidence, we can hardly regard the fact as authenticated.

The tradition, also, that John destroyed the temple of Diana of the Ephesians with his own hand, causing it to be razed to the ground, is also without doubt allegorical. This miracle was probably performed by the preaching of the gospel; there being no need forcibly to destroy idolatry, as it would fall to pieces from its own worthlessness. Hence it came to pass, as the Roman governor Pliny wrote to the emperor Trajan, that the idolatrous temples and altars were empty and deserted; for they were gradually disappearing from the kingdom of light and truth. In this sense Cyrill, an old Father of the church, with good reason might call John the destroyer of the temple of Diana.

There is one thing, however, which is well attested, that John, during his latter sojourn in Ephesus,

raised from the dead a deceased person ; although the minute circumstances of the case have not been transmitted to us. Wherever it was necessary to glorify the name of Jesus, we may be certain that John would make use of the miraculous power imparted to him as a messenger of the Lord, in order to restore to sight the spiritually blind, and awaken the spiritual dead to a new life. And how great must the number of those be whom he, during his long life, led to their God, and admitted into the fold of the Lord !

JOHN'S DISCIPLES AND FRIENDS.

We cannot form a better idea of the position of John in the church at Ephesus, than by picturing him in the form of a benevolent and serious, yet cheerful father of a family, in the midst of his household circle. His Epistles authorize us to make this comparison ; in them he addresses the Christians as "children" and "little children," sometimes also as "brethren ;" he also makes a distinction between "fathers, young men, and children," and then again addresses them collectively by the term "beloved." Those who loved and revered the Apostle as their spiritual father must have formed a numerous family, especially if we include all whom he diligently visit-

ed, and who lived not merely in Ephesus, but in the neighbouring towns and villages.

We can easily imagine that our Apostle, like the apostles Peter and Paul, had some among the many who were bound to him by the ties of love, to whom he stood in a closer relation, and who may with propriety be named his disciples. The most distinguished of these were Ignatius and Polycarp; the first became afterwards bishop of Antioch, and, in the reign of the emperor Trajan, on account of his bold confession, was carried to Rome, and thrown to wild beasts for the amusement of the populace. As they were leading him away to suffer the death of a martyr, he said, "I am the wheat of Christ, which must be ground by the teeth of wild beasts before becoming pure bread." In like manner, many thousand Christians ended their lives at the same time in joyful faith and confession of the truth; but so much the more did the kingdom of God prosper and increase. Polycarp, the other disciple of the Apostle John, had been appointed by him bishop of the community at Smyrna; and antiquity is full of his praises for faith and boldness in the service of the Lord: he also sealed his confession with his blood. When he was about ninety years old, there arose a tumult among the Jews and heathens, who with wild cries demanded his death. The old man fled from his flock to an estate in the neighbourhood of Smyrna; but his retreat was betrayed, he was taken by armed men, and carried back to the city. In vain the governor tried to persuade him to renounce Christianity, if

only in appearance, and to pay divine honours to the image of the emperor : he was inexorable. The enraged populace now desired his death with still greater violence, and demanded that he should be burned alive. It took place accordingly ; the old man advanced with joy to meet his fiery death, and his body, says the story, glittered in the flames like gold in the furnace. It was the general opinion of antiquity that Polycarp was the angel of the church in Smyrna, mentioned in Revelations ii. 8. and that the following verses are addressed to him.

There are also various other names of lesser note, recorded as those of the disciples and pupils of the Apostle ; for it is undoubted, that by word and example he induced many to become the servants of the Lord. It is an undoubted fact, that where such a chosen servant of God arises, he does not remain alone ; but arouses many others to follow his example, and become his assistants in the cause of truth. The names of these men are now lost, as the lesser lights are extinguished in the lustre of the greater ; or perhaps, following their Master's example of humility, they themselves may have concealed them. Lesser Asia continued, for many years after the death of John, to be a green and flourishing garden of the Lord, full of springs of living water ; but when these in later times were dried up, then the golden candlesticks also were thrown down from the altar.

There is another story regarding John, which an old and pious author of the fifth century has transmitted to us from the writings of the Fathers. We

shall relate it, because it is characteristic of the disposition of the beloved disciple. It happened that he possessed a tame partridge, which he was one day caressing and fondling, when a forester entered the apartment. He was astonished to see the venerable Bishop of the Ephesian church amusing himself with such an insignificant bird. Upon which John asked him, why he did not always keep his bow on the stretch? Upon which the huntsman replied, "If I did so, the string would relax, and the bow would lose its elasticity." "Then," said John, "wonder no longer if the human mind also, that it may not sink under the weight of severe thought, sometimes has recourse to amusement in order to enliven itself." It appears to me that, by this mild reproof, the Apostle showed the huntsman the rashness of his speech, and at the same time said no more to him than he could easily understand. We may also remark from this anecdote, the simple nature of John, which found pleasure even in a tame little bird; and perhaps regarded the bright red eye of his favourite with the same sort of feelings as our Lord beheld the lilies of the field.

JOHN ON HIS DEATH-BED.

In John were fulfilled the words of the royal Psalmist, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Psalm xcii. 12-15.

John attained a good old age; and though the church historians vary with regard to the exact duration of his life, yet they all agree that he lived beyond ninety, probably to ninety-eight years of age;—the days of his pilgrimage thus nearly equalling those of the ancient patriarchs. Ephesus and the parts of Lesser Asia, where he spent the latter period of his life, may be compared to another Canaan; as the earlier period, when he enjoyed the society of our Lord, resembled the patriarchal times.

John long survived the first judgment which God passed on the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, because they had rejected their Saviour the Lord of glory; he was to have the satisfaction of beholding the spreading of the gospel and the founding of Christian churches in all parts of the earth, and was the last of the apostles who, as a good and faithful servant, entered into the joy of his Lord.

It is strange that the disciple whom Jesus loved, and

who lay upon his bosom, should tarry the longest upon earth. Well might we have expected that he should sigh for the rest of his Lord, and, like Paul, desire to depart and be with Christ. But there is no trace of this in the Epistles which he wrote in his old age, and he nowhere expresses that longing for a future life and a heavenly inheritance, which we find in the writings of the other apostles, Paul and Peter. In this also we behold the character and spirit of the beloved disciple, who was a living personification of the words of our Lord, "I in you, and ye in me." That living and abiding in Jesus as the fruit does on the vine, was most peculiarly the characteristic of him who lay on his bosom; for the Lord whom he bore in his heart was never distant from him. The beautiful parable of the bridegroom and the bridegroom's friend, which John transmitted to us from the mouth of the Baptist, was gloriously fulfilled in his own person. He therefore remained willingly upon earth in the service of his Master, adorning the church as the bride of the Lamb, and preparing her for the great marriage-day.

He also most assuredly remembered that word which our Lord addressed to Peter after his resurrection, when the latter questioned him regarding the future destiny of John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" And thus, in humility and patience, he waited the summons of his Lord to lay down his mortal body; having constantly in his mind the sentiment he strove to impress upon others, "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." Even a longing for home has its delight, when one is on the road to that home, and sees it from afar.

What a blessing, joy, and honour for the churches and congregations in Lesser Asia, to have the beloved disciple of their Lord so long in the midst of them! and to form, along with him, a beautiful picture of a household and family of God upon earth! They also beheld in the aged Christian a living proof, that, when the outer man becomes old and decay approaches, the inner man may remain young in faith, hope, and love, and renew itself from day to day.

The Lord came at last, however, to recall his faithful servant to his heavenly home. John, when he was no longer able to walk, made himself be supported by two youths and led into the congregation. Here he appeared, for the last time, as a father among his children; for he knew that his hour was come:—and how must his countenance have shone illuminated with joy! The time for a glorious death-bed song, like those of Jacob and Moses in their last hours, was past; for prophecy had been fulfilled, death had been conquered, sin had been expiated, eternal justice had been satisfied, and the Holy One had been anointed. The whole life of the Apostle had been a song of praise for the appearance of the eternal Word of life in the flesh, and for his glory full of grace and truth; and in like manner, his last breath evinced the spirit which had ever animated his heart.

“Children, love one another!” were his last words,

which he several times repeated, "Children, love one another!"

Thus that disciple whom Jesus had loved fell asleep, and was buried at Ephesus. Because Jesus had said to Peter, "If I will that he tarry till I come," the report had spread during the life-time of John that he would never die, but remain upon earth until the day of judgment, and enter heaven without passing through the gates of death. Although John contradicts this opinion in the conclusion of his Gospel, and though his grave at Ephesus was also a proof to the contrary, yet the saying long continued, "He lives, and only slumbers in the tomb." It testifies at least in what reverence his name was held, both in the Eastern and Western land. We also know and testify, though in another manner, "this disciple has not died." He lives, and will still live, in the church of the Lord upon earth, until the end of time. We can listen to the words of the Apostle, until we see Him whom he loved and whom he preached, in the following words: "And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.—And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

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