

MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRED HUMANITY OF THE BLESSED REDEEMER

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**MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRED HUMANITY
OF THE BLESSED REDEEMER**

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST (Chapter 1)

In that wondrous prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father on the eve of his sufferings and death, there is a declaration which demands of all who fear God the deepest and most attentive consideration. It is this: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." **Joh 17:3** These words are often incorrectly quoted, by which much of their force and meaning is lost, "And this is life eternal, to know thee." But the Lord's words are, "that they might know thee." In the original the article stands before "life eternal," so that the meaning of the whole passage is, "And this is the life eternal which he has to give, that they whom thou hast given him may know thee." He thus explains what this eternal life is, and that it is given to the objects of his Father's love and choice, that they, and they only, might have the inward and unfailing possession of it in time and for eternity. In the preceding verse the blessed Lord had told his heavenly Father that he had "given him power over all flesh," for this express purpose, "that he should give eternal life to as many as God had given him." But for the instruction of the Church of God for all time, that she might clearly understand and know what this eternal life is which he has to bestow, and that on a matter so vital, so essential, no mistake might be made, he graciously adds the explanation to which we have already referred. By this plain and decisive declaration, he would for ever show that the eternal life which he has to give is no visionary, imaginary, dim, and dreamy heaven; no mere deliverance at death from illness, pain, and suffering; no narrow escape from hell, just at the last gasp; no reward of merit, or purchase of a deathbed repentance; no fruit of juggling ceremonies or absolving priests, got in the very article of dissolution, by a drop of oil or a little bread and wine; no entrance for unregenerate souls into a paradise of unknown bliss, of which on earth there had been no foretaste, and for which no previous meetness or spiritual preparedness had been inwardly wrought. All such carnal views of heaven, all such natural notions of a state of happiness after death of deceivers and deceived, the blessed Lord at once and for ever cast out by declaring with his own lips of truth and grace that the eternal life which he had to bestow consisted in two things: the knowledge of the only true God and the knowledge of himself as the sent of the Father.

The importance and significance of this declaration it is impossible to overstate. Its infinite weight is determined by eternal life being laid in the opposite scale; its immeasurable breadth by the commencement of heaven dating from a life on earth. For eternal life begins below, to be consummated above; is sown in grace, to be harvested in glory. Thus Enoch walked with God before he was translated; Abraham was the friend of God; and Moses saw the Lord face to face. These and all the Old Testament saints "desired a heavenly country" before they reached it. **Heb 11:16** But how could they desire a country of which they had no knowledge, foretaste, or enjoyment? Can we desire that of which we know nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, enjoy nothing? "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," is the experience of every soul that by the letting down of heaven upon earth finds earth itself the very portal of heaven. But how can it know there is a God in heaven, unless it has found that God on earth; or desire none beside him even here below, unless here below it has felt and known his love?

But it is not our purpose to open or enlarge upon this declaration of the blessed Lord in its general bearings, or as comprehending the whole of the important truth couched therein. The part which rests with weight upon our own mind at this present moment is that which places the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ on the same level with the knowledge of the only true God. How deep, then, how mysterious, and yet how blessed must that knowledge be to obtain, to possess, to enjoy which is to be put into possession, whilst here below, of life everlasting. Science, learning, knowledge, general or special, mental ability, mechanical skill, political wisdom, intellectual refinement, and every attainment which, in a state of high civilisation, elevates men above the slaves of drunkenness and debauchery, are well for time. Who can despise modern wonders of science and skill, though he that fears God and trembles at his word may call to mind the woes denounced against ancient Tyre for her riches and her pride, **Eze 26; 27; 28 and may see with fear that what she was England is, and that the same sins may call down the same doom. But what are all the attainments of science, all the wonders of art, all the triumphs of engineering skill for eternity? Yes; were all the science and art, all the skill, wealth, and power, now divided among thousands. concentrated in one individual, what would the whole collective array be compared with one grain of grace, one ray of divine teaching, one drop of atoning blood in the conscience, or one gleam of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost?**

If, then, this spiritual and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ whom God hath sent is a free gift, and yet is only bestowed upon those whom the Father has given to his dear Son, how precious the possession, but O how exclusive the boon! How as with a two-edged sword this word out of the mouth of the Son of God **Re 1:16 cuts both ways; how, as a key worn on his shoulder and wielded by his divine hand, it shuts as well as opens; how, whilst with one hand it raises millions to hope and heaven, with the other it sinks millions into despair and hell. As a healing word from the Lord's lips it brings rest and peace to prayerful hearts, wounded consciences, and contrite spirits; but, as a word of truth and righteousness it forever seals the doom of the ignorant and unbelieving, the self-confident and the self-righteous, the dead in sin and the dead in profession.**

As all true Christians believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is God and man, this spiritual, saving knowledge of his Person and work, his love and grace, his blood and righteousness, divides itself into two branches: a gracious acquaintance with his Deity as the eternal Son of God, and gracious knowledge of his humanity as the Son of man.

As we have reason to believe that what we were enabled to write upon the eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord has been received with a measure of acceptance by those who know and love the truth as it is in Jesus, we have felt encouraged now to bring before them some

reflections on the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer. To know him as God, to know him as man, to know him as God-man, and this by a divine revelation of his glorious Person, blood, and love to our souls this is, indeed, to have eternal life in our breasts. Nor can he be savingly known in any other way but by divine and special revelation. "For no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." **Mt 11:27**

The Apostle, therefore prays for the saints at Ephesus, that "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened." **Eph 1:17-18** He prayed for the same blessing for them as he had enjoyed for himself, as he speaks, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me." **Ga 1:15-16** He knew, therefore, in himself, in his own blessed and happy experience, what it was to be "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" **Col 1:9** and to be blessed with "all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment (or knowledge) of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." **Col 2:2-3** Thus he travailed in birth again for the Galatians until "Christ was formed in them;" **Ga 4:19** and prayed for the Ephesians, that "Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith." **Eph 3:17** He speaks also of their having "learned Christ," "heard of Christ," and "been taught of Christ," **Eph 4:20-21** all which expressions point to a divine discovery of his Person and work to the heart. The blessed Lord also assured his sorrowing disciples that he would "come to them," and that they should "see" him, and "live" upon him; that they should "know that he was in them," and that he would "manifest himself to them and make his abode with them." **Joh 14:18-23**

Nor were these blessings and favours limited to the Lord's own immediate disciples. As "the precious ointment which was poured upon the head" of our great High Priest "went down to the skirts of his garments," **Ps 133:2** so there is "an anointing which teacheth" the lowest and least of the members of the mystical body of Christ "of all things, and is truth and no lie." **1Jo 2:27** By this unction from above every one that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Christ; **Joh 6:45** and knoweth for "himself that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." **1Jo 5:20** If, then, we are favoured with this teaching, and "a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from heaven," **Joh 3:27** we shall see by the eyes of our enlightened understanding "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," and what we thus see we shall believe, love, and adore.

Should we not, then with all holy awe and godly reverence, seek to approach this mystery of wisdom, power and love? for all salvation and all happiness, as well as all grace and

glory, are wrapped up in it. Right views are indispensable to a right faith, and a right faith is indispensable to salvation. To stumble at the foundation is, concerning faith, to make shipwreck altogether; for as Immanuel, God with us, is the grand Object of faith, to err in views of his eternal Deity, or to err in views of his sacred humanity, is alike destructive. There are points of truth which are not fundamental, though erroneous views on any one point must lead to God-dishonouring consequences in strict proportion to its importance and magnitude; but there are certain foundation truths to err concerning which is to insure for the erroneous and the unbelieving the blackness of darkness for ever.

THE NATURE OF THE REDEEMER'S HUMANITY Chapter 2

To glorify his dear Son has from all eternity been the purpose of the Father; and both in the plan and in the execution has he manifested the depths of his infinite wisdom, power and love. That the eternal Son of God should take into intimate and indissoluble union with his divine Person the flesh and the blood of the children, that in that nature he might manifest the riches of the sovereign grace, the heights and depths of the everlasting love, and the fulness of the uncreated glory of a Triune Jehovah, has been from all eternity the determinate counsel and purpose of the great and glorious self-existent I AM; and all creation, all providence, and all events and circumstances of time and space were originally and definitely arranged to carry into execution this original plan. Creation, with all its wonders of power and wisdom, was not necessary either for the happiness or the glory of the self-existent Jehovah. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had, from all eternity, that holy, intimate union and intercommunion with each other, that mutual love and ineffable fellowship of three distinct Persons and yet but one God, which creation could neither augment nor impair. Time, with all its incidents, is but a moment-, space, with all its dimensions, is but a speck, compared with the existence of a God who inhabiteth eternity, and therefore filleth all time and all space. That a self-existent God should be amply sufficient for his own happiness and his own glory is a truth as self-evident to a believing heart as the very existence of God himself. But it pleased the sacred Triune Jehovah that there should be an external manifestation of his heavenly glory; and this was to be accomplished by the incarnation of the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity. The Father, therefore, prepared him a body, which in due time he should assume. Thus addressing his heavenly Father, he says, "A body has, thou prepared me." **Heb 10:5**. That he should take this prepared body into union with his divine Person was the eternal will of God; so that when the appointed time arrived for the decree to be accomplished, the eternal Son could and did come forth from the bosom of the Father with these words upon his lips, -"Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me **the volume of God's eternal decrees**, to do thy will, O God." **Heb 10:7**.

Now, the word of truth declares that "God manifest in the flesh" is "the great mystery of godliness." **1Ti 3:16**. Therefore, without an experimental knowledge of this great mystery there can be no godliness in heart, lip, or life; and if no godliness no salvation, unless we mean to open the gates of bliss to the ungodly, who "shall not stand in the judgment;" **Ps 1:5**; and to count for nothing that "ungodliness" against which "the wrath of God is

revealed from heaven." **Ro 1:18**. It is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone "maketh free;" and it is the truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," which alone sanctifies as well as liberates: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." **Joh 17:17**. How important, then, how all-essential to know the truth for ourselves, in our own hearts and consciences, by divine teaching and divine testimony, that, set free from bondage, darkness, ignorance, and error, liberated into the blessed enjoyment of the love and mercy of God, and sanctified by his Spirit and grace, we may walk before him in the light of his countenance. And as in the Person of the incarnate Son of God "are hid all the treasures of wisdom-and knowledge." how blessed is it to look up by faith to him at the right hand of the Father, and to receive out of his fulness those communications of wisdom and grace which not only enlighten us with the light of the living, but cause us to be partakers of his holiness, and thus make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

As thus taught and blessed, we desire to approach this solemn subject, and to look with the eyes of an enlightened understanding and of a believing heart at the mystery of an incarnate God. And if Moses at God's command put off his shoes from off his feet, when he looked at the burning bush. for the place whereon he stood was holy ground, **Ex 3:5**, much more should we, when we look on the mystery of God made manifest in the flesh. of which the burning bush was but a type, put off the shoes of carnal reason from off our feet.

The sacred humanity of the blessed Lord consists of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, taken at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the overshadowing operation and influence of the Holy Ghost. This is very evident from the language of the angel to the Virgin: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." **Lu 1:35**

1. The first thing to be borne in mind is, that it was a **real** and **substantial** human nature, consisting of a real human body and a real human soul, both of which were assumed at one and the same instant in the womb of the Virgin. It was necessary that the same nature should be taken which had sinned, or there could have been no redemption or reconciliation of that nature, or of those that wore that nature. Thus the apostle argues, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" **Heb 2:16** implying, that if fallen angels had to be redeemed and reconciled, the Son of God must have taken angelic nature; but as man had to be redeemed, he assumed human nature. It was not, then, a shadowy form which the son of God assumed in the womb of the Virgin, as he had appeared in human shape before his incarnation to Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Manoh and his wife, but a real human nature, as real, as substantial as our own.

Thus the Son of God "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" **Php 2:7** "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" **Joh 1:14** "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh-," **Ro 8:3** These Scripture testimonies abundantly show that the Son of God assumed a real human nature, but not a fallen, peccable, mortal nature. He was "made flesh," therefore real flesh; "in the **likeness** of sinful flesh," therefore not in the **reality** of sinful flesh. He took flesh of the Virgin, or he could not have been the promised "seed of the woman," which was to bruise the serpent's head; **Ge 3:15** or of "the seed of Abraham," to which the promise was especially made, **Ga 3:16** and from whom the Virgin Mary was lineally descended. And this nature he so assumed, or to use a scriptural expression, so "took hold of," **Heb 2:16, marg.**, that it became his own nature as much as his divine nature is his own. It was not assumed, as a garment, to be laid aside after redemption's work was done, but was taken into indissoluble union with his divine Person. Nor did his death on the cross dissolve this union, for though body and soul were parted, and his immortal, incorruptible body lay in the grave, his soul was in paradise, in indissoluble union with his Deity. Thus, as each of us is really and truly man, by human nature being so personally and individually appropriated by us as our own subsistence, that it is as much ours as if there were no other partaker of it on earth but ourselves; so the Son of God, by assuming that nature which is common to all men, **therefore called "the flesh and blood of the children,"** made it his own as much as ours is our own nature. He is, therefore, really and truly "the **man** Christ Jesus." **1Ti 2:5**

2., The next thing to be believed in and held fast is, that this humanity was not a person, but a **nature**. This point may not seem at the first glance of deep and signal importance; but as all God's ways and works are stamped with infinite wisdom, it will be seen, on deeper reflection, that it involves matters of the greatest magnitude —of the richest grace and the highest glory. For look at the consequences which would necessarily follow, were the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord a person and not a nature. Were it a person, the Lord Jesus Christ would be two Persons, one Person as God, and another Person as man, and thus would be two distinct individuals. But being a nature, which had of itself no distinct individuality, but was assumed at the very instant of its conception into union with his divine Person, the Lord Jesus is still but one Person, though he possesses two distinct natures. The angel, therefore called it "that holy **thing**"-i.e., that holy nature, that holy flesh, that holy substance -a "thing," because it had a real substance, "holy," because not begotten by natural generation, but sanctified in the moment of conception by the Holy Ghost, so as to be intrinsically holy, impeccable, immortal -capable of dying, but not tainted with the seeds of sickness or death. It was not a body like ours, "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin;" **Ps 51:5** but was begotten by a divine and supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, and was therefore "holy," not relatively, and partially, as we, but really, thoroughly, and intrinsically holy; "harmless," or as the word might be rendered, "free from all ill;" "undefiled" with any taint of corruption in body or soul, original or actual, in any seed, inclination, desire, feeling, or movement of or toward it; "separate from sinners" in its conception and formation, in every thought, word, or deed, so that it was as separate

from sin, and sin as separate from it, when on earth as it is now in the presence of God; "and made higher than the heavens," by the exaltation of that human nature to the throne of glory; higher than the visible heavens, for what is the glory of sun, moon, or stars to the glory of the sacred humanity of Christ in the courts of heaven? and higher too than the invisible heavens, for in his human nature as the God-man, he is exalted 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. (Heb 7:26; Eph 1:20-22)

Among the heresies and errors which pestered the early church, was the Nestorian heresy, which asserted that Christ's human nature was a Person, and thus made two persons in the Lord, and the Eutychian, which declared that there was but one nature, the humanity of Christ being absorbed into his divinity. Against both these errors the Athanasian Creed, that sound and admirable compendium and bulwark of divine truth, draws its two-edged sword: "Who, although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the Manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person; for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." The Nestorian heresy is cut to pieces by the declaration that "he is not two," **i.e. persons**, but one Christ; and the Eutychian by the words, "one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person."

But consider the blessings that are connected with and flow out of this heavenly truth. The glory and beauty of this mystery, it is true, can only be seen and known by faith; for faith, as "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," alone gives to these divine realities a substantial existence in the believer's heart. But looking by faith into this heavenly mystery, we may see in the two points we have thus far touched upon signal beauty and blessedness. The human nature which the blessed Lord assumed into union with his divine Person hungered, thirsted, was weary, wept, sighed, groaned, sweat drops of blood, agonised in the garden and on the cross, was tried, deserted, tempted, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and, by a voluntary act, died. Had it not been a real human nature, the sufferings and sorrows of the holy soul, the pains and agonies of the sacred body, the obedience rendered, the blood shed, the sacrifice offered, the life laid down would not have been real, at least not really endured and offered in that very nature which was to be redeemed and reconciled. This is beautifully unfolded by the apostle: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." **Heb 2:17-18**

But again, were the human nature of our blessed Lord a Person, its acts would have been personally distinct, and the virtue and validity of Deity would not have been stamped upon

them. We may thus illustrate the distinction between a nature and a person. Man and wife are mystically by marriage one flesh, but they still remain two distinct persons. Their acts, therefore, as persons, are individually distinct, and each is morally and really responsible for his or her individual actions. But were they so incorporated, like a grafted tree, as to become two natures and only one person, then the acts of the weaker nature, assuming for the moment that the female is the weaker, being the acts of one and the same person, would be stamped with all the strength and power of the stronger. Thus it is with the two natures of our blessed Lord. The human nature, though essentially and intrinsically holy, impeccable, incorruptible, and immortal, being the weaker and inferior nature, yet becomes stamped with all the worth, virtue and validity of the divine nature, because though there are two natures there is but one Person. Thus the grand, vital truth of the two natures yet but one Person of the glorious Immanuel is no mere dry or abstract doctrine, no speculative theory spun out of the brains of ancient fathers and learned theologians, but a blessed revelation of the wisdom and grace of God.

3. But much beauty and heavenly glory are wrapped up **in the way in which that humanity was assumed**. In the forming of this holy humanity we see the three Persons of the blessed Trinity engaged. The Father prepared the body, the Son assumed it, the Holy Ghost formed it. By the preparation of the body, as the act of the Father, we understand not its actual forming or framing in the womb of the Virgin, but its eternal designation, its preparation in the council, wisdom, and love of the Father. "A body hast thou prepared me;" **Heb 10:5** (margin), "thou hast fitted me," literally, "put together joint by joint." To design, to contrive, to put together in his own eternal mind, not merely the framework of the Lord's body and the constitution of his soul, but so to prepare it that, conceived in the womb of the sinful Virgin, it should not partake of her sin, of her fall, of her sickness, of her corruptibility -this was a greater wonder to appear in heaven than what holy John saw in vision. **Re 12:1**

This body, thus prepared, the eternal Son of God assumed. By its assumption by the Son we understand not a creating act, as if the Son of God himself created the body to be assumed, but that ineffable act of condescension and grace whereby he took at one and the same instant of its formation, that sacred humanity, consisting of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, into union with his divine Person. We say "at one and the same instant," for we reject with abhorrence that vain figment, that idle tale, that pestilential and dangerous error of the preexistence of the human soul of the Lord Jesus. He was made **in all things** like unto his brethren, sin only excepted; **Heb 2:17; 4:15** and unless it can be proved that our soul was created before our body, and pre-existed ages before it, it cannot be shown that the human soul of the Lord Jesus had any such pre-existence.

This human nature, prepared by God the Father, and assumed by God the Son, God the Holy Ghost formed. By the forming of that sacred humanity by the Holy Ghost we understand that act of miraculous power whereby he overshadowed the Virgin by his operations and influence, and created, of her flesh, a holy human nature, which he sanctified and filled with grace in the very instant of its conception.

4. But this leads us onward to a fourth point, not less full of truth and blessedness. And we may put it in the form of a solemn question. How was it possible that in a nature so prepared, so assumed, and created, there could be **any taint of sin, corruption, disease, or mortality? The Father contemplated that human nature which he had prepared for his dear Son from all eternity with ineffable complacency and delight. Could he who made man in his original creation so pure and innocent, creating him in his own image, after his own likeness, have prepared for his own Son, his only-begotten, eternal Son, a body fallen, tainted, and corruptible, or even capable of corruption and decay? Could the Son, who is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his Person," assume into union with his eternal Godhead any other but a pure, holy, immortal, and incorruptible nature? It was not a body to decay with sickness and die of disease, and then be thrust away out of sight as the food of corruption, but taken into intimate union with Deity itself, as its immortal and incorruptible companion. Could the Holy Ghost form anything but a holy nature for the Son of God to assume into a union so close, intimate, and indissoluble?**

But it may not be unprofitable to examine these points of divine truth a little more closely.

i. And first, as to the intrinsic **holiness and purity of the Lord's human nature. It was essentially a nature impeccable, that is, not only not tainted with sin, but absolutely incapable of being so tainted. As we read of its being "impossible for God to lie," **Heb 6:18** so we may say of the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord, it was impossible it could sin.**

The testimonies in the word of truth are most full and clear to the impeccability of the human nature of the blessed Lord. "He hath made him to be sin for us **who knew no sin." **2Co 5:21** He knew no sin; that is, in his own Person, in its taint or defilement or in any approach thereunto. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." **Joh 14:30** Satan, the prince of this world, came to tempt and to assail him; but he had nothing in him, as he has in us; that is, no internal material on which to work. If we may use such a figure, he had no ground within the walls on which to plant his infernal artillery. He might assault the blessed Lord from without, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," which had neither birth nor being, root nor stem, nor the possibility of any, in the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer.**

The late Dr. Cole, in a work published many years ago, (1) has exposed, in the most clear and forcible manner, the awful blasphemies of the once popular Edward Irving (2) on this point. Well may we call them "awful blasphemies," for Dr. Cole declares that he heard with his own ears this poor, miserable, ranting orator, for he called his own sermons "Orations," term the holy humanity of the blessed Lord, "that sinful substance." The sacred beauty, the ineffable blessedness of that holy humanity mainly consisted in the Lord's being "a lamb without blemish and without spot," **1Pe 1:19** as was typified by the paschal lamb, **Ex 12:5** and indeed by every other ceremonial sacrifice. **Le 22:19-24; De 15:21** We must never lose sight of the peculiar nature of the blessed Lord's humanity. The nature of Adam was peccable, that is, capable of sinning, because, though created pure, it was not generated by any supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost. It was a pure created nature, but not a holy begotten nature. The two things are essentially distinct. Besides which, the humanity of Adam was a person, and therefore could fall; but the humanity of Jesus is a nature taken into union with his divine Person, and therefore could no more sin or fall away from Godhead than his Godhead, could sin or fall off from his manhood.

(1) **"The True Signification of the English Adjective, "Mortal," and the Awfully Erroneous Consequences of the Application of that Term to the Ever Immortal Body of Jesus Christ, briefly considered." By Henry Cole, London.**

(2) **1792-1834. An exceedingly popular London preacher, who adopted strange and erroneous views.**

ii. It was therefore **incorruptible**. The body of the blessed Redeemer lay three days and nights, according to the Jewish mode of calculation, in the sepulchre, but it knew no corruption. As the apostle expressly declares, "He whom God raised again saw no corruption." **Ac 13:37** The sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus had no seeds in it of decay. Though a real body, like our own, though it ate and drank and slept as we do, not being under the original curse, nor involved in the Adam fall, it was not subject to sickness or corruption, as our body is. The voluntary death of the blessed Lord severed for a while body and soul; but the body was no more tainted with corruption in the sepulchre than the soul was tainted with sin in paradise.

iii. This sacred humanity of the adorable Lord was therefore essentially **immortal**. The body of the Lord was capable of death; indeed, as dying was the main part of every sacrifice, it was taken that it might die. It did not die from inherent necessity, as our bodies die, which are essentially mortal, because involved in Adam's transgression; but it died by a voluntary act. This is most plain from the Lord's own words, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." **Joh 10:17-18** It was not the pain of the cross, the nails driven through the hands and feet, the exhaustion of nature, or the agony of soul that killed', so to speak, the Lord Jesus. When he had finished the work which his Father gave him to do, so that he could say, "It is finished," "he bowed his head" -the head did not

decline of itself, weighed down by death, but he himself, full of life and immortality, bowed it; and then, by a voluntary act, "gave up the ghost," or breathed out his life.

We conclude with an extract from Dr. Cole's book:

The awful and inevitable consequences of applying this term 'mortal' to the body of Christ. If the body of Christ was 'mortal' in the unalterable meaning of that term, his death, as we have already hinted, was not **voluntary** but of necessity. He did not die of his own free will, but died, because, being a personal sinner, **tremble my soul at the thought!** he could not save himself from death! He had no power to 'lay down' his life, but was compelled to yield it up, because he had forfeited it by his own sins! He did not 'give his life a ransom for many-, but the just judgments of God took it from him for his own transgressions : 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' **Eze 18:4**

But is this the truth as it is in Jesus Christ? Is this the doctrine concerning the adorable Person of the Son of God that is revealed in the Word? Is this the instruction which the Holy and Blessed Spirit seals upon the heart of the redeemed? No, no! The scriptures declare, and those that have been brought to experience the benefits of the death of Christ know and believe that his death was not of **necessity** but a **free and voluntary gift**. How plainly does he declare. and how expressively describe this himself: 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd **giveth** his life for the sheep. I **lay down** my life that I may take it again. No **man taketh it from me**, but I lay it down of myself. I **have power** to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' **Joh 10:11,18** His sacrifice is everywhere called 'a sacrifice of himself a voluntary gift.' 'He offered up himself.' **Heb 7:27** 'By the sacrifice of himself **Heb 9:26** 'Who gave himself a ransom.' **1Ti 2:6** And so universally. But all these scriptures are flatly contradicted, all this cloud of testimonies is utterly nullified, if the body of Christ was 'mortal.'

THE REDEEMER'S HUMILIATION (Chapter 3)

In approaching the solemn subject of the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, as engaged in the work of redemption when here below, we desire to do so under the special teaching and unction of the Holy Ghost, not only that nothing erroneous, inconsistent, or unbecoming may escape our pen, and that what we write may be in the strictest harmony with the oracles of God and the experience of his saints, but that life, and power, and savour may attend our reflections to those believing hearts which may desire to walk with us in these fields of heavenly meditation To guide into all truth, to take of the things of Christ and to show them to his disciples, and thus glorify Jesus, is the especial work of the Holy Ghost. **Joh 16:13-15** To have this divine teaching is to have "an unction from the Holy One whereby we know all things;" **1Jo 2:20** and is to be blessed with that anointing which

"teacheth of all things and is truth, and is no lie." **1Jo 2:27** Prayer and supplication, reverent thoughts and feelings towards the sacred Majesty of heaven, inward prostration of spirit before his throne, submission of mind to the word of truth faith in living exercise upon the Person and work of the Son of God, hope anchoring within the veil, and love flowing forth to the adorable Redeemer, will all accompany this heavenly anointing. So unspeakably holy, so great, and so perfect is that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; one not made with hands, as the tabernacle in the wilderness, but prepared by God the Father, assumed by God the Son, and sanctified by God the Holy Ghost, that we should as much dread to drop any word derogatory to or inconsistent with its grace and glory as the high priest under the law would have trembled to carry swine's blood, or the broth of abominable things into the most holy place.

The sacred humanity of his dear Son, as the temple of his Godhead, and as irradiated with the beams of his eternal glory, the eyes of the Father ever contemplate with ineffable complacency and delight.

Nor was this tabernacle less glorious in his holy eyes who sees things as they really are not as they appear to man, even in Jesus' deepest humiliation and shame, when he was "a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people." When dogs compassed him, when the assembly of the wicked inclosed him, when they pierced his hands and feet, when He could tell all his bones as they hung stripped on the cross, when his enemies looked and stared upon him, parted his garments among them, and cast lots upon his vesture, **Ps 22:6-18**, he was as much delighted in by the Father, and was as glorious in his eyes as he now is at the right hand of his throne. He ever was from the hour of his incarnation, he ever will be the same Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, when he hung upon the cross, today as he sits at the right hand of God, and for ever in the eternity of his kingdom, power, and glory. May we, then, who believe in his name, and cleave to him with purpose of heart, as beholding the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, feel such a sacred communion with him in his suffering humanity that we may be able to say, with holy John, in the flowing forth of faith and affection, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." **1Jo 1:3**

The foundation of this sacred mystery was laid in the eternal purposes of God, and determined by a covenant ordered in all things and sure. The creation of this lower world, and indeed we may say, of the higher world of bright, angelic beings, was but a first step to the bringing to light of these hidden purposes of Jehovah. When he formed man in his own likeness, it was not merely after his moral image, **Eph 4:24; Col 3:10** but after the likeness of that man who was set up in the mind of God from everlasting, or ever the earth was. **Pr 8:23** It was utterly impossible that a holy God could create a sinful man. He, therefore, made man upright, but able to fall. During the period of man's innocency the promises of

the covenant of grace, so to speak, slept. They were in the bosom of the covenant, ready to appear, but were not yet needed. But immediately that man sinned and fell, -as soon as Justice, which, as the revelation of the intrinsic holiness of Jehovah, had the first claim to speak, had pronounced sentence on the head of the guilty criminals, mercy, as already laid up in the covenant of grace, stepped in with the first promise which issued from the lips of a sin-pardoning God, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Here was the first intimation of the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The bruiser of the serpent's head was to be of the seed of the woman; and the sufferings of the sacred humanity to be assumed of the woman were at the same moment foreshadowed in the declaration that the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel.

As a further development of the sacred mystery of the Slaughtered Lamb, the gracious Lord then instituted Worship by sacrifice, for it is evident from Abel's offering of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, which he doubtless burned on the altar, in strict accordance with the Mosaic ritual afterwards appointed, **Nu 18:17** that the Lord then instituted the rite of sacrifice, and himself clothed our first parents with the skins of the sacrificed victims as emblematic of the righteousness of the slain Lamb of God, who was thus revealed to their faith.

Let us not think that these solemn transactions in the garden of Eden were a sudden thought in the mind of God-an expedient then and there for the first time devised to patch up the fall. The covenant of grace between the three Persons of the sacred Trinity was entered into with a foreview of the fall; and therefore the blessed Lord is called the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" **Re 13:8** It is, indeed, derogatory to the character of him who "declareth the end from the beginning," **Isa 46:10** who "looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven," **Job 28:24** to think that the Adam fall took him, so to speak by surprise, was an unlooked-for unexpected event, of which there had been no foresight, and for which there had been made no provision. Far from our mind be such low, grovelling thoughts of the great and glorious self-existent I AM. Such views would root up the very foundations of our faith in his omniscience and omnipotence If God did not foresee the fall, an event charged with the eternal destiny of millions, what minor circumstance can he foresee now? If God did not provide a remedy for the fall as foreseen, where is his wisdom as well as his prescience of the circumstances whereby we are at present surrounded? Such a blind God groping, as it were for a remedy amidst the ruins of the fall, which he never foresaw, is worse than a heathen idol. At any rate it is not the God of the Bible it is not the God whom living souls believe in, worship, and adore. They admire with holy reverence his eternal foresight, and bow with submission before his fixed decrees; they adore his sovereignty in the election of the vessels of mercy and the rejection of the vessels of wrath; and when favoured with a sip of his love, bless his holy name for having loved them with an everlasting love from before the foundation of the world. If those foundations of our most holy faith be destroyed, what can the righteous do? **Ps 11:3** But blessed be God, his prescience and his providence, his wisdom and his grace, his mercy and

his love, are all from everlasting to everlasting, secured by a covenant ordered in all things and sure, fixed by firm decree and ratified by his word and by his oath, two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie. **Heb 6:18** In this everlasting covenant it was appointed that the Son of God, the second Person in the glorious Godhead, should take our nature into union with his own divine Person, that he might offer it as a sacrifice for the sins of his elect people, and thus redeem them from all the consequences of the fall, and reconcile them unto God.

We have already shown that this sacred humanity of our adorable Lord was a real human body, and a real human soul, taken at one and the same instant into union with the divine Person of the Son of God, and that it was essentially impeccable and immortal. We have, with God's blessing, in pursuance of our sacred theme, and as a further opening up of "the great mystery of godliness. God manifest in the flesh," to show the work accomplished in that sacred humanity whilst here on earth in its state of humiliation and suffering.

The first consideration is, **what he became** by this voluntary act of taking our nature into union with his divine Person. In opening up this part of our subject we shall tread closely in the footsteps of that portion of holy writ where the apostle Paul unfolds the sacred mystery of the humiliation of the blessed Lord. **Php 2:5-8**

1. He **emptied** himself of all those outward adjuncts of his glorious Person wherewith he had for ever shone as the eternal Son of the Father in the courts of heaven. We use the word "emptied himself," as being the literal translation of the word rendered in our version, "made himself of no reputation," but we do not mean thereby that he deprived himself of any one of the perfections of the divine nature. Not a single essential attribute of Deity was, or indeed could be in the least degree diminished by his assumption of our nature, for he could no more cease to be all that God is than he could cease to be God. But he emptied himself of them before the eyes of men laying aside their outward and visible manifestation. As an earthly king may lay aside for a while his regal state, and yet not cease to be a king, so the Son of God laid aside for a season those bright beams of his glory which would otherwise have shone forth too brightly and gloriously for human eyes to look upon; for no man can see God and live. **Ex 33:20**. Besides which, there was a secret purpose in the mind of God, whose glory it is to conceal a thing as well as to reveal it, **Pr 25:2**, that the glorious person of his dear Son should be veiled from all eyes but those of faith.

As, then, the sun is sometimes veiled in a mist, or by passing clouds, through which his light shines and his orb appears, though dimmed and shorn of those rays which the human eye cannot bear, so the Son of God veiled his diving glory by the tabernacle of the sacred

humanity in which he dwelt. He is therefore said to have "tabernacled among us," as the word "dwelt" **Joh 1:14** literally means; for as the Shechinah, or divine presence, dwelt in a cloud of glory, upon the mercy-seat, in the tabernacle erected in the wilderness, **Le 16:2**, so that the most holy place needed not the light of the golden candlestick which illuminated the outer sanctuary, and yet was veiled by the curtains of the tabernacle, **2Sa 7:2**, so the sacred humanity of the blessed Lord was as a tabernacle to his divine nature, veiling it from the eyes of men, and yet by its indwelling presence filled with grace and glory.

Thus, to common eyes, he had no form nor comeliness, was as a root out of a dry ground, was despised and rejected of men, and when they saw him there was no beauty in him that they should desire him. **Isa 53:2**. It is true that sparkles of his eternal Sonship and glorious Godhead shone through the veil of his humanity to believing eyes and hearts, for John says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." **Joh 1:14** And the Father not only outwardly, with a voice from heaven, twice declared that he was his beloved Son, **Mt 3:17; 17:5** but revealed him inwardly as such to the hearts of his disciples, according to the Lord's own testimony in the case of Peter **Mt 16:16-17** As long as he was in the world he was the light of the world, **Joh 1:9; 8:12; 9:5** as the sun, however veiled by clouds, is still the light of the earth. Though rejected and abhorred of men, he could, therefore, still look up to his heavenly Father, in the lowest depths of his humiliation, and speak in the language of filial love and confidence, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." **Isa 49:5**

2. The second act of humiliation of the eternal Son of God in assuming our nature was **to take upon him the form of a servant**. Some are born servants, as Abraham had three hundred and eighteen trained servants born in his house; **Ge 14:14** and some are made servants by others, either taken captive in war **De 21:10** or bought with money. **Le 25:44-46** But the blessed Son of God took upon him the form of a servant, as a voluntary act of grace; and not only the form, but the reality, for the word form respects not only his outward appearance whilst here below. but his inward subjection of soul to God. Therefore the Father said of him, in the language of prophecy, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," **Isa 42:1** and unto him, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." **Isa 49:3** He was formed from the womb to be God's servant, **Isa 49:5** so that he became a servant at the very instant that he took our nature into union with his own divine Person in the womb of the Virgin. Thus the apostle, quoting the words of **Ps 40:6**, "Mine ears hast thou opened," marg. "digged," that is, "Hast made me thy willing servant," in allusion to **Ex 21:6**, renders them, "A body hast thou prepared me;" for by taking the prepared body he became the willing servant of the Father, according to his own words, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." **Ps 40:8**

3. By taking this prepared body, he was therefore **made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man**, that is, though his sacred humanity was intrinsically different from ours, as being holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, impeccable, and immortal, yet, in outward form and appearance, as in reality and truth, it perfectly resembled man's. It ate, it drank, it slept, was weary, sweat drops of blood, endured pain of body and travail of soul. The early church was much pestered with what is called the Gnostic heresy, which, under the plausible assumption that real flesh was too gross and material a substance for the Son of God to assume, asserted that he took a shadowy, aerial form, in which there was no real flesh or blood, but only the appearance. It is against this heresy that holy John draws his sword, when he declares that "the Word was made flesh," and gives this as a test of saving truth and damnable error: "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come. and even now already is it in the world." **1Jo 4:2-3** We must hold fast, then, to this vital truth, that it was real flesh and blood, though holy flesh and blood, that the Son of God assumed in the womb and offered on the tree.

4. Having, then, thus voluntarily assumed the form of a servant, the blessed Lord took that in which the very essence of servitude consists, **obedience**, and that not only to the word, but to the will of his heavenly Father.

As this obedience forms our justifying righteousness and is a part of his finished work, it claims at our hands the most attentive, prayerful, and meditative consideration. Not, however, to dwell too long on this part of our subject, we may briefly name these five particulars as most marked and blessed features of the obedience of Jesus, whilst here in this state of humiliation. It was voluntary-delighted in-perfect-vicarious-and meritorious.

i. It was **voluntary**. "Lo! I come **in the volume of the book it is written of me** to do thy will, O God," **Heb 10:7** were, so to speak, the words in his heart and mouth when he came out of the bosom of the Father to take flesh in the womb of the Virgin. There was no compulsion to bring him down from heaven to earth but the compulsion of love. As the love of Christ is said to constrain us not to live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again, **2Co 5:14** so, in a sense, we may say that the love of his people constrained him to live and die for them. They were his inheritance, the portion given him by his Father when he appointed him heir of all things, **Heb 1:2** that they might be his eternal possession. **De 32:9; Ps 2:8** "Thine they were," he therefore meekly reminds his Father, "and thou gavest them me," adding, to show the unity of mind, will, purpose, and possession in the Father and the Son, "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." **Joh 17:6,10**

He, therefore, loved the church as his own bride, the spouse of his heart, whom he had betrothed unto himself as the gift of the Father before time was. **Jer 31:3; Ho 2:19-20** Yes, before the mountains were settled; while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, even then was he rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth that part which his saints should inhabit, and his delights were with the sons of men. **Pr 8:25-26,31** When, then, in and by the fall, the church had become defiled and polluted beyond all thought and expression, when sunk beyond all other help and hope, the image of God in which she had been created, marred, and defaced, she an enemy and an alien by wicked works, the willing captive of sin and Satan, with hell opening its mouth to swallow her up in the same gulf of eternal woe where the fallen angels were already weltering then, even then, O miracle of grace! O wonder of unutterable love! the Son of God, by a purely voluntary act, yet in accordance with the will and counsel of the Father and the Holy Ghost, gave himself for her.

This free, voluntary gift of himself, with all its blessed fruits and consequences, is beautifully unfolded by the apostle in that striking passage, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." **Eph 5:25-27** The forlorn, abject, helpless, and hopeless state of the church by the fall, and the pitiful compassion of the blessed Lord as her covenant Head and Husband, are beautifully set forth by the prophet Ezekiel, where he compares her to a poor, deserted, abandoned infant, cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born. No eye pitied it, no hand was stretched forth to do it any necessary office, or give it food, warmth or shelter. Abandoned to die, had not he who is "very pitiful, of tender mercy" pitied her, **Jas 5:11** had not he whose love passeth knowledge loved her, into what an unfathomable depth of everlasting woe must she not have sunk! But in this very hour of need he passed by, and the time was the time of love, for he spread his skirt over her, and swore unto her, entered into a covenant with her, and she became his. But before she could pass into his arms, he had himself to wash away all her filth in the fountain of his own blood, to anoint her with the oil of his grace, and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Blessed Spirit, and to clothe her with brodered work, even the righteousness that he wrought for her by his own active and suffering obedience the three blessings of which the apostle speaks as the present portion of the saints of God: "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." **Eze 16:5-10; 1Co 6:11**

ii. It was an obedience that the blessed Lord **delighted in**. His own words, in the language of prophecy, as if in holy anticipation of his coming from heaven to earth, a thousand years before the incarnation, were, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." **Ps 40:8** Thus he could

say, when faint and weary at Samaria's well, his love and delight in doing the will of God absorbing all feeling of the natural wants of the body, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." **Joh 4:34** In this spirit also he said, a year before his actual sufferings and death, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with"-and O what a baptism of suffering and blood! of what agonies of body, and of what travail of soul! "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" **Lu 12:50**—as though his holy soul panted with intense desires for the overwhelming baptism of garden sorrows, and pressed forward to meet it, and the sufferings of the cross, as the fulfilment of his Father's will.

So, on his last journey out of Galilee towards Judea, "he went before," as if he would exceed his usual pace, and outstrip his lagging disciples, "ascending up to Jerusalem," where the will of his Father was to be obeyed, and the atoning sacrifice to be offered. **Lu 13:33; 19:28** Blessed Lord! would that we could follow thee in this holy example, and delight to do thy will as thou didst delight to do thy Father's will. And such surely would be our desire and delight were we more conformed to thy suffering image, and more moulded after the pattern of thine obedience. **Ro 12:1-2** Animated by the same holy delight, he said to his disciples, on the eve of his sufferings and death, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." **Lu 22:15** And when the solemn hour drew nigh when the waters came in unto his soul, when he sank in deep mire where there was no standing, when he came into deep waters where the floods overflowed him, **Ps 69:1-2**, [It is in the Psalms, especially **Ps 22; 40; 69**, that the inward experience of the blessed Lord as a Man of sorrows is set forth.] in the gloomy garden, when he had to drink of the cup of wrath put into his hand, what meek submission, what holy resignation he showed to his Father's will! Where can we look to see such sorrows? But where can we look to find such holy obedience, such meek submission, such patient endurance of them?

iii. Again. It was a **perfect** obedience. Every thought, every word, and every act of that holy and sacred humanity were perfect, not only as proceeding from a nature intrinsically pure, but as filled with all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, that glorious Person in the undivided Godhead who not only begot by a divine operation the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord in the womb of the Virgin, but filled it with all his gifts and graces, descending upon him more visibly at his baptism, and anointing him as Prophet, Priest and King, (**Isa 61:1; Lu 3:22; 4:1; Joh 3:34; Ac 10:38; Heb 1:9**) but abiding in him in all his fulness during the whole of his ministry, sufferings, and death. The law demanded a perfect obedience; it could, indeed, from its very nature, accept no other; and this obedience must be unwavering, flowing on in one uninterrupted stream from the heart, and that stream, like Jordan, all the time of harvest, overflowing all its banks with love to God and man. As the Lord promised that rivers of living water should flow out of the belly **or heart** of him that believed in his name, so the rivers of living obedience flowed from his own heart and lips, as he himself believed in God and did his will from the heart.

iv. The obedience of Jesus to the Father's will was **vicarious**, that is, rendered on behalf of his church, and imputed to her for righteousness. He stood in her place and stead as her Surety and Representative. She owed a debt which she could not pay, an obedience to the Law which she could not render. The Father accepted his Son's, and thus his obedience became hers. Thus, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous; **Ro 5:19** for God made the Lord Jesus to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. **2Co 5:21**.

v. This obedience was **meritorious**. Here we see the beauty, grace, and glory of the incarnation of the Son of God. As God, he could not suffer; as man he could not merit- but as God-man he could suffer as man, and merit as God. And as though he has two natures, he has but one Person, his doing and dying, his sufferings and obedience, his blood and righteousness, are stamped with all the value and invested with all the validity of Godhead, because he who obeyed and suffered as man is truly and verily God.

Here, then, is "the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." Here flow through this consecrated channel pardon and peace. Here God can be just and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Here every attribute of God is harmonised, the law magnified, the gospel revealed, the sinner saved, and God glorified.

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS (Chapter4)

Well might the apostle, as if in a burst of holy admiration, cry aloud, as with trumpet voice, that heaven and earth might hear, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." **1Ti 3:16** A mystery indeed it is, a great, a deep, an unfathomable mystery; for who can rightly understand how the divine Word, the eternal Son of God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us? "Who shall declare his generation?" **Isa 53:8** either that eternal generation whereby he is the only-begotten Son of God, or the generation of his sacred humanity in the womb of the Virgin, when the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her? These are the things "which the angels desire to look into;" which they cannot understand, but reverently adore. And well may we imitate their adoring admiration, not attempting to understand, but believe, love, and revere; for well has it been said,

Where reason fails, with all her powers,

There faith believes, and love adores.

Nor, if rightly taught and spiritually led, shall we find this a barren, dry, or unprofitable subject. It is "the great mystery of godliness;" therefore all godliness is contained in it, and flows out of it. There never was, there never will or can be a truly godly thought, feeling, or desire—no, not one godly word or work, a godly heart or a godly life which does not arise out of, and is not sustained by, the great mystery of an incarnate God. There may be, indeed frequently is, as a legal holiness, a fleshly piety, a tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, and a profusion of good works, so called, independent of the grace that dwells in the Lord the Lamb; but godliness, as consisting in a new and heavenly birth, with all its attendant fruits and graces, can only flow from the fulness of a covenant Head, communicating life to the members of his mystical body. And this covenant Head, we know, is the Son of God, once manifest in the flesh and now exalted to the right hand of the Father. How clear on this point, that all life is in him and out of him, are his own words of grace and truth: "Because I live, ye shall live also;" "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me;" "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you;" "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

If, then, our hearts, as touched with an unction from above, are bent after godliness, as a felt blessing; if, as made daily more and more sensible of our miserable emptiness and destitution, and the drying up of all creature springs of happiness and holiness, we long more and more to realise the inward possession of that promised well of water, springing up into everlasting life, we shall desire to look more and more into this heavenly mystery, and to have its transforming power and efficacy more feelingly and experimentally made known to our souls. "If any man thirst," said the blessed Lord, "let him come unto me and drink;" and to show that not only should he drink for his own soul's happiness, but for the benefit of others, he graciously added, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly (or heart) shall flow rivers of living water." **Joh 7:38** The whole of God's grace, mercy, and truth is laid up in, is revealed through, is manifested by, the Son of his love; for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" **Col 1:19** and this as Immanuel, God with us. Thus his sacred humanity, in union with his Divine Person, is the channel of communication through which all the love and mercy of God flow down to poor, guilty, miserable sinners, who believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.

If blessed then with faith in living exercise, we may draw near and behold the great mystery of godliness. To tread by faith upon this holy ground is to come "unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh

better things than the blood of Abel;" **Heb 12:22-24** for every blessing of the new covenant, if we are but favoured with a living faith in an incarnate God, is then experimentally as well as eternally ours.

The last acts of the suffering obedience of our adorable Redeemer are couched in the words of the apostle, "And became obedient unto death, **even the death of the cross.**" **Php 2:8** The death of Christ was the fulfilment of the purpose for which he came into the world, which was, "to give himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

Eph 5:2 "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." **Heb 9:26** The sufferings, bloodshedding, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ were a sacrifice offered for sin, and are therefore spoken of as a propitiation **Ro 3:25; 1Jo 2:2; 4:10** and an atonement. **Ro 5:11** But in a sacrifice two things are absolutely necessary: 1. That **the blood of the victim should be shed**, for "without shedding of blood is no remission:" "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul;" **Le 17:11** and 2. That **the victim should die**; for death being the penalty of disobedience, **Ge 2:17; Eze 18:4** the sacrifice offered as an atonement for sin cannot be complete without the death of the victim. In the sacrifice of himself, offering up his sacred humanity on the altar of his Deity, the blessed Lord accomplished these two essentials of a propitiatory offering.

1. His blood was shed upon the cross—the actual living blood of his sacred humanity. It is therefore called "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," **1Pe 1:19** and "his own blood." **Ac 20:28; Heb 9:12** It was precious as flowing from his sacred humanity; precious, as stamped with all the validity and merit of Deity; precious in the sight of God as a sweetsmelling savour; and precious in the hearts of his people as cleansing them from all sin. Sin is an evil so dreadful, so hateful and abhorrent to his righteous character, so provoking to his justice and holiness, that God could not pardon it unless an atonement were made adequate to its fearful magnitude. Thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil could not atone for sin. Did all men consent to give their firstborn for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul, **Mic 6:7** all could not suffice to outweigh the magnitude or sin. Lebanon is not sufficient for a burnt offering. Nothing short of the blood of the only-begotten Son of God could be an atonement of sufficient worth, of equivalent value.

2. But the death of the victim was also required. He who freely and voluntarily stood in the sinner's place must die in his room, or the substitution could not be effectual Here then, we see the mystery of the death of Jesus. There was no natural mortality[1][i] in that sacred humanity which the Lord assumed in the womb of the Virgin. And yet he took a nature which could die by a voluntary act. The whole of his obedience in his state of humiliation was voluntary. Therefore the last act of it was as voluntary as the first the death on the cross as much as the assumption in the Virgin. The Lord's own words are decisive here:

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Joh 10:17-18

The very merit of his obedience unto death whereby it became capable of being imputed for righteousness to the church of God consisted mainly in two things: the dignity of the obedient Sufferer and the voluntariness of the sacrifice as an act of obedience to the will of God. Had our blessed Lord not been God, and that as the eternal Son of God, There would have been no merit in his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death. As the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his Person, as his co-eternal Son he thought it not robbery—no unhallowed, disallowable claim, to be equal with God; **Php 2:6** and therefore the very infinity of Deity itself attached to his words and works so as to stamp efficacious merit upon them. It was not because his humanity was perfect that it was meritorious. Had his humanity been as perfect as it was, if Deity were not in conjunction with it, no merit could have been attached to it any more than there was merit in the obedience of Adam, or in that of an angel. But being God as well as man, the merit of Deity was stamped upon all the acts of the obedient suffering humanity, so that, as we have sometimes said, Godhead was in every drop of his precious blood.

Again, if the life of the blessed Lord had been violently taken away, contrary to his will, where would have been the obedience unto death? Had he been killed, so to speak, by the cross—had died because he could not help dying, had his life been violently torn from him, where would have been the laying down of his life as the last act of his voluntary obedience? What power could man have had over him? Had he so willed, he could have freed himself from the hands of his enemies. Therefore he said unto Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." **Joh 19:11** And again, "Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" **Mt 26:53** When, then, the band of men and officers from the chief priests came to take him with lanterns, and torches, and weapons, he freely "went forth" to yield himself up; but when he said, "I am he," or rather, as the words literally mean, "I AM," the glory of his eternal Deity so flashed forth, that "they went backward, and fell to the ground." **Joh 18:3-6**

Thus truly was he "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." **Isa 53:7** What heart can conceive, what tongue express what his holy soul endured when "the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all"? In the garden of Gethsemane, what a load of guilt, what a weight of sin, what an intolerable burden of the wrath of God did that sacred humanity endure, until the pressure of sorrow and woe forced the drops of blood to fall as sweat from his brow. The human nature, in its weakness recoiled, as it were, from the cup of anguish put into his hand. His body could

scarce bear the load that pressed him down; his soul, under the waves and billows of God's wrath, sank in deep mire where there was no standing, and came into deep waters where the floods overflowed him. **Ps 69:1-2** And how could it be otherwise when that sacred humanity was enduring all the wrath of God, suffering the very pangs of hell, and wading in all the depths of guilt and terror? When the blessed Lord was made sin (or a sin-offering) for us, he endured in his holy soul all the pangs of distress, horror, alarm, misery, and guilt that the elect would have felt in hell for ever; and not only as any one of them would have felt, but as the collective whole would have experienced under the outpouring of the everlasting wrath of God. The anguish, the distress, the darkness, the condemnation, the shame, the guilt, the unutterable horror, that any or all of his quickened family have ever experienced under a sense of God's wrath, the curse of the law, and the terrors of hell, are only faint, feeble reflections of what the Lord felt in the garden and on the cross; for there were attendant circumstances in his case which are not, and indeed cannot be in theirs, and which made the distress and agony of his holy soul, both in nature and degree, such as none but he could feel or know.

He as the eternal Son of God, who had lain in his bosom before all worlds, had known all the blessedness and happiness of the love and favour of the Father—his own Father, shining upon him, for he was "by him as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." **Pr 8:30** When, then, instead of love he felt his displeasure, instead of the beams of his favour he experienced the frowns and terrors of his wrath, instead of the light of his countenance he tasted the darkness and gloom of desertion—what heart can conceive, what tongue express the bitter anguish which must have wrung the soul of our suffering Surety under this agonising experience?[1][ii] A few drops of the wrath of God let down into the conscience of a child of God have made many a living soul cry out, "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." **Ps 88:15-16** But what is all that Job, Heman, Jeremiah, or Jonah experienced, compared with the floods of anguish and terror which all but overwhelmed the soul of our blessed Lord? We therefore read of him in the garden, when the first pangs of his agony came on, that he "began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;" and this made him say to his three disciples, who were to be eye-witnesses of his sufferings, **1Pe 5:1** "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." **Mr 14:33-34** So great was that load that his human nature must have sunk beneath the weight his body and soul been rent asunder, but for four sustaining props: the power of his Deity, for though that purposely did not display its strength, it remained in firm union with his sacred humanity; the help and support of the Holy Ghost sustaining his human nature under the load laid upon it; the joy set before him, which enabled him in the prospect to endure the cross, despising the shame; **Heb 12:2** and the strengthening of the ministering angel sent from heaven. **Lu 22:43** Thus supported and sustained, our gracious Redeemer sank not in the deep waters, but, as our great High Priest, "offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" **Heb 5:7** not as some have foolishly thought and said, fearing the miscarrying of his undertaking, or that he should sink into hell, but because he feared his

heavenly Father with the reverence of a Son[1][iii] for filial fear, with every other grace, was in the heart of Jesus as his treasure. **Isa 11:2-3**

Let us ever bear in mind that the sufferings of the holy soul of Jesus were as real, that is, as really felt, as the sufferings of his sacred body, and a thousand times more intense and intolerable. Though beyond description painful and agonising, yet the sufferings of the body were light indeed compared with the sufferings of the soul. It is so with the saints of God themselves, when the Lord lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet in their conscience, and lets down a sense of his anger and displeasure into their soul. What is all bodily suffering compared to a sense of God's displeasure and the arrows of his wrath sticking in the conscience? So it was with our great High Priest, when both as sacrificer and sacrificed, alike priest and victim, he was bound with the cords of love and obedience to the horns of the altar. **Ps 118:27** Surely never was there such a pang since the foundations of the earth were laid as that which rent and tore the soul of the Redeemer when the last drop of agony was poured into the already overflowing cup, and he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Nature herself sympathised with his sorrow, and was moved at his cry, for the earth shook, the sun withdrew his light, and the graves yielded up their dead. Yet thus was redemption's work accomplished, sin atoned for and blotted out, the wrath of God appeased, everlasting righteousness brought in, and the church for ever reconciled and saved.

When, then, the Lord had been fully baptized with his baptism of suffering and blood, when he had drunk the cup of sorrow and anguish to its last dregs, and had rendered all the obedience which the law demanded and the will of God required he cried out with a loud voice that heaven and earth might hear, "It is finished!" and then, and not till then, he meekly bowed his head, laid down his life, as the last act of his voluntary, suffering obedience, and gave up the ghost.

THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER'S SUFFERINGS AND DEATH (Chapter 5)

We might now pass on to the consideration of that sacred humanity as taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, where it lay in all its innate purity, sanctity, and incorruptibility, perfuming the grave, and consecrating the tomb as the sleeping-place of those who die in the Lord. Thence we might pass to the resurrection of that incorruptible body, whereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power; **Ro 1:4**; thence to the continuance of the blessed Lord upon earth during the forty days of his tarrying here below; thence to his ascension on high when he led captivity captive; thence to his sitting at the right hand of God in our nature; and thence to his second coming at the great day. All these successive steps are full of blessedness to believing hearts, when they can meditate upon them, and through faith, hope, and love in them, rise up into sweet union and

communion with their most gracious and glorious Lord, as their once suffering but now risen and exalted Head.

But as we are still at the cross of our suffering Lord, we cannot leave that sacred spot without dwelling for a few moments on several points most intimately connected with it. Three at this present moment offer themselves to our mind.

1. **The work accomplished** by the sufferings, bloodshedding, obedience, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the benefits and blessings which spring out of it. **It was a finished work.** Here is all our salvation and here is all our hope. When were such words ever uttered on this earth as those which his gracious lips spoke from the cross, "It is finished"? Well may we cry, in the language of our sweet Christian Psalmist, **Holy Ghost, repeat the word, There's salvation in it.**

Standing, then, at the cross of our adorable Lord, and hearing these gracious words from the lips of him who cannot lie, if blessed with living faith, we may see the law thoroughly fulfilled, its curse fully endured, its penalties wholly removed, sin eternally put away, the justice of God amply satisfied, all his perfections gloriously harmonised, his holy will perfectly obeyed, reconciliation completely effected, redemption graciously accomplished, and the church everlastingly saved. Here we see sin in its blackest colours, and holiness in its fairest beauties. Here we see the love of God in its tenderest form, and the anger of God in its deepest expression. Here we see the sacred humanity of the blessed Redeemer lifted up, as it were, between heaven and earth, to show to angels and to men the spectacle of redeeming love, and to declare at one and the same moment, and by one and the same act of the suffering obedience and bleeding sacrifice of the Son of God, the eternal and unalterable displeasure of the Almighty against sin, and the rigid demands of his inflexible justice, and yet the tender compassion and boundless love of his heart to the election of grace. Here, and here alone, are obtained pardon and peace; here, and here alone, penitential grief and godly sorrow flow from heart and eyes; here, and here alone, is sin subdued and mortified, holiness communicated, death vanquished, Satan put to flight, and happiness and heaven begun in the soul. O what heavenly blessings, what present grace, as well as what future glory flow through the sacred humanity of the Son of God! What a holy meeting-place for repenting sinners and a sin-pardoning God! What a healingplace for guilty, yet repenting and returning backsliders; what a door of hope in the valley of Achor for the self-condemned and self-abhorred; what a safe spot for seeking souls; and what a blessed resorting-place for the whole family of God in this vale of grief and sorrow!

2. Another most blessed fruit of the sacred humanity of our adorable Redeemer is that in that nature he **learnt the experimental reality of temptation and suffering**, and thus became able to sympathise with his tempted and afflicted people. It was necessary under the law that the high priest "should have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity." **Heb 5:2**. Our great High Priest was not compassed with infirmity, like the high priest under the law. and therefore had no need to offer sacrifice for his own sins; **Heb 5:3**; but that he might be "a merciful" as well as "faithful" high priest-faithful to God and merciful to man, "it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he might be able to succour them that are tempted." **Heb 2:17-18**. "We have not, therefore, a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." **Heb 4:15**.

Here we see the wisdom and grace of the Father in preparing, and the love and pity of the Son in assuming a nature like our own, sin only excepted, that he might have a real experience of every form of suffering and of temptation. Those only can feel for others in trouble and sorrow who themselves have walked in the path of tribulation; nor can any one really sympathise with the tempted but those who have themselves been in the furnace of temptation. Thus our blessed Lord became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; hid not his face from shame and spitting; endured poverty, hunger, thirst, and nakedness; was betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and forsaken by all; was oppressed and was afflicted, not only as a part of his meritorious, suffering obedience, but that by a personal experience in his holy humanity of sorrow and affliction he might sympathise with his mourning, afflicted people. And as with affliction, so with temptation; the gracious Redeemer endured every sort of temptation which Satan could present to his holy soul, for "in **all** points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin," **Heb 4:15**, that he might feel for and sympathise with the tempted.

But this is not all. The blessed Redeemer had not only to sympathise with the sorrows and temptations, but experimentally to learn the graces of his believing people. He had therefore to learn obedience in the same way that they learn it, for "he learnt obedience by the things which he suffered;" **Heb 5:8**; was taught in the school of affliction the inward experience of submission to God's will, meekness under injury and oppression, and lowliness of heart as a heavenly grace. Therefore he could say, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." **Mt 11:29**. Let us not think that the blessed Lord had no inward experience in his holy soul of spiritual graces, or that his divine nature supplied to his human the grace of the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit that was given him without measure, **Joh 3:34**, who not only anointed him as Prophet, Priest, and King, but dwelt in him in all his fulness, bestowed upon him every spiritual grace, as faith, trust, hope, love, prayer and supplication, patience, long-suffering, zeal for the glory of God, and with all spiritual wisdom and understanding, all counsel and might, all heavenly knowledge and the fear of the Lord. **Isa 11:1-2**. All these gifts and graces dwelt in his sacred humanity

[If space admitted, we could easily show from those Psalms in which, beyond all controversy, Christ speaks that all the graces which we have here enumerated dwelt in him and were expressed by him. Let our spiritual readers examine Ps 18; 22; 40; 69, all of which the most indubitable external and internal evidence assigns to Christ, with an eye to this particular point, and trace it for themselves.] and were drawn into exercise by the Holy Ghost, so that the blessed Lord believed, hoped, and loved; prayed, sighed, and groaned; trusted in God and lived a life of faith in him, just in the same manner and by the same Spirit and power, though in an infinitely higher degree, and wholly unmixed with sin, as his believing people do now. So that just in the same way as his sacred body was fed and nourished by the same food as ours, so was his holy soul sustained by the same communications of grace and strength as maintain in life the souls of his people now.

Thus he learnt experimentally not only their trials and temptations, their griefs and sorrows, both natural and spiritual, but their joys and deliverances, their manifestations, their waiting, hope, their trusting confidence, their patient expectation, their obedient submission, and in a word, the whole compass of their experience. [Thus in reading David's deliverances and blessings, though we know that they were really David's, and truly felt and acknowledged by him as such, yet we may often say, "A greater than David was here." Thus compare Ps 18:16-19 with Ps 18:43-44] If any think it is derogatory to the Deity of our blessed Lord, to believe that he had a spiritual experience of the same graces that his people have, for being God, they might argue he could not need them, let them explain why his body needed human food, or why his soul had an experience of sorrow and temptation. Could not his divine nature, as in the wilderness, have supported the human without food? And is it not equally derogatory to say that the blessed Lord had an experience of affliction and temptation, as of joy and deliverance? As our great Exemplar, as our suffering Head, the blessed Lord was delivered as well as tempted, rejoiced in spirit as well as sighed and wept, was made glad with the light of his Father's countenance as well as felt the hidings of his face. [Our blessed Lord had no experience of regeneration or of repentance: for the one is the quickening of the soul out of death, and the other implies the existence of sin. These two things are to be carefully distinguished from his experience of faith, trust. &c.]

3. The third point connected with the sacred humanity of Jesus as obedient unto death, is the **example** he has left to his believing people that **they should walk in his steps**. It will little profit us to have the clearest views of the Lord's suffering humanity if it produce no impression on our hearts and lives. At the foot of the cross there stood those who mocked the sufferings and shame of the blessed Redeemer; there were those who looked on with callous indifference; and there were those who mourned and wept, believed and loved. So now there are those who mock the eternal Sonship and suffering humanity of the blessed Jesus; and there are those who look upon his suffering Majesty without faith and without feeling, without any sorrow for sin or any thirst after holiness. And there is a small remnant who look and believe, and as led into the fellowship of his sufferings, mourn and weep. These see and feel that there is a knowing him and the fellowship of his sufferings,

being made conformable to his death; **Php 3:10**; a bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body; **2Co 4:10**; a being crucified with Christ; **Ga 2:20**; a determination to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified; **1Co 2:2**; and a glorying in his cross as the only effectual means whereby the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world; **Ga 6:14**. We need not wonder that in our day there is such a form of godliness and such a denial of the power. It must ever be so when men are ignorant-willingly ignorant of the suffering humanity of the blessed Lord, and know so little of the mystery of the cross.

One word more. All union and communion with God is only through the humanity of Jesus. God-man unites God and man. In union with God by his Deity, in union with man by his humanity, the Lord Jesus is the Daysman who lays his hand upon them both. **Job 9:33**. This made holy John say, "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, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." **1Jo 1:2-3**. Happy are those who can say with him, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ;" but this those only can experimentally say who having been blessed with a manifestation of his Person and work can add: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." **1Jo 5:10**.

THE BURIAL (Chapter 6)

We last stood at the foot of the cross, where we saw by faith the blood-shedding and death of our adorable Lord; we viewed him yielding up his life by a voluntary act of his holy will, and heard his gracious words, "It is finished," just before he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. But we leave him not there. We have seen him die and by faith now view his sacred body still on the cross. But he did not long hang there as a spectacle to angels and men. **[As the blessed Lord breathed out his life about the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon, and the preparation of the Passover begun about four o'clock, it would seem that his dead body did not remain above, and most probably under, an hour upon the cross before taken down for burial.]** His immediate disciples had fled, but there were those who came to perform those offices of love by which a safe and secure place was provided wherein that sacred body might lie. We see, then, by faith, that pallid body of which not a bone was broken **though hands and feet were mangled and torn, and side pierced**, taken down with all believing reverence and adoring affection by Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, aided, doubtless, by those holy women whose names the Holy Ghost has recorded as afterwards beholding and sitting over against the sepulchre where that pure body was laid.

As the original penalty was, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die," and as "the wages of sin is death," the Surety and Sin-bearer must endure the penalty, and literally, actually die in the sinner's room and place. Thus there was a necessity that the Redeemer of sinners should die; but as the Son of God could not die, Deity being incapable of suffering and death, the blessed Lord took a nature which could die—not by inherent mortality or external violence, but by a voluntary act [It is remarkable that three of the evangelists use three distinct words in the original, to express the voluntary way in which the Lord Jesus yielded up his life. In Mt 27:50, it is "yielded up the ghost," literally, "dismissed his spirit;" in Mr 15:39 and Lu 23:46 it is the same word, "he gave up the ghost," literally, "breathed it out," and Joh 19:30, "gave up the ghost," literally, "delivered it," all implying a voluntary act.]—as voluntary as that by which he assumed that nature in the womb of the Virgin, or resumed his body at the resurrection.

Our thoughts, then, now lead us to the body of Jesus in the grave; and here we see much to engage our meditations. The first thing that strikes our mind in beholding this lifeless form is the separation of body and soul which took place when the adorable Lord by a voluntary act laid down his life. The last words that the Redeemer spoke were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." By his "spirit" we are to understand his human soul which at once went into paradise, into the immediate presence of God, as he intimated in the words, "And now come I to thee." [Joh 17:13](#). Nor did he go thither that day alone. A trophy was soon to follow him—the soul of that repenting, believing malefactor, who, a partner with him in suffering, had become by his sovereign grace a partner with him in glory.

There was, then, an actual separation of the Redeemer's body and soul; but this did not destroy or affect the union of his Deity with his humanity. That union remained entire, as his holy soul went into paradise in union with his Deity, and thus he was still God-man as much in paradise as he was at the tomb of Lazarus, or at the Last Supper. But his sacred body, though by the act of death life was gone out of it, still remained as before, "that holy thing." Death did not taint that sacred body any more than sin did not taint it in the womb of the Virgin. The promise was, therefore, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell **rather, in Hades, or that paradise in which it was after death**, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." [Ps 16:10](#). This holy body was essentially incorruptible, as being begotten of the Holy Ghost, by special and supernatural generation, of the flesh of the Virgin; but as in all other acts of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, were all engaged that no taint of corruption should in death assail it. The Father promised, and, as a God that cannot lie, performed by his almighty, superintending power; the Son, by the same innate, active, divine energy by which he assumed that body in the womb of the Virgin preserved it untainted, uncorrupted in the grave; and the Holy Ghost, who formed that body in its first conception, breathed over it his holy influence to maintain it, in spite of death and the tomb, as pure and as incorruptible as when he first created it. These things are indeed difficult to understand or indeed conceive; but they are heavenly mysteries, which faith receives and holds fast in spite of sense, reason, and unbelief. For see the tremendous

consequences of allowing any taint of corruption to assail that blessed body. Could a tainted body be resumed at the resurrection? Corruption would have marred it as it will mar ours; and how could a corrupt body have been again the habitation of the Son of God?

We are often instrumentally preserved from error not only by knowing and feeling the sweetness and power of truth, but by seeing, as at a glance, the tremendous consequences which a denial of vital, fundamental truths involves.

But we pass on to Jesus in the tomb. A sepulchre hewn out in the rock, and therefore pure, clean, and dry, and "wherein never man before was laid," so as to be free from any taint of corruption; a great stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre to preserve the sacred deposit from external violence or unbecoming intrusion; Roman soldiers forbidding all access of strange feet into the sacred precinct; a guard of angels watching over that body in which their God and Creator had dwelt;—how all these circumstances tended, and all worked together to the same result—the safe guardianship and inviolable preservation of that holy body which the Lord had assumed for the redemption of his people.

But may we not gather up profitable instruction here? The holy women who mourned and wept at the cross did not forget their dear Lord at the sepulchre. Thither their thoughts ran during that Sabbath Day on which they rested according to the commandment; and with the first dawn of the next day—the first day of the week, they sped their steps, with spices, to anoint that dear Object of their faith and love. The mystery of the resurrection was indeed hidden from their eyes; but they ceased not to love in death and in the sepulchre that sacred form which they had loved in life. May not our thoughts turn to the sepulchre too; and may we not, with these gracious women, resort thither as to the sleeping-place of the body of Jesus? Nature shrinks from death, even apart from that which following after death makes it to so many a king of terrors. Even where grace has set up its throne, and mercy rejoices over judgment, many unbelieving, infidel thoughts at times will cross the mind and perplex the judgment about the separation of body and soul, and the launching of the spirit into an unseen, unknown world. Faith, it is true, can subdue these perplexing thoughts, better hinted at than described, but faith needs some solid ground on which to build and rest. If, then, the soul is blessed with any assured hope or sweet persuasion of interest in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, so as to remove guilty fears, how strengthening to faith is a view of his death, not merely as the only sacrifice for sin, but as the exemplar so to speak, of our own! We shall all have to die, and therefore to look by faith at the death of Jesus may be a profitable subject of meditation as a relief against the perplexing thoughts to which we have before alluded. Into his Father's hands the dying Lord commended his spirit. The Father received it, for him the Father heareth always; [Joh 11:42](#), and thus his spirit returned unto him who gave it. [Ec 12:7](#). Thus, by the act of dying, the soul and body of the blessed Redeemer were, for a time, fully and actually separated as fully and actually as ours will also be at death.

But follow by faith that soul of Jesus when he breathed it forth, and view it at once and immediately entering paradise, into the blissful presence of God. What food for faith is here! How strengthening, how encouraging to a believing heart which has often been perplexed by such thoughts as we have named, to view the soul of Jesus thus passing at once into paradise. And may we not, by faith, view the soul also of the believing malefactor, when the time of release was come, winging its flight into the same paradise whither the soul of Jesus had preceded it? If we know anything painfully and experimentally of the assaults of unbelief, the arrows of infidelity, and the fiery darts of the wicked one, and how they are all quenched by the shield of faith, we have found that faith, in order to stand firm, must have the word of truth, a "Thus saith the Lord," upon which to rest. Let us now, then, see how this stands as connected with the death of the blessed Lord. Fortified by his holy example, if blessed with faith in his Person, blood, and righteousness, the dying believer may commend his spirit into the hands of Christ as did martyred Stephen, in the same confidence that the Lord Jesus commended his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

But, there is another sweet and blessed thought connected with the grave in which Jesus lay. We may have seen the grave open its dark mouth to receive a dear friend and brother, or some fondly-loved relative, who has left a sweet testimony behind of his interest in the finished work of the Son of God; and as we have looked down into that narrow cell, seen the coffin lowered slowly into it, heard the clods fall heavily on its lid, and felt how the beloved object was buried out of our sight, no more again to walk with us here below, how nature has shrunk from each gloomy sight and sound! What could then relieve the burdened mind, and soothe the sorrowing spirit, but a sweet persuasion by faith of these two things: First, that the soul of the departed one was with the Lord, which was far better than again to be burdened with the body of sin and death, now for ever laid down; and second, that the Lord Jesus, by lying himself in the grave, had consecrated it as his people's sleeping-place, and perfumed it, as it were, by permitting it to be the deposit of his own incorruptible body.

What a trial to their faith must the death of Jesus have been to his disciples and believing followers! When their Lord and Master died, their hopes, for the time at least, seem almost to have died with him. This seems evident from the language of the two disciples who were journeying to Emmaus. "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." [Lu 24:21](#). How staggering to their faith that the Lord of life should be put to death; the King of glory be covered with shame and ignominy; and that he, whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, should lie in the narrow precinct of a garden sepulchre.

But another thought strikes our mind as arising out of this fruitful subject of spiritual meditation—the apparent triumph of evil and of the powers of darkness, in the death and burial of the Lord Jesus.

To the eye of sense, truth, holiness, innocence, all fell crushed by the arm of violence as Jesus hung on the cross. To the spectator there, all his miracles of love and mercy, his words of grace and truth, his holy spotless life, his claims to be the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, with every promise and every prophecy concerning him, were all extinguished when, amidst the triumph of his foes, in pain, shame, and ignominy, he yielded up his breath. We now see that, by his blood-shedding and death, the blessed Lord wrought out redemption, finished the work which the Father gave him to do, put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciled the church unto God, triumphed over death and hell, vanquished Satan, magnified the law and made it honourable, exalted justice, brought in mercy, harmonised every apparently jarring attribute, glorified his heavenly Father, and saved millions with an everlasting salvation. But should we have seen this as we see it now, had we stood at the cross with weeping Mary and broken-hearted John, heard the railing taunts of the Scribes and Pharisees, the rude laughter of the Roman soldiery, and the mocking cries of the Jewish mob, viewed the darkened sky above, and felt the solid earth beneath rocking under our feet? Where would our faith have been then? What but a miracle of Almighty grace and power could have sustained it amidst such clouds of darkness, such strength of sense, such a crowd of conflicting passions, such opposition of unbelief?

So it ever has been, so it ever will be, in this time state. Truth, uprightness, godliness, the cause of God as distinct from, as opposed to error and evil, have always suffered crucifixion, not only in the person, but in the example of a crucified Jesus. It is an ungodly world; Satan, not Jesus, is its god and prince; and, therefore, not truth but falsehood, not good but evil, not love but enmity, not sincerity and uprightness but craft and deceptiveness, not righteousness and holiness but sin and godlessness prevail and triumph as they did at the cross. This tries faith; but its relief and remedy are to look up, amidst these clouds, to the cross, and see on it the suffering Son of God. Then we see that the triumphing of the wicked is but for a moment; that though truth is now suffering, it is suffering with Christ; and that as he died and rose again, so it will have a glorious resurrection, and an eternal triumph.

One or two thoughts more before we close this part of our present subject of meditation.

To be partakers of Christ's crown, we must be partakers of Christ's cross. Union with him in suffering must precede union with him in glory. This is the express testimony of the Holy Ghost: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." **Ro 8:17.** "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." **2Ti 2:11-12.** The flesh and the world are to be crucified to us, and we to them; and this can only be by virtue of a living union with a crucified Lord. This made the apostle say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." **Ga 2:20.** And again, "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." **Ga 6:14.** An experimental knowledge of crucifixion with his crucified Lord made Paul preach the cross, not only in its power to save, but in its power to sanctify.

But as then so now, this preaching of the cross, not only as the meritorious cause of all salvation, but as the instrumental cause of all sanctification, is "to them that perish foolishness." **1Co 1:18.** As men have found out some other way of salvation than by the blood of the cross, so have they discovered some other way of holiness than by the power of the cross; or rather have altogether set aside obedience, fruitfulness, self-denial, mortification of the deeds of the body, crucifixion of the flesh and of the world. Extremes are said to meet; and certainly men of most opposite sentiments may unite in despising the cross and counting it foolishness. The Arminian despises it for justification, and the Antinomian for sanctification. "Believe and be holy," is as strange a sound to the latter as "Believe and be saved," to the former. But, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," is as much written on the portal of life as, "By grace are ye saved through faith." Through the cross, that is, through union and communion with him who suffered upon it, not only is there a fountain opened for all sin, but for all uncleanness. **Zec 13:1.** Blood and water gushed from the side of Jesus when pierced by the Roman spear.

This fountain so dear, he'll freely impart;
Unlock'd by the spear, it gushed from the heart,
With blood and with water; the first to atone,
To cleanse us the latter; the fountain's but one.

"All my springs are in thee," **Ps 87:7,** said the man after God's own heart; and well may we re-echo his words. All our springs, not only of pardon and peace, acceptance and justification, but of happiness and holiness, of wisdom and strength, of victory over the world, of mortification of a body of sin and death; of every fresh revival and renewal of

hope and confidence; of all prayer and praise; of every new budding forth of the soul, as of Aaron's rod, in blossom and fruit; of every gracious feeling, spiritual desire, warm supplication, honest confession, melting contrition, and godly sorrow for sin—all these springs of that life which is hid with Christ in God are in a crucified Lord. Thus Christ crucified is, "to them who are saved, the power of God." And as he "of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," at the cross alone can we be made wise unto salvation, become righteous by a free justification, receive of his Spirit to make us holy, and be redeemed and delivered by blood and power from sin, Satan, death and hell.

Nor is there any other way to **become dead to the law**, our first husband, so as "to be married to another, even him who is raised from the dead, that we may bring forth fruit unto God." **Ro 7:4**.

By the baptism of the Holy Ghost **of which water baptism is a type and figure** we are baptized into Jesus Christ, and specially into his death. **Ro 6:3**. By his blood-shedding and death he fulfilled the law, bearing its curse, and thus he "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, nailing it to his cross." **Col 2:14**.

THE UNION AND COMMUNION WITH CHRIST (Chapter 7)

In our Meditations on the sacred humanity of the adorable Redeemer we must never, even in thought, separate his human nature from his divine. Even when his sacred body lay in the grave, and was thus for a small space of time severed from his pure and holy soul by death and the tomb, there was no separation of the two natures, for, as we have before shown, his human soul, after he had once become incarnate in the womb of the Virgin, never was parted from his Deity, but went into paradise in indissoluble union with it. It is a fundamental article of our most holy faith that the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ had no existence independent of his divine. In the Virgin's womb, in the lowly manger, in the lonely wilderness, on the holy mount of transfiguration, in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, in Pilate's judgment hall, on the cross, and in the tomb, Jesus was still Immanuel, God with us. And so ineffably close and intimate is the conjunction of the human nature with the divine, that the actings of each nature, though separable, cannot and must not be separated from each other. Thus, the human hands of Jesus broke the seven loaves and the fishes; but it was God-man who multiplied them so as to feed therewith four thousand men, besides women and children. **Mt 15:38** The human feet of Jesus walked on the sea of Galilee; but it was the Son of God who came on the waves to the ship. **Mt 14:33** The human lips of Jesus uttered those words which are "spirit and life;" **Joh 6:63** but it was the Son of the living God who spake them. **Joh 6:69** The human hands and feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross; but the blood shed by them was indeed divine, for all the virtue and validity of Deity were stamped upon it. **Ac 20:28**

But there is another thought connected with a believing view of the Lord Jesus Christ as Immanuel, God with us, and that is, the union of the Church with him in all that he did and suffered for her. He being the Head, all the members of his mystical body in covenant union with him shared in his sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification. Thus Paul speaks of himself as crucified with Christ, **Ga 2:20** and of believers generally as dying with Christ; **Ro 6:8**; **2Ti 2:11** being buried with Christ; **Ro 6:4**; **Col 2:12** as rising with him, **Col 3:1** and sitting together with him in heavenly places. **Eph 2:6**

Now, as the Blessed Spirit is pleased to guide us into an experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and to give us a measure of union and communion with his sacred Majesty, he leads us into a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. This is what the apostle speaks of as typified by the ordinance of baptism as a standing figure and permanent representation of the baptism of the Holy Ghost: "Know ye not 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. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." **Ro 6:3-5** The ordinance of baptism is thus represented as the figure of that higher, more sacred, and spiritual baptism whereby, in living experience, believers are made one with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. And here his humanity is indeed seen in its special grace and distinguishing glory, for it is only as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," **Eph 5:30** this being the foundation of the union, that they are baptized into this spiritual communion with him.

But this part of our subject may demand a little further opening up. The Church, then, has a mystical, but not less real, union with Christ, from his having taken the flesh and blood of the children into union with his own divine Person. By virtue of this union with him, as members with the head, she participated with him in all he did and suffered for her sake. But this mystical union all the elect have, even those still unregenerated or unborn. This union does not, therefore, of itself give communion, though it is the foundation of it. Another kind of union, then, is needed, which is peculiar to the regenerated, and which they have in exact measure to their participation of the Spirit of Christ, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his," that is, by inward or outward manifestation. By being made partakers, then, of Christ's Spirit, the members of his mystical body have a living union with him, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." **1Co 6:17** Being thus baptized by the Blessed Spirit, they are made one spirit with the Lord, and thus have a fellowship with him in his sufferings, death, and resurrection. As, then, he died under the curse of the law and the guilt and burden of sin, and yet by death died unto the law and unto sin, being by death freed from the curse of the law and the penalty of sin, so the believer dies under the curse of the law and the burden of guilt and sin in his conscience;

and yet by virtue of his union with Christ as a member of his body, and of communion with him as baptized by his Spirit, he dies also unto the law and unto sin, no more to suffer the penalty of the one or to live under the power of the other. But though thus delivered, yet to the end of his days, as mourning and groaning under sin, as suffering from the hidings of God's countenance, as tempted and assailed by Satan, as hated and persecuted by the world, and often forsaken by followers and friends, he is crucified with Christ, and has fellowship with him in his sufferings and death. His sorrows, his trials, his temptations, and his sufferings, all, as sanctified to his soul's good, lead him to the cross of his suffering Lord, to get life from his death, pardon and peace from his atoning blood, justification from his divine obedience, and resignation to the will of God from his holy example. Here the world is crucified to him, and he to the world; **Ga 6:14** here sin is mortified, **Ro 6:6; 8:13** and its reigning power dethroned; **Ro 6:12** the old man crucified and put off. **Ro 6:6; Eph 4:22** and the new man put on. Thus, having a spiritual union with his suffering, dying Lord, the heaven-taught believer suffers and dies with him, and by this fellowship of his sufferings and death becomes here below conformed to his suffering image, **Ro 8:17,29; 2Ti 2:12** and is made conformable to his death. **Php 3:10**

This is no mere doctrine, an article only of a sound creed, but a fountain of life to every believer's soul in proportion to the measure of the Spirit whereby he is baptized into the death of Jesus. But for the most part it is only through a long series of afflictions, bereavements, disappointments, vexations, illnesses, pains of body and mind, hot furnaces, and deep waters, as sanctified to his soul's profit by the Holy Spirit, that the child of God comes into this part of Christian experience.

These things are indeed death to the flesh, and are meant to be so, that it may be crucified and mortified; and are killing blows to all schemes of earthly joy, worldly happiness, and temporal prosperity and pleasure, as well as to all legal hopes and pharisaic righteousness; but they are, in the Spirit's hand, the very life of the believing soul. For "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of their spirit." **Isa 38:16** Crucifixion is a long, painful, lingering death. Nature dies hard, and struggles, but struggles in vain, against the firm but blessed hand that nails it to the cross of Christ; but grace, cleaving all the more closely to him who suffered and bled there, draws life and power from his blood and love. This experience made the apostle say of himself, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." **2Co 4:10-11** Here was the secret of all his strength, of all his holiness, and all his happiness. This inward experience of the power and blessedness of the cross inspired him with a firm and holy determination to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified; and this made him say, as the grand distinguishing test of the lost and of the saved, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." **1Co 1:18**

For this was not Paul's experience only, a hidden secret of which he alone was made by grace the happy partaker. All who are taught by the same Spirit, and have the same union and communion with a crucified Lord, whether Jew or Greek, know him to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. **1Co 1:24** We read of believers being "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," **Isa 61:3** and this planting is a being planted into Christ so as to have that union and communion with him which the living branch has with the vine. The apostle therefore speaks of our being "planted together in the likeness of his death." **Ro 6:5** What the vine is, the branches are. Where the vine is, there will the branches be. The vine was once prostrate on the ground; the branches were prostrate with it. The vine rose from earth to heaven; the branches rise with it. As then a tree planted into good soil drinks of its juices, or rather as a grafted scion becomes so incorporated with the stock as to be one with it, not merely in outward strength and firmness of union, but so one with it as to draw virtue, sap, and fruitfulness out of it, so the true believer, being planted into the likeness of Christ's death, draws supplies of grace and strength out of his fulness.

Here, then, we see the blessedness of the bleeding, suffering, dying humanity of our adorable Redeemer. By virtue of his suffering humanity he has union with a suffering people, and by virtue of being baptized with his Spirit they have union and communion with a suffering Lord. He died that they might live, bore the curse of the law that it might not light on them, and suffered "the just for the unjust" that they having fellowship with him in his sufferings and death might have every gracious motive communicated, and the supply of all spiritual strength imparted, to crucify them to sin, to the world, and to self.

THE RESURRECTION (Chapter 8)

But we pass on to the resurrection of the blessed Lord from the dead; and here we shall have to establish the doctrine before we enter into its experimental fruits.

1. The first thing that we notice is, what we may call **the grand fact** of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. On this the whole verity of the Christian faith may be said to be suspended. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, he was not what he declared he was, "the Son of the living God." But if he rose from the dead, it was God's own attestation that he was his only begotten Son, for all will admit that nothing short of the power of God can raise the dead. For this reason we find in the Acts of the Apostles the resurrection of the Lord Jesus made a leading feature in every sermon and every address.

Whether Peter preached to the inquiring Jews, **Ac 2:23-24; 3:15** to the opposing Sanhedrim, **Ac 4:10; 5:30-31** or to Cornelius and his friends; **Ac 10:39-40** or whether Paul addressed the synagogue of Antioch, **Ac 13:30** the Athenian Areopagus **Ac 17:31** or king Agrippa and the most noble Festus, it might be said of them what the Holy Ghost declares of all the rest; "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." **Ac 4:33**

Look for a few moments at this remarkable circumstance, that these blessed men of God made the resurrection of Jesus, as it were, the very foundation of all their sermons and addresses; for we may be sure that the Holy Ghost inspired the apostles thus to preach. And see the reason why they bore this firm testimony in the very forefront of the battle which they waged in the name of God against the kingdom of darkness and death. The Lord of life and glory had been condemned to death by the Jewish council on a charge of blasphemy, first, because he had said that "he would destroy the temple made with hands, and within three days build another made without hands;" **Mr 14:58** and, secondly, that he had declared, in the very presence of the council, that he was the Christ, the Son of God. **Mr 14:61-64** He therefore died under the charge of blasphemy, in pain and ignominy, crucified openly for that alleged crime in the face of the assembled thousands who had come from all parts to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Now, had Jesus not risen from the dead that charge would have been substantiated, and he would have been justly convicted by the voices of many thousands as having been put righteously to death. It was necessary, then, not only for the whole economy of redemption, but for the very veracity of Jesus himself, and for the whole truth of the gospel, that he should be raised from the dead by the power of God as the seal of his mission, as the standing, undeniable, irrefragable truth that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, as he claimed to be.

We see, then, the force and meaning of the apostle's words, where he says that the Lord Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." **Ro 1:4** It was God's attesting witness to his divine Sonship, the visible, ratifying seal to his heavenly mission. And not only so, but God's own assurance to the church that his atoning sacrifice had been accepted, that the debt due to law and justice was fully discharged, and her justification complete, for he "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification;" **Ro 4:25** that is, he, as the head and representative of the church, was raised by God from the dead as justified from all law charges, and the church was thus visibly and authoritatively declared to be justified in him. This was the attesting witness from heaven that her justification was complete, and that Jesus lives at God's right hand to reveal that justification to her heart, put her into experimental possession of its unspeakable blessedness, and seal it effectually by the Holy Ghost upon her breast.

2. The next thing that we notice is that **each Person of the sacred Trinity**, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was engaged in the blessed work of raising Jesus from the dead. Though the Persons of the Trinity are essentially distinct, and their acts in the great economy of redemption separate, yet as one God they participate in the putting forth of every act of divine power. Thus God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, as we learn from almost innumerable passages; but see the following, which we need not quote at length, but simply refer to; (**Ac 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:37; 17:31; Eph 1:20; Col 2:12**) But the Son of God raised himself from the dead, according to his own words of grace and truth, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." **Joh 10:17-18** He is "the resurrection;" **Joh 11:25** and as he raised Lazarus from the tomb, and will at the last day raise up the sleeping dust of all that the Father gave unto him, **Joh 6:39-40** so, by the exercise of the same divine power, did he raise his own incorruptible body from the grave. The Holy Ghost also had a blessed participation in the same divine act. We therefore read that the Lord Jesus was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, **1Pe 3:18**—the same Holy and Blessed Spirit who will also quicken the mortal bodies of the saints at the great resurrection. **Ro 8:11**

3. The next thing that we notice is, **the identity of the Lord's risen body**. It is a cardinal, fundamental article of our most holy faith that the same actual, identical body was raised from the grave which was deposited in it. If erroneous men had not indulged their vain speculations about the risen body of the Lord Jesus, we might well wonder at their daring attempts to pull up the landmarks which the Holy Ghost has so plainly set up in the word of truth. The Lord never had, never could have, two different bodies, one before, another after the resurrection. We might as well talk of his having two different souls—one soul for earth, and another soul for heaven. The identity of his body is as indispensable to his still being Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," as the identity of his soul, no less certain, no less necessary, and no less precious. But because, after the resurrection, the Lord came miraculously into the place where the disciples were assembled, the doors being shut, and vanished out of the sight of the disciples at Emmaus, and because they cannot conceive how he can wear a human body in heaven, such as he had upon earth, men who would be wise above what is written have assumed that a change took place in that body, and that it no longer consisted of flesh, and bones, and blood, as before, but was, as it were, transmuted into some aerial, celestial substance, they know not what, but such as they imagine would be more fitting to inhabit the courts of heaven.

Now, nothing can be more plain, if we are willing to follow the footsteps of the Holy Ghost, than that it was the same identical body which hung on the cross that rose from the dead. It would seem, as if to stop all cavil, and crush in the very bud all such erroneous speculations as we have alluded to, the Lord himself gave again and again the most incontrovertible proofs after his resurrection that he was the same Jesus as before, and not another, and that he wore the same body in all respects without change or alteration. He did not appear

for a few moments only, as if "showing himself through the lattice," and then hastily withdrawing, but conversed with them most familiarly, and ate with his disciples after the resurrection; **Lu 24:42-43; Ac 10:41** and for this very purpose, that they might be standing and undeniable eye and ear witnesses that it was indeed the very same Jesus with whom they had consorted before his crucifixion. Now we all know what a marked change a little alteration makes in a person's form and features, so that a severe illness, or the lapse of a few years, makes him scarcely recognisable as the same person by even his most intimate friends. If, then, any visible change had taken place in the body of the Lord Jesus, it would not only have destroyed its identity but its identification. The whole chain of evidence that it was indeed the same Jesus who had been crucified that was risen from the dead would have been broken to pieces unless it was clearly and undeniably the same form, the same features, the same feet and hands, the same voice—in a word, the very same Jesus whom they knew so well and loved so dearly. Did not Mary Magdalene know his form and features well? Could she have been deceived? Was not John, who leaned on his breast at the last supper, well acquainted with his voice, gestures, and countenance? Could he have been deceived? So with Peter and James, not to name the other disciples who had attended him daily from the baptism of John. **Ac 1:22** One witness might be deceived, but not so many. But besides this, there were several special seasons on which the Lord did not only appear for a short time to his disciples, but was with them some space. Look at the instance of Thomas. What can exceed the clearness of the testimony mercifully produced by his very unbelief? So firmly fixed was he in his disbelief of the resurrection that he would not believe that the disciples had seen the Lord as risen from the dead; and declared that except he should see in his hands the print of the nails; and, lest his eyes should deceive him, unless he put his fingers into the print of the nails; and even lest he should be deceived then, except he should thrust his hand into the very side which had been pierced by the Roman spear, he would not believe. But how condescendingly to him, and how graciously for the saints in all ages, did the blessed Lord, eight days after this unbelieving declaration, appear again gently to reprove him for his unbelief, but at the same time to afford to the church through him the memorable testimony that he wore still the same body; that the hands were the very same hands, still bearing the print of the nails which had fastened them to the cross, and that it was the very same side which still wore the thrust-mark of the Roman spear.

If this were not a proof of actual identity where shall we find one? If this evidence be rejected, what remains but to reject the whole mystery of the resurrection as an idle tale? Learned men have, by comparing scripture with scripture, ascertained that the blessed Lord appeared ten times to eye-witnesses after his resurrection [1][i] and that at some of these appearances, as that memorable one recorded, **Joh 21** he conversed with his disciples as closely and as intimately as before his resurrection. And that his human body in which he ate and talked with them was not a shadowy appearance, which had neither flesh nor bones, he spake to them those ever-memorable words, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." **Lu 24:39** "Behold," said he, "my hands and my feet"—they are real hands, they are real feet; "that it is I myself," the same, the very same Jesus, having the same body which you

saw him wear before; "handle me, and see," feel, if you will, whether it be real flesh or an aerial body, "for a spirit," such as you take me to be, a disembodied soul, or an airy, unreal phantasm, "hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

Can anything be stronger than this the Lord's own testimony to the actual identity of his body before and after his resurrection? And if it be objected that, whatever the body of the

Lord was then, it is now so exceedingly glorified that it has lost in that glory all the distinctive features of its former humanity, we reply. How was it with that same body before the resurrection, on the holy mount, when it was transfigured before the three disciples, so that "his face did shine as the sun, and his very raiment," as borrowing lustre from his glorious humanity, "was white as the light?" **Mt 17:1-2** There we see that the brightest glory no more altered the identity or changed the substance of the Lord's body than the glory of the face of Moses altered his. When we come to the ascension of our blessed Lord, we shall see this perhaps more clearly and distinctly still, or at least view more at length the blessings and benefits connected with it.

THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEEMER'S RESURRECTION (Chapter 9)

We shall attempt now to show the spiritual bearing and influence which the resurrection of the Lord has upon the believing soul.

The apostle's earnest desire and prayer were that he might "know the Lord Jesus Christ, and **the power of his resurrection.**" **Php 3:10.** It was not, then, the bare fact of his resurrection, or the mere doctrine of it as revealed in the scripture, which would satisfy his panting soul, though both of them in themselves as foundation truths full of unspeakable blessedness; but what his believing heart intensely longed to enjoy was the inward experience of its power, fruits, and effects. What was that power? Let us see, if we can, with God's blessing, what it was to know and enjoy which drew forth such intense desires from Paul's inmost soul.

The prayer which this man of God offered for the church of God at Ephesus **Eph 1:16-23** will, we think, form a blessed key to this experimental secret. Among the heavenly blessings which he there prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," would grant unto them, he begs that "he would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that they might know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." **Eph 1:19-20.** If we read the whole of that blessed prayer we shall see that the Lord

Jesus is there spoken of as the Head and Representative of his body, the church—a multitude which no man can number. When, then, he died on the cross, he sank, so to

speaking, under the load of millions of sins, for "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

We know, indeed, that by the shedding of his precious blood the sins of the church were purged away, and that he himself said, "It is finished," before he gave up the ghost; but as under the law the death of the victim was the essential part of the sacrifice, so, until the Lamb of God died, the sacrifice was not complete. In this sense, then, he died and sank into the grave under the tremendous weight of sin laid on his sacred head. By these, as dead under the law, he was bound fast in the tomb—faster than by the burial-clothes, the Roman guard, or the stone rolled to the door of the sepulchre; and by these he was held fast till the resurrection morn. These, then, were the "pains (or cords) [1][i] of death" of which Peter speaks, which held him fast. (**Ac 2:24**). But God "loosed" these cords, because he being the Son of God and the Prince of life, "it was not possible that he should be holden" of death; and therefore he raised him up as the justified Head of his body the church, leaving in the grave the sins under the guilt and weight of which he had died. Being thus raised up as the head of the church, and openly acquitted and justified, she rose in and with him.

This view of Christ's resurrection may prepare us to enter more clearly and fully into the experimental meaning of that blessed prayer for the Ephesian believers, to which we have already referred; and to show us why the apostle prayed that they might know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is here spoken of as a most miraculous display of the mighty power of God. Why was it such? Not surely in merely raising the dead body of the Lord Jesus to life, for that miracle had been before done in the case of Lazarus and the widow's son, and in many other instances. But it was because in raising up Christ from the dead God raised up millions of redeemed sinners with him, and that, too, out of all their sins and miseries, which had sunk his sacred head, as bearing them all, into death and the grave. The church is, therefore, said to be "quickened together with Christ," and "raised up together with him;" **Eph 2:5-6; Col 2:12-13**; and believers are spoken of as "risen with Christ." **Col 3:1**.

Now, what a living child of God longs to experience is the felt power of this resurrection—that as having been mystically and virtually quickened together with Christ at and in his resurrection from the dead, he may feelingly enjoy the spiritual power of that resurrection in his own soul, enabling him to rise up out of the cords of death which so often hold him firm and fast. This putting forth of the power of Christ to quicken, renew, and deliver the soul is so exceedingly great that it is compared by the apostle to the display of that mighty power which God put forth in raising Jesus from the dead. For though the believer was virtually and really quickened together with Christ when he rose from the dead, and has already risen out of the grave of death and sin by this power regenerating and making him alive unto God, yet he often sinks back into the gloomy grave of carnality and deadness. He therefore wants a mighty power to be put forth in his soul—the power of Christ's resurrection; for he feelingly needs the same almighty power which raised Jesus from the

dead to raise him up once more to faith, and hope, and love. The resurrection of Jesus, and his interest therein as a quickened member of his body, is indeed the sure pledge that he shall again be blessed with this renewing, reviving grace; but O the power!—inwardly and experimentally to feel this power from time to time coming into his soul as the power of God came into the tomb of Christ and raised him from the dead; and by the experience of this power to rise with Christ to light, life, liberty, and love—this is indeed to have the kingdom of God which is not only "in power," but is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." **1Co 4:20; Ro 14:17**

As, then, by the resurrection of Christ the church was mystically "quickened together with him," **Eph 2:5** so regeneration is the first proof, the initial pledge, of the resurrection of each individual believer with him. This is the first act of the power of Christ's resurrection as a felt, experimental reality in each member of his mystical body. As, then, the regenerated soul experiences more and more of the putting forth of this risen power, and feels more and more deeply and sensibly the contrast between the workings and movements of this hidden life and its own miserable darkness, bondage, and death when this divine fruit of Christ's resurrection is not realised, it hungers and thirsts after its renewed enjoyment. Regeneration in itself is an instantaneous act which cannot be repeated, but its effects are permanent. A child can be born but once; but having once breathed it breathes again; and without breath and food cannot live. So every sweet revival, gracious renewal, soft word, melting touch, comforting look, heavenly smile, applied promise, encouraging testimony, or blessed manifestation of or from the risen Lord of life and glory is not, indeed, regeneration, but the fruit and effect of it; and to experience it in the soul is to experience the power of his resurrection.

The more we view by faith the resurrection of our adorable Redeemer, the more grace and glory shall we see shining through it; and the more we feel of our own sinfulness and helplessness, the more shall we desire to realise the power of that resurrection in our own personal experience. The guilt of sin makes us cleave to a dying Christ; the power of sin makes us hang upon a risen Christ. The Holy Ghost, therefore, in the scripture sometimes exhibits Jesus to our view as a slaughtered Lamb, and sometimes as the church's glorious risen Head. Holy John blessedly unites them both in one verse, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." **Re 1:5** Though he had such a view of his glorious Person as a risen Jesus that he fell at his feet as dead, yet his faith departed not from the cross, or from the fountain opened therein for sin and for uncleanness. So blessed Paul, in the longing aspirations of his soul, breathes forth at one and the same moment his desires to know Christ risen and to sympathise with Christ suffering: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." **Php 3:10** Even in the courts of heaven, in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, John had a view of a Lamb, standing "as it had been slain," and heard the song of

the representatives of the redeemed as they fell down before him: "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." **Re 5:9**

Whether, then, dying on the cross, or risen from the dead, or ascended up on high, he is still Jesus, "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," wearing still the same sacred humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin. We cannot separate Jesus' cross from Jesus' crown; the slaughtered Lamb from the risen Conqueror; the High Priest offering sacrifice from the High Priest carrying the blood within the veil; the church's suffering Surety from the Church's glorified Representative. We need him as much for what he was as for what he is. Without a dying Jesus there could be no redemption; without a living Jesus there could be no salvation. It is sweet to lie at the foot of the cross that the drops of his atoning blood may fall on the conscience; it is sweet to see his languid eyes sealed in death, and to know that he died the just for the unjust that he might bring us unto God; it is sweet to see the prisoner of death break through the barriers of the tomb and come forth into the light of heaven as the Church's justified Head; and it is sweet to see him ascended up on high to take possession of the kingdom given him by the Father before the foundation of the world. And well it is for poor sinners, and especially for those who are burdened with the guilt of sin, that it is so. For though we are said to be "come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, &c., and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," all which blessings spring from Christ risen, yet we are said also to be come "to the blood of sprinkling," which, as issuing from Christ crucified, "speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." **Heb 12:22-24**

We have dwelt a little largely upon this lest any apprehension might arise in our readers' minds that we are looking away from the cross by speaking so much of the resurrection. In thought they may be separated, but not in blessing; for as without the cross there could have been no atoning blood, so without the resurrection there could be no prevailing intercession.

1. One of the greatest blessings that spring out of an experimental knowledge of the power of his resurrection is **the manifest justification thereby of every one who believes in the Son of God**, according to those words, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." **Ro 4:25** We have used the expression, "the **manifest justification**," for the elect are not really and actually justified by Christ's resurrection, but by the imputation of his active and passive obedience, as the apostle speaks, "Therefore 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. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be

made righteous." **Ro 5:18-19** The resurrection of Christ from the dead is not, then, the procuring cause, but the manifest proof that his obedience to the law was accepted on their behalf, and that they were raised up together with him as justified persons; for "in the LORD," that is, by virtue of union with him, "shall all the seed of Israel be justified;" **Isa 45:25** and this they were manifestly when their covenant Head was raised up and openly acquitted of all law charges.

Now as the resurrection of Christ was the manifest justification of their **persons**, so a knowledge of its power is the manifest justification of their **consciences**. For till Christ is revealed to the soul as risen from the dead, it is shut up under the law, full of guilt and condemnation, a prisoner in the pit where there is no water; but when he is manifested, or rather, when he manifests himself—which he could not do unless he were alive from the dead- he seals a sense of justification on the conscience. "I bring near," he says, "my righteousness," **Isa 46:13** which he does when he experimentally clothes the soul with the garments of salvation, and covers it with the robe of righteousness. **Isa 61:10** Then the power of his resurrection experimentally felt raises the child of grace out of the grave of bondage and death, and by faith in him as a risen head, he is "justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." **Ac 13:39** Christ is thus sensibly made of God unto every believing soul righteousness; and in the language of faith he can say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." **Isa 45:24** This made the apostle say, "And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." **1Co 15:17** Why are you not, he might ask them, yet in your sins as regards their condemnation by the law? Because Christ is risen from the dead. Why are you not yet in your sins as regards their condemnation in your own conscience? Because by faith in him as risen from the dead you are justified experimentally from them. It is thus the apostle connects, in another place, the two blessings of manifest and experimental justification: "Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." **Ro 4:25-5:1** Why that "therefore" connecting the two chapters, but to show that as by Christ's resurrection we are manifestly justified, so by faith in him as risen from the dead we are experimentally justified, of which the proof is to have peace with God? This justifying faith gives manifest union with Christ, and, opening up a divine channel of communication with him, produces another blessed fruit of the power of his resurrection:

2. **Communion with him as a risen Head.** In his last consoling discourse Jesus said to his disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." **Joh 14:18-19** But being able only to view him with the natural eye, when his personal presence was withdrawn the world could see him no more. "But ye see me," said the blessed Lord to his disciples. And how should they see him? In the same way as is recorded of Moses: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." **Heb 11:27** Faith is the eye of the soul, for it is "the evidence of things not seen"

by sense; and thus by faith they would see him at the right hand of the Father. But as they saw him there, would they not see him as a living Head, for he says, "Because I live, ye shall live also?" And would not life, flowing into them from union with him, flow back unto him in sacred communion? But he also said, "I will not leave you comfortless," as mourning my death and your own disappointed hopes; "I will come to you." But how? By personal manifestation. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." **Joh 14:21** Thus communion with Christ rests on three things —seeing him by faith, living upon his life, and experiencing his manifested presence. But all these three things depend on his resurrection and a knowledge of its power. As risen from the dead, the saints see him; as risen from the dead, they live a life of faith upon him; as risen from the dead, he manifests himself unto them; and as life and feeling spring up in their souls from sweet communion with him, the power of his resurrection becomes manifest in them.

The sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, as seen by faith, has a blessed effect in drawing the soul up unto himself. We cannot have communion with pure Deity. Our fallen condition and miserable state as guilty sinners has for ever shut out that way. But eyeing by faith the pure humanity of our adorable Redeemer, in union with his eternal Deity, we may now draw near to God in all holy boldness. The blood of Jesus gives us access within the veil, as the apostle urges, "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." **Heb 10:19-22** And again, "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, for we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." **Heb 4:14-16** Now, just in proportion to our faith in him as a risen Head shall we feel the holy boldness of which the apostle speaks; and as thus venturing nigh and enabled to plead with him, pour out our heart before him, show before him all our trouble, confess our sins, bewail our backslidings, and seek some manifestations of his pardoning love, will communion with him be sensibly experienced, for he will more or less manifest himself, apply some comforting word, and melt and soften the heart into humility and love. This communion, therefore, with the Lord Jesus as a risen Head all the reconciled and justified saints of God are pressing forward after, according to the measure of their grace and the life and power of God in their soul. It is indeed often sadly interrupted and grievously broken through by the sin that dwelleth in us. But the principle is there, for that principle is life; and life is the privilege, the possession, and the distinction of the children of God. You need none to assure you that Jesus is risen from the dead if he manifests himself to your soul. You want no evidence that you are a sheep if you have heard and know his voice. So you may say, "Jesus is risen, for I have seen him; Jesus is risen, for I have heard him; Jesus is risen, for I live upon him."

Communion with Jesus is the life of religion, and indeed without it religion is but an empty name. If without him we can do nothing; if he is our life, our risen covenant Head, our Advocate with the Father, our Husband, our Friend, our Brother, how are we to draw sap out of his fulness, as the branch from the vine, or to know him personally and experimentally in any one of his endearing relationships, unless by continual communion with him on his throne of grace? In fact, this is the grand distinguishing point between the living and the dead, between the true child of God and the mere professor, that the one has real union and communion with a risen Jesus and the other is satisfied with a form of godliness. Every quickened soul is made to feel after the power of God, after communion from above, after pardon and peace, after visitations of mercy and grace; and when he has had a view of Christ by faith, and some revelation of his Person and work, grace and glory, nothing afterwards can ever really satisfy him but that inward communion of spirit with Jesus whereby the Lord and he become one; "for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." **1Co 6:17**

3. Another fruit of Christ's resurrection, and closely and intimately connected with the foregoing, is, **the rising with him of the spiritual affections** of his believing people, as the apostle urges on the Colossian saints: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." **Col 3:1-2** By nature we cleave to earth and to earthly objects. Our affections are buried in the grave of death, nor are we able of ourselves to raise them up to high and heavenly things. We need, then, the power of Christ's resurrection to be inwardly felt and realised, that, as risen with him our covenant Head, we may no longer lie buried in the things of time and sense, the vain and fleeting objects here below, but may set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Our Head is risen from the dead. Why, then, should we, the members of his body, still grovel here below in the dust of the earth? He is gone up on high. Let our affections mount with him. He is in heaven. Let our hearts be with him.

Now, just in proportion as we realise the power of Christ's resurrection do we rise in our heart and affections up from this miserable earth, with all its cares and all its passing vanities. Nothing seems to be a greater evidence of the low, sunken state of the church in the present day than the manifest want of this heavenly grace. How few there are whose affections are set on things above. How few can really say, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." **Php 3:20** How few there are who, either by their conversation or their life, manifest that their heart is in heaven—we will not say continually, but ever there at all. How few seem to have any affectionate thoughts toward Jesus, any longing for his manifested presence—"O, when wilt thou come unto me?"—any delight in him as the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, any breaking forth of heart after him as the hart panteth after the water-brooks,

any adoring contemplation of his glory, any inward retirement of spirit, whereby their wandering affections are gathered home and fixed upon heavenly things.

We know, indeed, how cold, stupid, and carnal the heart often is, and how the affections stray after the things of time and sense; but to be always so, never to have any sweet incoming of divine life and power drawing the affections heavenward, how do such persons differ from those altogether dead in a profession? Where there is life, it will work; where there is faith, it will act; where there is love, it will flow. Such persons, to say the least, are in a very perilous condition, for if not wholly dead, their affections being so set on things of earth, they lie open to the worst snares of the devil and the flesh. Even some of the Lord's more clearly-manifested people are verily guilty in this matter. Some of them are bowed down with a daily load of care. Worldly anxieties fill their mind and occupy their thoughts from morning to night. Can these be said to be spiritually risen with Christ? Would not the power of his resurrection experimentally felt lift them up from their family cares, their business cares, their too often imaginary, their self-tormenting cares? Were their faith more firmly fixed on a risen Christ, their affections more set on a living Christ, what a load of carking cares would be removed from their shoulders! Others of the Lord's family are bowed down with worldly grief and sorrow. Some beloved object has been removed out of their sight, and their affections linger round the tomb which holds his earthly remains. The sorrow of the world is working death in them, nor can they look beyond the sepulchre to the resurrection. But is not Christ risen from the dead? Has he not destroyed death and him that had the power of death, and as having felt the power of his resurrection, should not their affections rise with him, and there find their happiness and their home, instead of seeking the living among the dead? Others, again, who once did run well, and whose heart and affections once seemed fixed on heavenly things, through that root of all evil, the love of money, are now eagerly pursuing the world, intent upon gain, thinking they never can have enough, elated with every flush of success, and correspondingly depressed with failures and reverses.

Knowing what we are by nature, and how surrounded by temptation on every side to do evil, we cannot wonder that even those who have some marks of the fear of God in their hearts may be, for a time, left to live so far from the power of Christ's resurrection. But it will not always be so with them. There are in reserve for them heavy crosses, hot fires, deep waters; and by these, as so many chastening rods, they will be brought once more to feel the power of Christ's resurrection raising them out of their carnality and death, and then once more they will set their affections on things above.

4. Closely connected with the setting of our affections on things above, as the fruit of the resurrection of Jesus and of our union with him as a risen Head, is the being made **spiritually-minded**; that heavenly grace which contains in its bosom these two blessed

fruits, "life and peace." **Ro 8:6** Just in proportion as our heart and affections are engaged on heavenly objects, shall we feel a sweet savour of heaven resting upon our spirit; and as we can only give back what we receive, every going forth of divine life from the soul below is but the fruit and effect of the incoming of that life from above. Christ is our life above; **Col 3:4** and as he by his Spirit and grace maintains the life of faith in the soul, it manifests itself in gracious actings upon himself. This movement of the life within up to its divine Author and Object is the breathing of the spirit from under its house of clay, the ascension of the soul up unto God, the taking possession beforehand of its mansion above, and sitting down with Christ in heavenly places before the glorious celebration of the marriage supper of the Lamb. **Re 19:7,9**

Without this spirituality of mind religion is but a mere name, an empty mask, a delusion, and a snare. There must be wrought in the soul of every heir of glory before he departs out of this time-state what the apostle calls a being "made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." **Col 1:12** God does not take into heaven, into the fulness of his own eternal bliss, those whom he does not love, and who do not love him. It is a prepared people for prepared mansions. And this preparedness for heaven, as an inward grace, much consists in that sweet spirituality of mind whereby heavenly things become our only happiness, and an inward delight is felt in them which enlarges the heart, ennobles the mind, softens the spirit, and lifts the whole soul, as it were, up into a holy atmosphere in which it bathes as its choice element. This is "life," not the cold, dead profession of those poor, carnal creatures who have only a natural faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the truths of his gospel; but that blessed life which shall never die, but live in the eternal presence of God when earth and all it holds shall be wrapped in the devouring flames. And it is "peace"—the Redeemer's dying legacy—whereby, as he himself fulfils it, he calms the troubled waves of the soul, stills every rebellious movement, and enthrones himself in the heart as the Prince of peace.

5. The last fruit of the resurrection of the blessed Lord that we shall mention is that it is the **first fruits and pledge** of the resurrection of the saints at the last day. So speaks the apostle in that chapter which has comforted thousands of mourners when they have laid in the tomb the remains of their beloved husbands, wives, children, or friends who have departed in the Lord. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." **1Co 15:20-22** Christ risen is the first fruits of that mighty crop of buried dead whose remains still sleep in the silent dust, and who will be joined by successive ranks of those who die in him, till all are together wakened up in the resurrection morn. The figure is that of the sheaf of the first fruits which was waved before the Lord before the harvest was allowed to be reaped. **Le 23:10-11** This offering of the wave sheaf was the consecration and dedication of the whole crop in the field to the Lord, as well as the manifest pledge that the harvest was fully ripe for the reaper's sickle. The first fruits represented the whole of the crop, as Christ is the representative of

his saints; the offering of them sanctified what was still unreaped in the field, as Christ sanctified or consecrated unto God the yet unreaped harvest of the buried dead; and the carrying them into the tabernacle was the first introduction therein of the crop, as Christ entering heaven as the first fruits secures thereby the entrance of the bodies of the saints into the mansions prepared for them before the foundation of the world. Thus Christ rising from the dead presented himself before the Lord as the first fruits of the grand harvest of the resurrection yet unreaped, and by so doing consecrated and dedicated the whole crop unto God. As, then, he rose from the dead, so shall all the sleeping saints rise from the dead at the last day, for his resurrection is the first fruits, the pledge, and earnest of theirs.

His risen body also is the type to which the risen bodies of the saints are to be conformed, "for as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." **1Co 15:49** This is that glorious image to which the saints are to be all conformed. "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." **Ro 8:29** But though fully retaining all the essential characteristics of humanity, for otherwise it would cease to be manhood in conjunction with Godhead, yet so unspeakably glorious is this risen body of the blessed Lord, to the image of which the risen saints will be conformed, that in this time-state we can not only form no conception of its surpassing glory, but not even of that inferior degree of glory which will clothe the bodies of the saints at the resurrection. "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." **1Jo 3:2** But of this we may be sure, that there will always be an essential and unapproachable distinction between the glory of Christ's humanity and theirs. His humanity, being in eternal union with his Deity, derives thence a glory which is distinct from all other, and to which there can be no approach, and with which there can be no comparison. The glory of the moon never can be the glory of the sun, though she shines with his reflected light. "He will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body;" **Php 3:21** but though like, it will not be the same. It will be the saints' eternal happiness to see him as he is, and to be made like unto him; but it will be their everlasting joy that he should ever have that pre-eminence of glory which is his birthright, and to adore which will ever be their supreme delight. To have a body free from all sin, sickness, and sorrow, filled to its utmost capacity of holiness and happiness, able to see him as he is without dying under the sight, and to be re-united to its once suffering but now equally glorified companion, an immortal soul, expanded to its fullest powers of joy and bliss—if this be not sufficient what more can God give?

THE ASCENSION (Chapter 10)

There is this peculiar blessedness in the Person and work of the adorable Redeemer, that, like the sun which shines in every clime, he is ever beaming forth out of his inexhaustible fullness rays of grace and glory, under every aspect, to believing eyes and hearts; so that the more we look to him the more we see in him to adore and love, the more we believe in his name the more it becomes as the ointment poured forth, and the more we experience of

his grace the more we feel of its power. "Have I been," he asks his people, "a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" **Jer 2:31** No, Lord, we may well answer; not "a wilderness," for from thee is all our fruit found; not "a land of darkness," for with thee is the light of life. If, then, no fruit be gathered by us from that portion of the heavenly garden through which we now purpose, with God's help and blessing, to walk with our readers, it is not because no fruit grows there, but because our eyes are too dim to see, or our hands too weak to reach it down from the tree of life. In this, as in everything else that we speak, write, or do in his name, we willingly acknowledge our shortcomings; for though we would wish to set forth to the utmost of our power the grace and glory of the incarnate Son of God; and though what has lately engaged our pen has not been without some amount of careful thought and consideration, yet we feel miserably to fail both in conception and expression, and must confess with Berridge,

But we lisp and falter forth

Broken words, not half his worth.

And if this be true as regards our past Meditations on the holy humanity of Jesus in his state of humiliation here below, how much more must it be so when we have to view him as he now is, enthroned on high in all the fulness of his mediatorial grace and glory. Still, we essay the task, in the hope that our meditation of him may be sweet, and be attended with a blessing from on high to those who love his name and long for his appearing. For though he is exalted far beyond all present conception, yet in the word of truth we have a sure guide, by following which we may obtain some believing apprehensions of what he is to those who see him by faith at the right hand of the Father.

1. The first point, then, that will now engage our thoughts is the ascension of the blessed Lord; and the first step in our meditation upon it will be to **prove the fact**. This, in the depth of his wisdom. God has been pleased to place beyond all doubt or controversy, at least to all who receive the scriptures as an inspired revelation; and by so doing he has given us much reason to admire his infinite condescension and grace. The Lord might have ascended to heaven immediately after his resurrection, without showing himself to his disciples; or after appearing to them, to prove that he was risen from the dead, he might have gone up on high without any eye-witnesses of his ascension. But that so stupendous and yet so indispensable a fact might rest on an immovable foundation, the Lord did not ascend till forty days after the resurrection, that by his repeated appearances to his disciples he might afford them so many "infallible proofs" **Ac 1:3** that indeed he was risen from the dead; and when he went up on high it was in the presence and in the open sight of his eleven apostles, that not only they themselves might have the evidence of their own eyes,

the strongest of all possible proofs, but that through all ages the church might be able to rest with sure confidence on such indubitable testimony.

The fact, then, of the Lord's ascension we have now more particularly to show from the scriptures of truth. On the morning of that day on which he ascended to heaven the blessed Lord appeared for the tenth and last time to his followers. The eleven apostles met together at his command in Jerusalem, and there Jesus appeared in their midst. As we read: "And being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." **Ac 1:4-5** During this last solemn interview the Lord conversed at some length with his disciples, as recorded, for we need not quote the passages at length. **Mr 16:15-18; Lu 24:44-49; Ac 1:4-8** He thus afforded them not only the sweet consolation of his actual, living presence before he as parted from them, but the clearest possible evidence that he was the very same Jesus whom they had so well known and so dearly loved in the days of his flesh, during the whole time that he had consorted with them. Having, then, afforded them this confirming evidence that it was indeed he himself, he ascended visibly before their eyes to give to them-and to the church of God through all ages by them-the surest testimony that he had gone up into heaven in the same bodily form, the same identical humanity, in which they had ever known him.

As this is so important a feature of our present subject, and must form the foundation of our Meditations upon it, we will quote the very language of the Holy Ghost as we find it written in the inspired page: "And he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." **Lu 24:50-53** "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." **Ac 1:9** Consider for a moment the strength of this testimony. Could these eleven men have been deceived or mistaken in what they thus personally witnessed? Most of them afterwards laid down their lives in confirmation of what they then saw. When, then, they viewed him with whom they had been for some time holding sweet converse taken up before their eyes, and they watched his ascension till a cloud received him out of their sight, could they have had a more indubitable testimony of the fulfilment of his own words, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father?" **Joh 16:28** And again, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." **Joh 20:17** But to leave not a shadow of doubt on their minds, and to seal it more effectually on their hearts, as well as to assure them of his future return, the Lord was graciously pleased to add to their own eye-witness angelic testimony: "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said. Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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." **Ac 1:10-11**

It may seem, perhaps, to some of our readers, almost unnecessary for us to have brought forward so much scripture testimony on a point which no believer doubts. But, through some little acquaintance with the unbelief and infidelity of the human heart, and continued assaults from that quarter, we have long seen and felt in our own mind that faith wants the strongest and surest foothold that God has given on which it may stand during seasons of darkness and temptation. Some never seem to doubt either the certainty of the rock or their own standing on it; but we freely confess that there are times and seasons with us when hell, with all its infernal artillery, and the infidelity of the human mind combine together to shake our faith to its very centre. But we have learnt this lesson in the school of temptation, that faith needs the firmest possible foothold on which it may stand while the storm rages. As, then, the shipwrecked sailor, washed ashore by the heaving billow, cleaves with all his strength to the rock which he has happily reached, lest the receding wave should sweep him out to sea, so does the believing soul, landed on the rock of truth, cleave with all its might to the word of God's grace, lest the wave of infidelity sweep it away to the sea of destruction.

Now, when by divine grace faith can stand upon facts so clearly attested as the resurrection and ascension of the blessed Lord, it feels that there is firm ground beneath its feet; and that in believing in a risen and ascended Lord it does not "follow cunningly-devised fables," but receives the truth as it is in Jesus from the sure witness of those who "have made known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as eye-witnesses of his majesty." **2Pe 1:16** Faith, too, needs food as well as foothold; and it is upon these divine verities, so plainly revealed and so clearly established in the word of truth, that faith feeds as its choice provision. The time may come with you, dear reader, when you may feel as if clambering up a steep and lofty mountain, whose top you must reach or die; and yet, with all your exertion, every stone on which you would place your foot rolls away from under you, filling you with dread at every step lest life be lost or limb be broken. Under such circumstances how you would prize a solid rock on which, step by step, you could set your trembling, staggering feet. This rock is Christ, which God has laid in Zion; but that faith may stand upon it unmoved, immovable by the assaults of unbelief and infidelity, he has in the word of his grace laid this foundation firm and sure by the strongest testimony.

2. Having, then, seen the strong foundation on which the ascension of the blessed Lord rests as an ascertained fact, we may now proceed to view him by faith **as entering the courts of bliss**. And the first most obvious view that faith obtains of him is that he entered heaven in the same identical human body in which he last communed with his disciples, and which they had seen taken up before their eyes; for one part of "the great mystery of godliness" is

that "God manifest in. the flesh" was "received up into glory," and therefore in the same flesh as that in which he was thus manifested. **1Ti 3:16**

Dr. Owen has so clearly expressed the faith of the church on this vital point that we prefer giving his words to any of our own:

"All perfections whereof human nature is capable, abiding what it was in both the essential parts of it, body and soul, do belong unto the Lord Jesus Christ in his glorified state. To ascribe unto it what is inconsistent with its essence is not an assignation of glory unto its state and condition, but a destruction of its being. To affix unto human nature divine properties, as ubiquity or immensity, is to deprive it of its own. The essence of his body is no more changed than that of his soul. It is a fundamental article of faith that he is in the same body in heaven wherein he conversed here on earth; as well as the faculties of his rational soul are continued the same in him. This is that 'holy thing' which was framed immediately by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin. This is that 'Holy One' which, when it was in the grave, saw no corruption. This is that body which was offered for us, wherein he bare our sins on the tree. To fancy any such change in or of this body, by its glorification, as that it should not continue essentially and substantially the same that it was, is to overthrow the faith of the church in a principal article of it. We believe that the very same body wherein he suffered for us, without any alteration as to its substance, essence, or integral parts, and not another body of an ethereal, heavenly structure, wherein is nothing of flesh, blood, or bones, by which he so frequently testified the faithfulness of God in his incarnation, is still that temple wherein God dwells, and wherein he administers in the holy place not made with hands. The body which was pierced is that which all eyes shall see, and no other."

—(A Declaration of the Mystery of the Person of Christ), Chap. XIX. By Dr. Owen.

The clearness, wisdom, holy and heavenly sobriety of the above extract need no commendation from us.^{[1][i]} It speaks sufficiently for itself to those who know and love the truth, and are willing to submit themselves to the oracles of God as its own infallible source. We must have no tampering, then, with that fundamental article of our most holy faith, that the Lord Jesus took into heaven the identical humanity which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin. But this thorough identity of his holy humanity does not impair or detract from every perfection as now made manifest in that glorified human nature which is consistent with its preserving its real form and essence. And of this we seem to have a very clear proof in the word of truth. When holy John had a revelation of his glorified humanity, in the Isle of Patmos, it was not of an aerial body, retaining no traces of the

human form, a Jesus whom he could not at once recognise as having seen him before in the flesh, but "one like unto the Son of man"-that very same Son of man whom he had known here below-one, too, who had "head, and hair, and eyes, and feet, and hands," these human members all still retained in their entirety, but all unspeakably glorious; and whose "countenance" still the same human countenance "was as the sun shineth in his strength."

Re 1:13-16.

It is necessary, indeed, to bear in mind that whilst we speak of the identity of the risen and ascended body of the Lord, we utterly separate from it what the apostle calls "the weakness" of Christ; "he was crucified through weakness;" **2Co 13:4** for though this weakness was compatible with, and even necessary unto, his state of humiliation, it is not consistent with a heavenly condition, or his exaltation to eternal glory. The body of the blessed Lord ate, and drank, and slept, was weary and thirsty here below. But no such infirmities, or, to speak more correctly, no such sinless contingencies of a state of humiliation were taken with him into heaven. His body and soul are still identically and unalterably the same as they were upon earth; but heavenly glory, without destroying or even impairing the reality of his human nature, has eternally swallowed up all those mere passing and contingent circumstances which necessarily attended his humanity in a time-state. This will also be the case with the risen bodies of the saints at the great day, as the apostle so beautifully speaks: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed; for this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal put on immortality." **1Co**

15:51-53

But though they will be fashioned after the likeness of the risen body of Jesus, we must ever bear in mind that the glory of Christ's human nature in its mediatorial state essentially differs from that glory which will clothe the souls and bodies of the risen saints at the great day; for his humanity, as existing in intimate union with his divine Person, is there-by eternally distinguished from theirs, and exalted infinitely beyond any glory which the risen bodies of the saints shall wear. They will indeed see his glory face to face with-out a veil between, **Job 19:27; Joh 17:24; 1Co 13:12** and be partakers of it, which will be their eternal joy; **Joh 17:22; Lu 22:29-30; Re 3:21** they will be conformed in body and soul to his glorified image, so as to be eternally resplendent in all the beauties of holiness; **Ps 17:15; 1Co 15:49; Php 3:21** and as such they will "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." **Da 12:3** But with all this eternal weight of glory, the glorified humanity of the blessed Lord, from its ineffable union with his Deity, will ever differ from theirs not only in degree, but in nature. For this reason, his human nature, as being so glorious from its conjunction with his Deity, is the object of adoration and worship of all creatures the very same worship which is paid to the Person of the Father: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be

unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." **Re 5:13** This glory it has from its subsistence in his divine Person, therefore inherent in it, and thus essentially distinct from the inferior glory of the risen saints, who have it as a gift and not a necessary adjunct. All the glory which they will have is from him as a gift of his grace, and as being members of his mystical body; but it dwells in him in all its fountain fulness, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What we have here, or shall have hereafter, is only by gift; but what he is and has he is and has by right.

Besides which, though his sacred humanity in its glorified state still remains a creature, and neither is nor can be deified, yet, from its intimate conjunction with his Deity it receives emanations of power and glory which we may apprehend by faith, but of which no adequate conception can ever be formed by a finite intellect, not even of the highest angel. His eternal Deity irradiates his humanity with a lustre beyond its own, and shines through it with resplendent glory, as the sun shines through a cloud, or as at the moment of his transfiguration the glorious Person of the God-man made "his raiment become shining exceeding white as snow." **Mr 9:3** If such a comparison be admissible, as our soul ennobles our body, and thus, even in our fallen state, as being an immortal principle, separates us from the lower creation, so the essential Deity of the Son of God ennobles his humanity, and separates it from all approach or comparison of the inferior glory of his risen saints. But we pause, lest we seem to intrude too much on high and speculative subjects, though, as far as we have gone, we cannot but feel they are blessed mysteries when apprehended by a living faith.

3. We may pass on, then, to examine **in what way**, and **to accomplish what special purposes** of wisdom and grace the blessed Lord entered upon his present state of mediatorial exaltation at the right hand of the Father. And viewing him as ascending on high that, in his complex Person as God-man, he might be "set at God's 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 1:20-21** we may consider his entrance into his glory **Lu 24:26** under these two different aspects: as a triumphant King, and as a gracious High Priest. He entered heaven, then, in glorious triumph, to take possession of his mediatorial kingdom, as Zion's anointed King, and "to sit and rule upon his throne." **Ps 2:6; Zec 6:13; Lu 1:32-33** God the Father had appointed unto him a kingdom **Lu 22:29** as the reward of his incarnation and humiliation, **Php 2:9-10; Heb 2:9** and this he went into heaven to take possession of. **Lu 19:12; Re 3:21** Immediately, then, that he left earth, and was received out of the sight of the eleven apostles in a cloud of glory, his royal progress began. Surely, if a chariot of fire and horses of fire were despatched to take Elijah up to heaven, **2Ki 2:11** the blessed Lord had no inferior convoy. Was the servant so honoured, and was no honour paid to the Master? Should the subject be taken gloriously to heaven, and the King have no train of celestial glory? Did "his train fill the temple" when Isaiah "saw his glory and spake of him?" **Isa 6:1; Joh 12:41** and did no train of glory follow him as he ascended on high to take

possession of his mediatorial kingdom? But we are not left to conjecture upon this point. The scripture affords the clearest proof of the triumphant manner in which the Lord of life and glory went up on high.

In **Ps 68** there is a blessed description of the glorious convoy of angels which attended him on his royal progress up to heaven's gates; for as, when "he shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation," he will be "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels," **2Th 1:7** and shall "come in the glory of his Father, with his angels," **Mt 16:27** so thousands upon thousands of ministering angels attended upon him at his triumphant ascension. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them" **Ps 68:17-18** This triumphant ascension of the blessed Lord is also clearly intimated in **Ps 47** "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph; for the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises; for God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding." **Ps 47:1-2,5-7**

Nor are we left without scriptural intimations even of the blessed Lord's reception at the very courts of bliss. When he reached the gates of heaven the celestial courts were, as it were, moved at his approach, for then was accomplished that memorable transition recorded in **Ps 24** As thus represented to our faith, it was as if the attendant angels that formed his glorious convoy shouted aloud before him, as the heralds of his approach, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." **Ps 24:7** But from within is made the inquiry, "Who is this King of glory?" The answer is given from without by the attendants of his train, "The LORD, strong and mighty; the LORD, mighty in battle." Then comes forth the universal chorus, from without and from within, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory." **Ps 24:9-10** We do not say, it might be rash to assert it, that all this was literally and actually transacted, for heavenly realities are beyond the range of human conception; but it is so represented to our faith in the word of truth; and as such we receive it in the simplicity of little children.

Nor were good angels the only attendants of his train. Ancient kings, returning home after triumphant wars, brought back conquered enemies as well as congratulating friends. In a similar way the blessed Lord is represented in scripture as then manifestly triumphing over Satan and all his angels, as if in his glorious ascension, when "he led captivity captive," he dragged at his chariot-wheels the infernal hosts of hell, and openly showed them to all the

holy angels as vanquished prisoners. Thus, at least, the apostle speaks, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," that is, the cross, or, to adopt the marginal rendering, "in himself." **Col 2:15** The ancient promise was that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." When Satan, by entering into Judas, and by instigating the chief priests and the people to demand that Christ should be crucified, had, as he thought, effectually succeeded in destroying Jesus, he little imagined that this was to be, by God's eternal design, the very means of accomplishing that prediction. On the cross the seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head the seat of his poison-fangs, as well as of his infernal craft and cruelty. There Jesus spoiled principalities and powers, and cast them out of their usurped dominion. But when he ascended on high he "led captivity captive;" **Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8** that is, he led captive those who had led poor fallen man captive, in the open sight of all the angelic host, that the elect angels might be eye-witnesses of the ruin and misery which had fallen on the heads of their apostate brethren in the defeat of all their schemes against the Holy One of Israel.

It would appear, from the testimony of scripture, that the holy angels were partially, if not wholly, ignorant of the designs of God in the mystery of the incarnation till all was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus; and even now are waiting for further developments of the wisdom of God as therein displayed in the present grace and future glory of the church of Christ. This was represented in the Levitical dispensation by the cherubim looking toward the mercy-seat of the ark, as Peter explains the figure, "which things the angels desire to look into;" **1Pe 1:12** and observe that the apostle does not say that they "desired," but that they "desire," that is, still desire, to look into these heavenly mysteries, to afford them renewed discoveries of the wisdom and glory of God; for it is not by creation, with all its wonders, nor by providence, in all its displays, that the wisdom of God is made known to angelic minds, but by redemption. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." **Eph 3:10-11**

With what surpassing and resplendent glory, then, was the infinite wisdom of God displayed to these bright, angelic intelligences when, at the ascension of their Lord and ours, they personally witnessed how, in that very nature which "was made a little lower than the angels," in his state of humiliation, he had defeated all the designs of Satan, vindicated the honour of God, glorified his justice, magnified the law given by their ministrations and made it honourable, revealed the grace, mercy, and love of the Father in the salvation of millions of redeemed sinners, and was now returning triumphant into heaven to reign and rule at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

4. And this leads us to consider the **ends** for which Jesus ascended thus triumphantly into glory. They may be briefly viewed as two, which may be severally characterised by the two different instruments of regal power which the enthroned King of Zion bears as the insignia of his authority.

i. **The rod of iron** whereby he rules over his enemies. This has been put into his hands by his Father: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." **Ps 2:9** "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies," was the charter of his authority, when the Father said unto him, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." **Ps 110:1-2** Thus power is given him "over all flesh;" **Joh 17:2** yea, "all power in heaven and in earth;" **Mt 28:18** for "God hath put all things," and therefore "all enemies," "under his feet." **1Co 15:25-27** All persons and things are subject to his control; and though "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed; he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." **Ps 2:4**

ii. But there is the **sceptre of his grace**, by which he rules in the hearts of a willing people; **Ps 110:3** bows them at his feet in sweet submission to his will; and becomes enthroned in their heart and affections as the Prince of peace. But as we shall have occasion to speak more particularly of the exercise of this twofold kingly power when we come to the consideration of our Lord's present state in heaven, we shall not dwell any longer on this branch of our subject, but proceed to view the adorable Redeemer as:

5. Ascending on high that he might be a **High Priest over the house of God**, and that "not after the law of a carnal commandment," as the priests under the law, "but after the power of an endless life." **Heb 7:16** It was prophesied of him that he should be "a Priest on his throne." **Zec 6:13** as uniting in his glorious Person the regal and priestly dignities. Of this conjunction of king and priest in one Person Melchisedec was a type, who was "king of Salem and priest of the most high God;" **Heb 7:1** and we know that the testimony of God to his dear Son was, "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." **Ps 110:4; Heb 7:17** When, then, the blessed Lord had fulfilled one part of his priestly office here below by offering the sacrifice of his sacred humanity, his pure body and his holy soul, on the cross, thereby making an expiation for the sins of his people, he went up on high to accomplish on their behalf the second part of the priestly office, which is to make intercession for them. **Ro 8:34; Heb 7:25** This was beautifully typified by what took place on the solemn day of atonement, when the high priest, wearing the holy linen garments, a type of the pure humanity of Jesus, first offered sacrifice in the outer court and made atonement for sin, and then, with the blood of the bullock and of the goat, and the smoke of incense beaten small, lighted by coals taken from the brazen altar, entered into the most holy place. This most holy place was a type of heaven, **Heb 9:24** and the ascension of our

great High Priest thither was represented by the steps up which the high priest went when, after offering sacrifice, he entered with the blood into the temple.

We may also observe that when the high priest thus ascended the steps of the temple to present himself before the Lord in the most holy place, this was the very time when the jubilee trumpet sounded through the land, and proclaimed liberty to all slaves and captives, and to those who had sold their houses and lands that they might freely return and take possession of them. Thus when Christ ascended up on high to enter heaven with his own blood, proclamation was made of pardon and peace, for then began the spiritual jubilee, when those who lay captive under the law, in bondage to doubt and fear, and who had sold themselves and all their possessions for nought were to be liberated by the joyful sound of a free grace gospel preached by the apostles on the day of Pentecost.

KING OF KINGS (Chapter 11)

If favoured with that "anointing" from above which "teacheth of all things, and is truth, and is no lie," dropping into our heart and from our pen, our "meditation of him will be sweet" to both writer and reader. And indeed, if in any art of our Meditations on this sacred subject we especially need the unction of his grace to lead us into the truth, to endue us with the spirit of faith so as to receive into a believing heart what the Holy Ghost has revealed in the inspired word, to be kept from unhallowed, presumptuous speculation, whilst treading such sacred ground, and to unfold with any measure of holy and heavenly wisdom the mysteries of the kingdom of grace and glory of our risen and ascended Lord, it is now, when we approach that part of our subject where we have to contemplate him as seated at the right hand of the Father. We have seen him rising from the dead and ascending up on high, and our last view of him was his triumphant entry into the courts of heaven, or, as the Holy Ghost expresses it, "received up into glory." **1Ti 3:16**. The subject, then, of our present Meditation will be a view by faith of what Jesus now is at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But before we enter upon this most blessed theme, as the proposed subject of our Meditations was "The Sacred Humanity of our adorable Redeemer," it may not be out of place to cast a glance at this sacred humanity in its present exalted state of majesty and glory.

The exaltation of human nature, **what the scripture calls "the flesh and blood of the children," Heb 2:14, meaning thereby the whole of our humanity, body and soul**, as a necessary but most blessed consequence of its intimate and indissoluble union with the divine Person of the Son of God, is the greatest display of the wisdom, love, and grace of a Triune Jehovah that could be afforded to men or angels. In our present time-state, whilst

groaning in our earthly house of this tabernacle, surrounded by evils innumerable without, and burdened with a body of sin and death within, we can only apprehend and realise by faith what our nature now is in union with the Person of the Son of God, and what it hereafter will be in that great day when he shall come "to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe," when he "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." **Php 3:21.**

Viewed, however, by mortal eyes, as an object of existing sight and sense, human nature can now only be seen in its debased, degraded condition. The original beauty and glory of man, as made in God's image, after his own likeness, were utterly lost in the Adam fall. Sin has marred body and soul, filling the former with disease and pain, and the latter with pollution and corruption. Of this we have daily experience, not only in its most pressing and painful form as the poison in our own body and soul, often making us groan, being burdened, as regards ourselves, but as witnessing also with grief the pain and misery of others by which we are surrounded, and seeing spread before our eyes the vile abominations which run down our streets like water. But this is not all. Though even of this world's present misery and sin but an infinitely small fraction has pressed on our heart or entered our eyes or ears, we have not seen, and God grant we never may see, how human nature thoroughly let loose can both sin and suffer. What sins it is capable of we feel in ourselves, for in our own hearts lie deeply imbedded and struggling for life and growth the vital seeds of every foul and damnable crime; what it has done, and is ever greedily, exultingly, remorselessly doing in others, abandoned to its lusts, we see or read in daily act. Even in this civilised land what foul crimes are continually surging up to view, as if from a bottomless deep, where sin is ever seething and boiling as in a flaming cauldron.

But in this present life human nature is no more what it will be hereafter in the unregenerate, than what it will be hereafter in the regenerate. Its future capacity for sin is no more known by the iniquities which it now throws up into open view than the depths of the sea by the seaweed cast upon the shore. Take all the depths unfathomed, unfathomable, of your own heart, or look at the vilest wretch whom sins of every shape and name have debased to the lowest pitch, steeped to the neck in blood and crime, so sworn a foe of all laws, human and divine, that, if to be taken in no other way, he must be shot down like a wild beast for the security of the lives of the community; when you have probed the depths of your own heart, or painted in your own imagination the blackest wretch that the hulks have ever held, or vomited forth on a penal colony, you have not then seen or imagined in your mind the millionth part of what human nature really is as sunk and debased by the Adam fall. The very present constitution of the human body, the limited powers of the mind, the laws of society, the restraint of God's providence, and a thousand other visible or invisible checks, now keep human nature shut up in itself, as a wild beast in an iron cage. Nor will earth ever witness the full outburst of the fury of sin as blazing forth in the body and soul of man to its utmost height. Hell, and hell alone will fully manifest, as hell, and

hell alone will fully develop human nature as burning with the most intense and unquenchable enmity and blasphemy against God and the Lamb.

But take the converse. We have taken a glimpse at human nature debased and degraded, polluted by sin and set on fire of hell. Now view human nature pure and holy, unspotted, unfallen, and especially look at it as exalted above angels, principalities, and powers in the glorious Person of Immanuel, God with us. There we see humanity in intimate personal and indissoluble union with Deity. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God in suffering man, made after his own image, to sink so low, and in the Person of his dear Son to exalt it so high that the same nature should be in hell and in heaven; in hell, outvying devils in blasphemy in heaven, in union with Deity. It is at human nature thus exalted that we would now chiefly look; and if we have thus briefly touched upon man as debased and degraded by sin, we have thrown in these gloomy colours merely by way of contrast. As in a picture the dark shades set off and more clearly bring out the bright lights, so the very degradation of human nature by sin and its miserable consequences only more clearly brings out into open view the stupendous grace displayed in its glorious exaltation in the Person of the Son of God.

These thoughts, though at first sight perhaps somewhat discursive and foreign to our subject, may, with God's blessing, prepare our minds to approach that portion of our heavenly theme on which we now attempt to enter.

We have, in our past Meditations, beheld the blessed Lord ascend up on high, and have by faith traced his course up to the very gates of heaven; we have seen his angelic convoy, viewed his dismayed foes, and heard the shouts of exultation from the heavenly host which welcomed him home. We have now, then, to consider **the place** to which he thus triumphantly ascended, and **the end and object** of his triumphant entry there.

The place into which he ascended is heaven, by which we mean the immediate residence of God in all his majesty and glory. The blessed Lord is said **Heb 4:14** to have "passed into," or rather, as the word literally means, "**through** the heavens," **i.e.**, the material heavens, both the watery heavens, **Ge 7:11; De 28:12; Job 38:29,37**, and the starry heavens; **Ps 8:3; 19:1**; and to be "made higher" than they, that is, not only actually but locally. **Heb 7:26**. It is, then, into "the heaven of heavens," **Ps 148:4**, or "the third heaven," **2Co 12:2**, that the Lord ascended when he went up on high. He is therefore said to be "set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens." **Heb 8:1**.

We shall chiefly direct our present thoughts to the blessed Lord in the immediate presence of God as Zion's enthroned King.

Just before the Lord ascended up on high he "came and spake" unto his eleven disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." **Mt 28:18**. Previous to his resurrection his was a state of humiliation and suffering, for "he was made a little lower than the angels;" **Heb 2:9**; "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death;" **Php 2:8**; was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" **Isa 53:3**; yea, "a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." **Ps 22:6**. But when he arose from the dead, his humiliation was past, and his glory began, as Peter speaks, "Who by him do believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory." **1Pe 1:21**. Thus his resurrection was the commencement of his mediatorial reign, and his ascension and going up into heaven was the entering into possession of it, as he himself said to the two disciples, when journeying with them to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" **Lu 24:26**.

When, then, he entered into glory, he took possession of the throne of David, according to the promise made of him unto the Virgin Mary: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." **Lu 1:32-33**. He was then "called the Son of the Highest," *i.e.*, openly proclaimed as the Son of God, at and by his resurrection, for he was then "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead;" **Ro 1:4**; and when he went up on high, and was set "at God's right hand in the heavenly places," **Ps 47:4; 68:18; Eph 1:20**, he "received the kingdom," as he intimated in the parable of the nobleman and his ten servants: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." **Lu 19:12**. The "far country" is heaven; the "kingdom" received is his present mediatorial reign; and his returning is his second coming. He received the kingdom not only as a kingdom of grace and glory, but as a kingdom of authority and power. All things were then put under his feet, and all power given him in heaven and earth.

The universal power, the spiritual nature, and the eternal duration of this kingdom are no less clearly than beautifully unfolded in **Ps 72**: "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall

spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." And that this exaltation to the right hand of God is for the good of his people, and that he might be the spiritual, ever-living Head of his church, is blessedly unfolded by the apostle where, speaking of Christ's resurrection, he says that God "raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." **Eph 1:20-23.**

Men have unhappily thrown discredit upon this most blessed doctrine of the kingship of Christ, which, as revealed in the scriptures, is full of sweet consolation to the exercised family of God, by carnalising it into an earthly millennium. No doubt there are glories in this sovereign rule of Jesus to be one day more fully manifested, but it is proposed to our faith all through the New Testament as an object of our present spiritual experience; for as Zion's enthroned King he is the Head of his body the church, and as such supplies her out of his own inexhaustible fulness. He died that we might never die. To him, as raised from the dead, we are married that we might "bring forth fruit unto God." **Ro 7:4.** "Because he lives we shall live also." **Joh 14:19.** To him, as our enthroned King, we give the allegiance of our hearts; before his feet, as our rightful Sovereign, we humbly lie; and we beg of him, as possessed of all power, to subdue our iniquities, subdue our rebellious lusts, and sway his peaceful sceptre over every faculty of our soul.

That he should thus reign and rule, and that over all flesh, **Mt 28:18; Joh 17:2; 1Co 15:25-26; Heb 2:8,** was the promise made unto him in **Ps 2,** the subject of which is the exaltation of the Son of God as the anointed King of Zion. This exaltation of the Son of God in our nature made "the heathen rage, and the people [i.e., the Jewish people] imagine a vain thing," which was, that by their rebellion and disobedience they could "break the bands asunder, and cast away the cords" in which they were bound by God's firm decree, when he said, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." This exaltation of the Son of God in our nature, as of the seed of David, Peter preached in that Pentecostal sermon which the Holy Ghost so inspired and so honoured: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses; therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear; for David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself. The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." **Ac 2:32-36.** Jesus is here declared to be made by the Father "both Lord and Christ," that is. King and Priest "Lord," as invested with sovereign and supreme dominion, "Christ," as the anointed High Priest over the house of God.

This exaltation of the Lord Jesus was given him as a reward for his incarnation, humiliation, and suffering obedience, as the apostle so beautifully speaks, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." **Php 2:8-11.**

This exaltation wherewith God hath so "highly exalted him," is to his own right hand; and "the name which he hath given him, which is above every name," is that of "Lord," that in our nature as God-man he might rule and reign, and exercise supreme dominion and sovereign authority over things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. The mystery of grace and glory contained in and made manifest by this exaltation of the Son of God is not that he reigns and rules as one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, for this he did as one with them in essence, power, and glory before the foundation of the world; but that he reigns and rules as God-man as the Son of God and yet the Son of man, as David's Lord and yet as David's Son. See the following scriptures: **(Mt 22:42-45; Joh 10:26-27; Ac 7:55-56; Ro 1:3-4; 14:9; Eph 1:20-23; Heb 2:9).**

This exaltation of Jesus to the throne of glory was typified by the glorious throne which Solomon made for himself, and on which he sat in royal state: "Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind; and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there, on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom." **1Ki 10:18-20.** It was "a great throne," to show the greatness of his power and dominion; made of "ivory," to denote purity and perfection; and "overlaid with the best gold," to signify value and preciousness. It had "six steps," to denote elevation; and "the top was round behind," to signify that past and present were alike open to view, that there was no escaping the sight and power of him who sat on it, for the throne being round, he could turn his eyes and hands in all directions. There were "stays on either side on the place of the seat," to signify the firmness of the throne; and the two lions beside the stays and the twelve lions on the six steps denoted the power and authority of him who sat thereon, for he is the Lion of Judah. **Re 5:5; Ge 49:9.**

This aspect of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus as the enthroned King of Zion is a blessed subject of meditation when we consider its bearing upon the helpless, defenceless condition of the church of God. She stands surrounded by foes, internal, external, infernal; and all

armed against her with deadly enmity. "Behold, I send you forth," said the blessed Lord, "as sheep among wolves." **Mt 10:16**. What would have become of the flock, especially in those early times, when persecution so raged on every side, unless the Lord Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, had guarded the fold? Never could the church have more loudly sung the song of preserving power: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul." **Ps 124:1-5**. And even now, when the strong arm of the law protects them from external violence, what would become of the saints of God had they no sovereign Protector, who, in their nature, as their Head and Husband, rules and reigns on their behalf in the courts of heaven? We are encompassed with foes; for "we wrestle" not only "against flesh and blood"-strong in others, but far more strong and subtle in ourselves but-"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." **Eph 6:12**. What hope or help, then, can we have but in that all-seeing eye, which sees; that all-sympathising heart, which feels; that all-powerful hand, which delivers the objects of his love from all the snares and wiles, and defeats all the plans and projects of these mighty, implacable foes?

As our enthroned King, also, Jesus is the especial object of our faith. We daily and hourly feel the workings of mighty sins, raging lusts, powerful temptations, besetting evils, against the least and feeblest of which we have no strength. But as the eye of faith views our blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father, we are led by the power of his grace to look unto him, hang upon him, and seek help out of him. Trials in providence, afflictions in the family, sickness and infirmities in the tabernacle, crooked things in the church, opposition and persecution from the world, a vile, unbelieving heart, which we can neither sanctify nor subdue, a rough and rugged path, increasing in difficulty as we journey onward, doubts, fears, and misgivings in our own bosom, inward slips and falls, wanderings, starlings aside, and hourly backslidings from the strait and narrow path, jealous enemies watching for our halting, with no eye to pity, nor arm to help, but the Lord's how all these foes and fears make us feel our need of an enthroned King, Head, and Husband, whose tender heart is soft to pity, whose mighty arm is strong to relieve!

It is good also to bear in mind that Jesus, as Zion's exalted King, has received "gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." This Peter puts prominently forward in that sermon which he preached on the memorable day of Pentecost. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." **Ac 2:33**. It was as our enthroned King, that he received and shed forth the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, the promised Comforter. The same blessed truth is asserted and unfolded by the apostle Paul, **Eph 4**: "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into

the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." **Eph 4:8-10**. The apostle is here alluding to the prophetic declaration in **Ps 68:18**. One expression in this declaration is very sweet and beautiful, according to the marginal rendering. "Thou hast received gifts for men" is in the margin, "in the man," i.e., in his human nature, in which he is exalted as our anointed King.

The gift of the Comforter was, so to speak, dependent on the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." **Joh 16:7**. Thus he is said to send the Comforter, **Joh 15:26**, which he only does by virtue of his exaltation and glorification at the right hand of God, as holy John speaks: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." **Joh 7:36**. No heart can conceive or tongue describe the blessedness of this gift—the gift of the Comforter. How effectual his teachings! how divine his operations! how heavenly his influences! how sacred his anointings! how sweet his consolations, and yet how deep his convictions! how earnest his cries! how fervent his breathings! how unutterable his groanings! What could we know, or feel, or be, or have, or do; what could we think or say; how could we believe, or hope, or love; repent, or watch, or pray; submit, or suffer; preach, or hear, or write; how could we live; and, above all, and last of all, how could we die, without this holy and blessed Comforter?

But were Jesus not exalted as Zion's King, this shedding forth of the gifts and graces of the blessed Spirit could not and would not be. It is because God "hath given him power over all flesh, that he gives eternal life to as many as God has given him." This "eternal life" is spiritual life; for its very being and blessedness is that they to whom he imparts it "may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." **Joh 17:2-3**. But this life, and this saving knowledge of the Father and of the Son, are given by the Spirit, whom Jesus sends, and who glorifies him by coming to testify of him; for he receives of Christ's and shows it to his people. **Joh 16:14**.

Thus, as Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, he becomes a gracious and glorious head of influence to the mystical members of his body. This was prophesied of him under the figure of Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah, "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiyah; and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle; and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he

shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house." **Isa 22:20-23**. The Lord, therefore, who appeared in so glorious a manner to John, **Re 1** as the exalted Head of the church, (for though he was still the Son of man, **Re 1:13**, his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength; and though he was once dead yet he liveth and is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death), and said of himself, in his message to the church at Philadelphia, "And to the angel of the church at Philadelphia write, These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." It were good for us to be looking up to the blessed Lord as our enthroned King not only that he might sway his sceptre over our hearts, controlling our rebellious wills, and subduing us to his gentle might, but as Lord over all our enemies, external, internal, infernal.

But one point we must ever bear in mind, for indeed it will surely be taught us if we are amongst the number of his loyal subjects, that however great may be the benefits and blessings of having such a King as our gracious and glorious Sovereign, we can only truly know, and experimentally realise them as we are brought into the obedience of faith. Let us not deceive ourselves by merely seeing and acknowledging his dominion when our heart is destitute of submission to his sceptre. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." **Mt 7:21**. The Holy Ghost, in **Ps 18:44**, draws a distinction between the true obedience of Christ's "people" and the "strangers" to God and godliness. "As soon as they the people hear of me they shall obey me; the strangers shall submit themselves "lie, or yield feigned obedience," marginal reading unto me." But the same grace which makes the heart honest, and bows it in willing obedience to Christ's sceptre; the same holy anointing which, by revealing the love and blood of the cross, reconciles the stubborn will and softens and meekens the obdurate spirit, opens also the eyes of the child of God to see and his soul to feel his daily need of Jesus as his gracious King. His sceptre is felt to be a sceptre of grace; his kingdom an inward kingdom, **Lu 17:21**, which is "not in word but in power;" **1Co 4:20**; "not meat and drink" legal observances and fleshly obedience "but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." **Ro 14:17**.

But that this blessed kingdom may be set up with power in our hearts, we are led into trials and temptations, and thrust, as it were, into a very host of foes, that we may prove for ourselves the reality and blessedness of such a kingdom and such a King. Every child of God is surrounded by a host of enemies without and within, who, unless they be overcome for him and by him, will most certainly overcome him. There is no neutrality in this warfare; it is a fight for life or death; for certain victory or certain defeat. All the promises are made to him that overcometh, **Re 3:12**, and that most glorious one of all: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." **Re 3:21**. But to be overcome is to be lost, for ever lost, and to perish under the wrath of God. How then shall we overcome but by faith in our

risen Head; but by calling upon our enthroned King to fight our battles, who must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet?

If we belong to Jesus and walk in obedience to his will and word we shall surely have many outward foes, "for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." **2Ti 3:12.**

But let them pass; they cannot really hurt us, for "who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" **1Pe 3:13.** There are much more numerous and mightier enemies within than any foes without; and of these we may truly say with Judah of old, in the presence of the embattled host, "O, our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee." **2Ch 20:12.** And well it is when we can look up in faith and prayer to the blessed Lord as our risen Head and enthroned King, and, from a believing view of his surpassing grace and almighty power, ready to be stretched out on our behalf, can say, "Our eyes are upon thee." When we feel the power of sin, the tyranny of our vile lusts and passions, and what our nature is capable of if left to its own will and way, how sweet and suitable is the promise, "He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities." **Mic 7:19.**

When, then, our blessed Joshua brings the captive kings out of the cave, and by his Spirit and grace puts our feet upon their necks, **Jos 10:24,** then he becomes endeared to us as our sceptred King; for in these favoured moments we can truly say, "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." **Isa 26:13.** "Lord," we say, "subdue our iniquities; bend our wills to thine; reign and rule over and in us as our Lord and God; bring into captivity every rebellious thought to the obedience of Christ; come into our soul in thy love, and blood, and grace; conform us to thine image; make us to walk in thy footsteps, and let not any sin have dominion over us." When thus subdued by the sceptre of his all-conquering grace, we can lie humbly and resignedly at his feet, and, yielding the obedience of a believing, loving heart, commit all we are and have into his sacred hands as our most blessed rightful Sovereign; then we prove that the present kingship of Jesus at the right hand of the Father is no dry doctrine, nor mere speculative notion, but, as received into a feeling, believing heart, is a matter of vital and daily experience. This is the reign of grace; **Ro 5:21;** the building of the spiritual temple, in which there is heard neither hammer nor axe, **1Ki 6:7,** but noiselessly carried on in believing hearts by our glorious Joshua, of whom we read: "Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." **Zec 6:12-13.**

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST—His All-Prevailing Intercession (Chapter 12)

We are now led to another character of our blessed Lord, as wearing our nature in the courts of heaven, for in the prophecy of him just quoted, it is promised that "he shall be a **priest** upon his throne." The high priest under the law never sat upon a throne. He was a servant, not a sovereign; for he "served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things." **Heb 8:5**. But Jesus is a royal Priest, and as such was typified by Melchizedek, who united in himself the two characters of priest and king, for he was "King of Salem, and Priest of the most high God." **Heb 7:1**. This was "the order of Melchizedek," according to which Jesus was made a high priest by virtue of the ancient oath: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." **Ps 110:4**. There were three especial features in the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek which distinguished it from the Levitical order:

1. It was a **royal** priesthood; for Melchisedec was "by interpretation King of righteousness **that being the meaning of his name**, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace." **Heb 7:2**.
2. It was **made by an oath**. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest; **For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him. The Lord sware and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec**. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." **Heb 7:20-22**.
3. It was **for ever**, for so ran the promise, "Thou art a Priest for ever." Jesus was, therefore, not a temporary high priest, as the high priests under the law, whom sickness struck and death removed, for "they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." **Heb 7:23**. But Jesus being "made not after the law of a carnal commandment," as was the high priest under the law. "but after the power of an endless life," continueth ever, as having an unchangeable priesthood. And in this consists much of the suitability and blessedness of his priestly office as now carried on in heaven, as the apostle speaks: "Wherefore he 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 7:25**.

Let us, then, as the Lord may enable, now take a view by faith of the Lord Jesus, as the high priest over the house of God, and this may give us holy boldness to venture nigh. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh." **Heb 10:19-20**. If thus enabled to draw near with a true heart, we may find a benefit in meditating upon our blessed Lord in this relationship to his church and people.

The high priest, under the law, on the great day of atonement, which occurred once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, made a solemn atonement, first for the sins of himself and his house, and then for the iniquities of the children of Israel. **Le 16:34**. But this he did in two ways by offering a bullock as a sin offering for himself, and a goat, upon which the Lord's lot fell, as a sin offering for the people; **Le 16:6,9,11**; by taking a censer full of burning coals from off the altar, and filling his hands with sweet incense beaten small, and entering therewith into the most holy place. This was that sacred spot called "the holy of holies" or "the holiest of all" **Heb 9:3**; which contained the ark of the covenant on which, between the cherubim, was the Shechinah or visible manifestation of the presence and glory of God. Into this holiest of all, the high priest never entered but on the great day of atonement; and even on that day he was forbidden, under the penalty of death, to come within the veil which separated it from the holy place, unless he had washed his flesh, had put on the holy linen garment, taken with him the blood of the sacrifice, and put the incense upon the burning coals in the censer. All these things were highly typical of Jesus as the great high priest. The washing of the flesh denoted his purity as high priest; the holy linen garments, the holiness of his human nature; the blood, his atoning blood shed upon the cross; and the incense, his meritorious intercession. The most holy place was typical of heaven, and the veil typical of the separation between God and us, and that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." **Heb 9:8**. When Jesus died, this veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom **Mt 27:51**; to show that there was no longer a separating veil between God and his people.

But the high priest going within the veil, with the blood and the incense, was a special type of Jesus, our risen High Priest, entering into the courts of heaven. There was a connection between the intercession of the high priest without, and within the veil. Outside the veil the sacrifice was offered, but the blood was taken inside it. The brazen altar was without the veil, but the ark of the covenant was within. The high priest shed the blood without, but sprinkled it within. The burning coals were taken from the brazen altar which stood in the open court; but the incense was put upon them as he entered into the most holy place, that the cloud of its fragrance might cover the mercy seat on and before which he sprinkled the blood of the bullock, offered for his sins, and that of the goat, for the sins of the people.

Thus our most blessed High Priest, after he had offered his holy body and soul as a sacrifice for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended up on high to enter into heaven in his pure and sacred humanity, typified by the holy linen garments worn by Aaron, when he went within the veil, that he might there fulfil that part of his priestly office-to **make intercession** for us. This was beautifully typified, as we have already hinted, by the high priest taking the incense beaten small within the veil, together with the atoning blood. The incense was beaten small-bruised, not cut, not only that the fragrance might more freely flow forth when lighted by the coals, but as typical of the sufferings and sorrows of our

agonising High Priest. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." **Isa 53:10**. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities." The coals from off the brazen altar typified the wrath of God, for the fire on the brazen altar, kindled in the first instance by the Lord himself, **Le 9:24**, was never put out; and on it were burnt not only all the whole burnt-offerings, but every part of the other sacrifices, as the fat of the sin-offering, which was laid thereon for that express purpose. The cloud of incense which filled the most holy place, and covered the mercy seat, represented the fragrances of the present intercession of our great and glorious High Priest in heaven. And the blood, sprinkled on and before the mercy seat, typified "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel;" **Heb 12:24**; even that precious blood "which cleanseth from all sin;" which he took with him into heaven when he entered there in his holy humanity, and the efficacy of which to purge a guilty conscience from filth, guilt, and dead works, to serve a living God, he still makes manifest when the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the soul with his own divine power.

A believing view of Christ, as typified by the high priest under the law entering within the vail, on the great day of atonement, will prepare our minds more clearly and fully to contemplate him as now carrying on his priestly office in the glorious temple above; for he "is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." **Heb 9:24**. The entering in of the high priest within the vail was one special part of his sacred office, by which he was distinguished from his priestly brethren, who might offer the ordinary sacrifices, **Le 1:5**, but not go into the most holy place with the blood of the bullock and the goat. **Le 16:1**. Thus part of his priestly office was without, and part within the vail; and yet the two parts were continuous, connected, and inseparable.

So it is with our great and glorious High Priest now within the vail-hidden, indeed, from mortal eyes, as the high priest was from the children of Israel by the vail of the tabernacle, but as really and truly still ministering in our nature there as Aaron ministered in the holy of holies, when he sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy-seat, and filled the place with the smoke and fragrance of the incense. We have already traced a connection between the blood of the sacrifice shed without the vail and the same blood carried within, and a similar connection between the coals taken from the brazen altar and the incense beaten small, the smoke of which covered the mercy-seat. So there is a necessary and most blessed connection between the blood-shedding and sacrifice of Christ on earth and his intercession in heaven. The fragrance of his intercession rises from the altar of his sacrifice, as typically from the burnt offering of Noah "a sweet smelling savour" ascended up to the Lord; and as he is ever presenting his blood-shedding and death on behalf of his people here below, he, in this sense, "ever liveth to make intercession for them." **Heb 7:25**.

We need not suppose, therefore, that the intercession of our blessed High Priest is a vocal intercession, carried on by actual prayers and supplications. In the typical intercession of the high priest, on the great day of atonement, it was not his vocal prayers which prevailed with God, for of them no mention was made or commandment given, but the blood of the sacrifice and the smoke of the incense. Thus his office is described by the apostle: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." **Heb 5:1**. And as a remarkable illustration of this we may instance what occurred when the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, and the Lord was about to consume them as in a moment: "And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them; for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people." **Nu 16:46-47**. Moses did not bid Aaron pray for the people, but make an atonement for them; so that it was not the prayers of Aaron, as the interceding high priest and typical mediator, but the incense lighted with fire from the brazen altar, which prevailed with the Lord, and stayed the plague which had already begun. **Nu 16:45-48**.

So it is the presence of Jesus in heaven in our nature, and the continual presentation of his blood-shedding and sacrifice on earth before the eyes of his Father in which the power and prevalence of his intercession consist. Thus he is represented as "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood;" **Re 19:13**; and John had a view of him in the courts of heaven as a slaughtered lamb, for he says, "And I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." **Re 5:6**. His office as an interceding High Priest was thus represented, for as "a lamb as it had been slain" is a type of his sacrifice for sin, so his **standing** as a slain lamb in the midst of the throne denotes that his precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, **1Pe 1:19**, yea, of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," in the predestinating counsels and purposes of God, **Re 13:8**, now continually avails for the salvation of the redeemed, and is ever presented before the eyes of the Father.

The present intercession of our great High Priest at the right hand of the Father, as viewed by the eye of faith, is full of encouragement and consolation to every believing heart. There are but few of the Lord's living family who do not at various times and seasons sigh and groan under a load of sin and sorrow. Now there are two especial features in the intercession of Jesus within the veil which meet this twofold burden: the prevalency of his intercession; the sympathy and compassion of his loving heart. The former suits the burden of their sins; the latter that of their sorrows. We will, with God's help and blessing, consider these two points separately.

Let us first, then, take a glance at the prevalency of his intercession, and see how suitable it is to relieve the soul under a burden of sin. "If any man sin," says John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." **1Jo 2:1**. What can we do with our sins?—their burden, their guilt, their filth, and their power? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but to sink under them; for we can neither put them away nor subdue them. But Jesus can do both, for he "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." **1Co 1:30**. To him, then, a poor, guilty, miserable, sinking sinner may look to plead his case, for in him he has "an Advocate with the Father," one of God's own appointing, and therefore sure of the ear of the Judge, a wonderful Counsellor, **Isa 9:6**, who can stand up in the court of heaven on his behalf; one who never lost a cause, rejected a humble petition, or disappointed a client.

But the power and prevalency of this advocacy in heaven rest on his atoning sacrifice offered on earth; for John immediately adds, "And he is the propitiation for our sins." It is because "he has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and "was once offered to bear the sins of many," **Heb 9:26,28**; it is because he "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" **Col 2:14**; it is because his is a finished work; **Joh 17:4; 19:30**; and he has made peace through the blood of his cross, **Col 1:21**, that he is now our prevailing Advocate and successful Intercessor in heaven, where the cause is heard and decided.

We are very apt to lose sight of these most blessed truths, and that we have such a Friend above. We believe them, indeed, firmly and fully, anchor in them, and have no hope but what is connected with and springs out of them. But in seasons of darkness and distress, when guilt from repeated backslidings lies hard and heavy on the conscience; when the mists and fogs of unbelief gather over the foundations of our hope; when our evidences are beclouded and our signs but dimly seen, then we want a living Advocate who can plead our cause, we being unable to do it ourselves, and by presenting on our behalf his blood and obedience, his sufferings, sacrifice, and death, may bring us off more than conquerors against every accusing plea and every opposing adversary. As Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua the high priest, to resist him; **Zec 3:1**; as the accuser of the brethren accuses them before God day and night; **Re 12:10**; and neither Joshua nor the brethren could plead a word in their own defence, and yet both came off conquerors by the help of the Lord and the blood of the Lamb; so poor guilty sinners now prevail through the power of their heavenly Advocate. It is, then, because we feel the weight and burden of sin, yet see by faith that our great High Priest has passed within the veil, that our eyes, hands, and hearts are all up unto him.

As thus realised by faith, there is a peculiar power in this believing view of our heavenly Advocate, which draws desire and supplication out of the soul unto and after him. Nay, it is

this living and daily intercourse with Jesus in heaven in which the very life and power of godliness consist. "Because I live, ye shall live also." **Joh 14:19**. He, as exalted above all principality and power, is the church's glorious Head, **Eph 1:22**, "from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." **Col 2:19**. This union with him as a living Head brings about communion with him; for as he communicates grace out of his own fulness, there springs up in the soul a sweet and sacred fellowship with him, as viewed by faith on his throne of grace as the Mediator between God and man. And these communications of divine light and life out of his fulness, enlightening the eyes of the understanding, and being attended by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him **Eph 1:17-18**, there arises in the heart a gracious view of his beauty and blessedness, of his grace and his glory. **Ps 112:4; Isa 33:17; Lu 1:78-79; 2Pe 1:19**. This is drinking at the fountain of life and seeing light in God's light; **Ps 36:9**; and is the very "light of life," which the Lord gives to those that follow him. **Joh 8:12**.

As, then, the soul walks in the light of these gracious teachings, the blood of Jesus is seen as a fountain of infinite value and unspeakable efficacy for sin and uncleanness; his righteousness as a most blessed covering for all its shame and nakedness; his bleeding, dying love as a most healing balm for a wounded conscience, and a heavenly cordial for a fainting spirit. It is by these teachings that the reality of true religion and of vital godliness is learnt; and in no other way. No truly exercised soul can be satisfied with seeing salvation as a mere doctrine of the gospel—a fixed and certain truth that shines in the inspired page. Glad, indeed, he is that the way of salvation is so clearly revealed in the word of truth; and that there is the light, and life, and power of the Spirit within to bear his inward witness to the truth and certainty of the written testimony; but all this light and knowledge in the letter of truth falls short of a salvation revealed and manifested to his own heart and conscience.

Here, then, comes in the blessedness of an ever-living Advocate and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father, who, by applying his blood and love with power, says to the soul, "I am thy salvation." It is therefore said of him, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Who shall describe, as who shall limit God's "uttermost?" David, "from the ends of the earth;" **Ps 61:2**; Heman, when "laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps;" **Ps 88:6**; Hezekiah, "from the gates of the grave and the pit of corruption;" **Isa 38:16-17**; Jeremiah, "out of the low dungeon," where "the waters flowed over his head, and he said, I am cut off;" **La 3:54-55**; Jonah, "out of the belly of hell;" **Jon 2:2**; all these deeply-taught and deeply-tried saints of God knew both man's uttermost and God's uttermost, and that man's uttermost was sin, hell, and despair; and God's uttermost was mercy, salvation, and heaven. Never is the prevalency of our Great High Priest's intercession so proved as when it thus saves to the uttermost. And who that knows anything of himself as a sinner, or in whose heart the fountains of the great deep have in any measure been broken up; who that

has ever had a view of sin as seen in the light of God's infinite purity and holiness, and trembled before him; who that has ever felt the guilt of backslidings, the pangs of slips and falls, and his own miserable helplessness, not only in the hour of temptation but to remove the load of transgression off his conscience who of all these but has his "uttermost," if not really so deep and desperate as Heman's and Jonah's, yet, in his own feelings, such an uttermost as none can save him from but that High Priest and Advocate who liveth at God's right hand to make intercession for him? It is here we prove the experimental reality and felt blessedness of having such an Advocate with the Father, against whom and before whom we have sinned. The Lord enables us to commit our cause into his hand, however deep or desperate, and wait and watch for him to appear and save.

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST—His Sympathy and Compassion Chapter 13

Having attempted, then, to show the nature and prevalency of the intercession of Jesus at the right hand of the Father, and how mercifully and graciously it meets our case as burdened with countless sins and pressed down with innumerable infirmities, we come now to the consideration of the blessed Lord as our most compassionate and sympathising High Priest in the courts of heaven. Sympathy and compassion are necessary qualifications of a high priest, as sustaining the office of a mediator. A priest implies a sacrifice; a sacrifice implies a sinner; a sinner implies a guilty, burdened wretch, justly amenable to the wrath of God, and therefore in a most pitiable condition. For such a one the high priest offers a sacrifice, that he may obtain thereby the pardon of his sins. He must, therefore, compassionate the case of this guilty sinner, that, as feeling sympathy with him, he may present prayer and supplication on his behalf, that the sacrifice offered for his sins may be accepted. The apostle, therefore, says, "For every high priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people so also for himself, to offer for sins." **Heb 5:1-3**. The high priest under the law differed in this point from the blessed Lord in that he was himself a sinner, and as such had to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for the sins of the people. By this offering for his own sins two things were intimated: that as a sinner he himself needed a propitiating sacrifice; and, he was reminded thereby that, though a high priest, he was really no better than the sinner for whose sins he offered sacrifice. By this sense, then, of his own sinfulness, thus vividly and distinctly brought before his eyes, he was taught to have compassion on his fellow-sinners, and especially on those who had sinned ignorantly, and were "out of the way" through backsliding or infirmity, for there was no sacrifice provided for presumptuous sinners. **Nu 15:27-31**.

Our blessed Lord, then, as the great High Priest over the house of God, would not have been suitable to us, as encompassed with infirmities, unless he could compassionate our case, and sympathise with us in our troubles and sorrows. It is true that, as perfectly free

from sin, both in body and soul, he had no necessity to offer sacrifice for himself; but, as a most loving and tender High Priest, he could compassionate the sinner without partaking of his sins. But this was not all, for even in eternity, before he gave himself for his people, he had pity on them; and we read that, apart from electing love or saving grace, in the days of his flesh, he had compassion on the hungry multitude. But that he might become a merciful and compassionate High Priest he had to learn sympathy with his people in a very different way. In the wondrous depths of the wisdom and grace of God, he learnt to sympathise with us in our afflictions by a personal experience of them. This is the apostle's declaration: "For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." **Heb 4:15**. And what a most encouraging conclusion does he draw from this most blessed view of the compassion of our once suffering Head: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." **Heb 4:16**.

We showed in the last chapter the close and intimate connection that subsists between the two main branches of our Lord's priestly office: the sacrifice which he offered in the days of his flesh on earth and his present intercession in heaven. So there is a similar connection between the personal experience of suffering and temptation which the Lord endured here below and his present sympathy above with his tempted and suffering people still in the wilderness. We must not, however, suppose the personal experience of suffering was essential to his knowledge of it. As omniscient in his divine nature, the Lord perfectly knows what his people suffer, for "he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." **Ps 103:14**. In this sense he searcheth and knoweth us, for he understandeth our thought afar off; he compasseth our path and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways. **Ps 139:2-3**. As the all-seeing, heart-searching God, he sees and knows all our afflictions and sorrows as he knows everything in heaven and earth. But he could only have the personal experience of suffering by becoming himself a sufferer. This is a deep mystery; but as it is revealed to our faith in the word of truth and is full of blessed consolation to the afflicted family of God, we will approach it with all reverence as a part of our Meditations.

It was the eternal will of God that his dear Son should take the flesh and blood of the children, and that he should take it without sin, but not without suffering. Suffering was a part of the atonement: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." **1Pe 3:18**. Our blessed Lord was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," not only that by these sorrows and griefs he might redeem us from the depths of the fall. but that he might experimentally learn to feel for, and sympathise with us in our troubles and afflictions.

None can really sympathise with the afflicted but those who have passed or are passing through similar afflictions. We might as well expect a newly-married bride to sympathise

with a bereaved widow, or a merchant worth a million with a ruined bankrupt, as for the unafflicted to sympathise with the afflicted. The very word "sympathy" means a suffering with; but how can there be a suffering with another if the suffering itself be personally unknown? The primary element of the whole feeling is wanting, if suffering be absent on the part of the sympathiser. Thus, in order that our blessed Lord might personally, feelingly, and experimentally sympathise with his suffering people, there was a necessity that he must himself suffer. O mystery of mysteries! O wondrous heights and depths of redeeming love! that the Son of God should suffer, not only that he might redeem, but that he might personally feel for and experimentally sympathise with his suffering people!

But though we feel our inability and inadequacy to open up this sacred subject, yet, as we have proposed it as a part of our Meditations, let us now examine this point a little more closely, and see what sufferings the blessed Lord endured that he might learn thereby to sympathise with his afflicted ones, who drink of his cup and are baptized with his baptism.

In viewing these, we cannot well distinguish between the Lord's sufferings as meritorious and his sufferings as intended to teach him compassion and sympathy; for all his sufferings were a part of his atoning sacrifice: "By his stripes ye were healed." **1Pe 2:24**. He that was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities" hath also surely "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." **Isa 53:4-5**. In fact, by the sorrows and sufferings of the blessed Lord several purposes, according to the sovereign will and wisdom of God, were at once accomplished, and principally these following:

1. God was glorified, as the Lord himself said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." **Joh 13:31**. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." **Joh 17:4**. By his meek endurance of the sufferings laid upon him, and by his voluntary and patient obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, through the whole course of his suffering life, from the manger to the cross. God was supremely glorified.

2. The work of redemption was fully accomplished.

3. He learned obedience by the things which he suffered. **Heb 5:8**.

4. He left us an example, that we should follow his steps. **1Pe 3:21**.

5. He was made perfect; **Heb 5:9**; that is, he became by suffering perfectly qualified to sustain his high office as a merciful and faithful High Priest, who, "in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, is able to succour them that are tempted." **Heb 2:17-18**.

It is the last point which chiefly demands our present consideration, as contemplating him now in our nature at the right hand of the Father. The sympathy and compassion of the blessed Lord, as now exercised in the courts of heaven, are chiefly shown under the following circumstances:

1. To his people under affliction;

2. To his people under temptation.

1. The Lord's people are all, without exception, an afflicted people. This was their promised character from the days of old: "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord." **Zep 3:12**. Their afflictions, indeed, widely vary as regards nature, number, length, degree, but all find the truth of that solemn declaration that we must "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

i. Thus, some are afflicted in **body**, racked with continual pain, or suffering perhaps for years from some complaint which may not much shorten life, yet render life often a burden. If health be the greatest, as all must admit, of temporal blessings, the want of it must be the greatest of all temporal miseries. The blessed Lord, indeed, had no personal experience of sickness, for in his holy, immortal body there were the seeds neither of sickness nor death; but he experienced bodily pain, as when scourged by Pilate's command, when he wore the crown of thorns, when struck and buffeted by the rude Roman soldiery, and more especially when nailed to the cross. Thus, even in the matter of bodily suffering, our gracious Lord can sympathise from personal experience with his poor afflicted family still in the flesh who are racked with pain on their bed of languishing.

ii. Many again of the Lord's people are deeply tried in **providence**. Poverty, if not absolute want, is the daily cross of many of the excellent of the earth. But what a personal experience their gracious Lord had of this sharp trial, who had neither purse nor scrip, but was maintained by the contributions of the women who ministered to him of their substance. **Lu 8:3**. Did he not hunger in the wilderness, and before the barren fig-tree? Did he not thirst at Samaria's well and on the cross? And did he not say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head?" **Mt 8:20**. He who for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be rich, not only spiritually made himself poor by laying aside his divine glory, but actually and literally made himself poor by voluntarily submitting to the pain and pressure of bodily poverty.

iii. Others of the Lord's people are subject to cruel **persecutions**. This, indeed, has been the lot of all the saints from the days of righteous Abel, and will be to the end of time, for "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Fire, indeed, and faggot are now unknown, and the spirit of the times, at least in this country, will not suffer fine and imprisonment, and the other acts of violence which our godly forefathers endured for conscience sake; but the scourge of the tongue is still wielded, heads cut off instead of ears, and reputations branded instead of foreheads. But what a deep and personal experience had the blessed Lord of persecution from the day that Herod sought his life till he was nailed to the cross! How every word was watched which fell from his lips, every action misinterpreted, his character calumniated as a glutton and a wine-bibber, and shame and contempt poured upon him until, as the consummation of hatred, and to cover him, as they thought, with everlasting ignominy, they crucified him between two thieves.

iv. Others of the Lord's people suffer from the **treachery** of false friends. Had not our blessed Lord an experience of this in the treachery of Judas, so that he could say, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me?"

But it is not necessary for us to dwell longer on those **temporal** afflictions which press down so many of the Lord's people, but in which their gracious Head still sympathises with them.

He who wept at the grave of Lazarus; he who had compassion on the widow of Nain, **Lu 7:13**, on the beseeching leper, **Mr 1:41**, on the man possessed with a devil, **Mr 5:19**, on the blind, **Mt 20:34**, and on the fainting, scattered multitudes, **Mt 9:36**, surely pities and sympathises with his people in all their temporal sorrows, however diversified. These, though heavy, are not the severest afflictions which befall the saints of the Most High. We will now, therefore, divert our thoughts to those **spiritual** sorrows and troubles which all the family of God experience, though these, too, vary widely in number and degree, yet are allotted to each living member of the mystical body of Christ, according to the appointed measure. In these, as peculiar to the Lord's people, Jesus has a special sympathy with his

afflicted people, for of this cup he drank to the very dregs, and with this baptism he was baptized with all its billows and waves rolling over him. Whatever spiritual troubles and sorrows the Lord's people may be called upon to endure, their gracious Lord and Master suffered much more deeply than their heart, however deeply lacerated, can feel or their tongue, however eloquent, can express. But we will look at some of these spiritual afflictions, and endeavour to show how the blessed Lord had a personal experience of them, and thus learnt to sympathise with his people under them.

i. The chief burden of the Lord's living family is **sin**. This is the main cause of all their sighs and groans, from the first quickening breath of the Spirit of God in their hearts till they lay down their bodies in dust.

But it may be asked, what experience could the blessed Lord have had of sin. Seeing he was perfectly free from it both in body and soul? It is indeed a most certain and a most blessed truth that our gracious Redeemer "knew no sin;" **2Co 5:21**; was "a lamb without blemish and without spot;" **1Pe 1:19**; and was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." **Heb 7:26**. Still, sin was so imputed to him, and the Lord so "laid on him the iniquities of us all," that he felt them just as if they had been his own. "He was made sin for us;" its guilt and burden were laid on his sacred head, and so became by imputation his that it was as if he had committed the sins charged upon him.

Take the following illustration. View sin as a debt to the justice of God. Now, if you are a surety for another, and he cannot pay the debt, it becomes yours just as much as if you had yourself personally contracted it. The law makes no distinction between his debt and yours; and the creditor may sell the very bed from under you to pay the debt, just as if you were the original debtor. So the blessed Lord, by becoming Surety for his people, took upon him their sins, and thus made them his own. How else can we explain those expressions in the Psalms, which are evidently the language of his heart and lips, such as the following? "For in-numerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." **Ps 40:12**. Does not the Lord here speak of **his** iniquities taking hold upon him, so that under their weight and burden he could not look up, and that they were more in number than the hairs of his head?

ii. With the burden and weight of sin comes the **wrath of God** into the sinner's conscience; and this is the most distressing feeling that can be well experienced out of hell. So the blessed Lord, when he took the burden and weight of sin, came under this wrath. This was "the horrible pit" into which he sank, **Ps 40:2**, "the deep mire in which there was no

standing," "the deep waters where the floods over-flowed him." **Ps 69:2**. This made him say, "For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth. My heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath; for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down." **Ps 102:3-4,9-10**. None who read the word of truth with an enlightened eye can doubt that these Psalms refer to the blessed Lord, and that it is he who speaks in them.

iii. Then there is the **curse of the law**, which peals such loud thunders, and sinks so deeply into the heart and conscience of the awakened sinner. But did not Jesus endure this too? Surely he did, both in body and soul, as the apostle declares, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written. Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Ga 3:1. An awakened sinner, under divine quickening, has to bear but the weight of his own sins; but Jesus had to bear the sins of millions. It is at best but a few drops of the wrath of, God, and that wrath as already appeased, that fall into a trembling sinner's conscience; but Jesus had to endure all the wrath of God due to millions of ransomed transgressors. It is but the distant peals of the law which sound in a convinced sinner's soul; but the whole storm burst upon the head of the Surety. In a little wrath God hides his face from his Zion for a moment; but in great wrath he hid his face from his dear Son. Thus, whatever be the spiritual sorrows and troubles of afflicted Zion, even though she be "tossed with tempest and not comforted," in all she has a Head who suffered infinitely more than all the collective members. They do but "fill up what is behind of the afflictions of Christ;" **Col 1:24**; but 0 how small is that measure of affliction compared with his! It was, then, his personal experience of these spiritual afflictions which makes the blessed Lord so sympathising a High Priest at the right hand of God. Though now exalted to the heights of glory, he can still feel for his suffering saints here below. The garden of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary, are still in his heart's remembrance, and all the tender pity and rich compassion of his soul melt towards his afflicted saints; for,

His heart is touch'd with tenderness.

His bowels melt with love.

2. But the gracious Lord can also sympathise with his saints under all their **temptations**.

This is a deep mystery, but not more deep than blessed; and as it is pregnant with consolation to the tried and tempted children of God, we will attempt to unfold it to the best of our ability. The Holy Ghost expressly declares that our blessed Lord "was in **all points** tempted like as we are, yet without sin." **Heb 4:15**. This, then, we must accept as a

most solemn and, as viewed by faith, a most blessed truth. Nor must we limit the language of the Holy Ghost, but as he has said "**in all points**," so must we receive it on the testimony of him who cannot lie.

But as the word "temptations" has in the original two significations, including in its meaning "trials" as well as temptations, properly so called, we will extend the sense of the term, and view our Lord's **trials**, and our Lord's **temptations**. The distinction between them is sufficiently evident. **Trials** may have God for their author, but not **temptations**, for we are expressly told that God tempteth no man. **Jas 1:13**. Indeed, as temptation implies the presentation of sin to the mind, it would make God the Author of sin to make him the Author of temptation. But do we not read, it may be asked, that God "tempted Abraham?" **Ge 22:1**. The word "tempted" there should be rendered "tried," for in Hebrew as well as Greek the same word means to tempt and to try. God did not tempt Abraham to sin, as Satan tempted Eve, or as he tempted David, but "tried" him, as the apostle speaks, **Heb 11:17**, whether his faith was genuine.

Thus our blessed Lord was tried, and tried by God himself; for he is "a stone, a tried stone," of God's own laying. **Isa 28:16**. When the Father provided him with a body in which to do his will, he became God's servant, as he speaks, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." **Isa 42:1**. As a servant he yielded obedience, for he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. **Php 2:8**. His obedience was a tried obedience. God tried it; men tried it; devils tried it; enemies tried it; friends tried it. The weakness and ignorance of his disciples; the treachery of Judas; the desertion and denial of Peter; the craft and malice of the Scribes and Pharisees; the unbelief and infidelity of the people; the sins by which he was surrounded; the sinless infirmities of the flesh and blood which he assumed, as hunger, thirst, and weariness, the long journeyings, nightly watchings, the daily spectacle of sickness and misery—all these, and a thousand other circumstances beyond our conception tried the blessed Lord during his sojourn here below. But he bare all that was laid upon him. The purity of his human nature, in which were no seeds of sin actual or original, the strength of his divine nature with which it was in union, and the power of the Holy Ghost, which rested on him without measure, all concurred to bring him through every trial, and give him victory over every foe.

But by these trials he learnt to sympathise with his tried people. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." **Heb 4:15**. We may then freely go to him with our trials, may spread them before his face, as Hezekiah did the letter of Sennacherib in the temple, may feel a sweet persuasion that he sympathises with us under our heavy burdens, and will alleviate them, or support us under them, or if they be not removed will sanctify them, and make them work for our spiritual and eternal good. Thus faith in the sympathy of our

blessed Lord is wonderfully calculated to subdue fretfulness, murmuring, and self-pity, to teach us submission and resignation under afflictions, and to reconcile us to a path of sorrow and tribulation. It brings before our eyes the sufferings of the blessed Lord here below, the trials which he endured, and his holy meekness and submission under them when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. If we compare our sorrows and troubles with his, how light they seem! This works submission to them, and when we can look up in faith and love, and see the once suffering Lord now sympathising with us under our afflictions, it makes even sorrow sweet.

A conformity to the dying image of Jesus is hereby wrought into the soul, a fellowship given of his sufferings, a crucifixion of the flesh with its affections and lusts, a deadness to the world, a mortification of the whole body of sin, a separation of heart and spirit from everything ungodly and evil, and a communion produced with the blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father.

Thus we may bless God for our afflictions and trials, our sicknesses, our bereavements, our losses and crosses, our vexations and disappointments, our persecutions, our being despised by the world and graceless professors, our doubts, fears, and exercises, our sighs and groans under a body of sin and death, and, in a word, for every footstep in the way of tribulation which brings us nearer to Jesus, and opens to us more and more of his love and blood, grace and glory, sympathy and compassion, and all that he is as a merciful and faithful High Priest, whom God has raised from the dead, and seated at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. **Eph 1:21-23.**

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST—Blessing the People (Chapter 14)

One important part of the ministration of the blessed Lord, as the great High Priest over the house of God, we have not yet touched upon. This is his **blessing the people.**

This, we know, was committed to the typical high priest under the law as one of the functions of his ministerial office. "Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." **Nu 6:23-27.** The chief season when the high priest blessed the people according to this formula was on the great day of atonement, when, after

having carried the blood of the bullock and the goat into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it on and before the mercy-seat, he laid aside his linen garments, and, putting on the garments of glory and beauty, showed himself to the people who were praying without. **Lu 1:10**. In all this there was a beautiful propriety. The high priest had two distinct sets of consecrated garments. One set was made wholly of linen, which he wore on the great day of atonement. This was simplicity and purity itself, and as such is elsewhere used as a type of the pure humanity of the Son of God in the flesh, as **Eze 9:2,11; Da 10:5**. The other set of consecrated garments was worn on days of high and great solemnity; and being made of gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, was called "golden," or "garments of glory and beauty." The linen garments, then, which the high priest wore when he offered the bullock and the goat, and took their blood into the most holy place, were not only typical of the pure and perfect human nature of the Lord Jesus, but of that nature in its state of humiliation on earth. Similarly, the garments of glory and beauty, such as the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue, with its hem adorned with bells of pure gold and pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen, and the ephod on the breast, with the twelve precious stones on which the names of the tribes were engraved, **Ex 39** typically and figuratively represented the glorified humanity of the blessed Lord, which he now wears at the right hand of the Father.

As, then, the high priest, when he had laid aside his linen garments, and assumed the garments of glory and beauty, blessed the people from the court of the tabernacle, so the Lord in his glorified humanity blesses his waiting people here below from the courts of bliss. In him, as the church's risen Head, all spiritual blessings are lodged: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." **Eph 1:3**. He is the living Fountain whence all the streams flow to water his church here below. The ancient promise made to Abraham was, that "in him and his seed," that is, Christ, as the apostle explains the word, **Ga 3:16**, "all the nations of the earth should be blessed." Every blessing, then, which the elect enjoy either for time or eternity, in providence or in grace, comes from him as their covenant Head. They are blessed in him as they are chosen, adopted, and accepted in him. **Eph 1:4-6**. Not to speak of his blessings in providence, though in these "he daily loadeth us with benefits," **Ps 68:19**, how unspeakable are his blessings in grace!

Look at the blessing of eternal life which hangs before the eyes of the poor way-worn pilgrim in this world of sin and sorrow, as the prize of his high calling, the prospect of which, at the end of his race, animates his drooping spirits—this rich and glorious crown, without which all others would cease to be blessings, is given in Christ. "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." **1Jo 5:11**. This blessing the risen Lord bestows on his people when he first quickens their souls into spiritual life, for he is "the resurrection and the life," **Joh 11:25**, and "quickeneth whom he will;" **Joh 5:21**; and the life thus given he ever maintains, for his own words are, "Because I live ye shall live also." **Joh 14:19**. As, then, he ever lives at God's right hand, for he says,

"I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore;" **Re 1:18**; and again, "Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;" **Heb 7:25**; he sends down the blessing of eternal life into their soul. And this blessing of eternal life which he thus bestows has a sweet connection with the anointing which he received as the consecrated High Priest; for the droppings of that rich unction went down to the very skirts of his garments, and falls in regenerating grace upon the hearts of his people, like the dew of Hermon: "It is like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments. As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." **Ps 133:2-3**. How sweet to carry in the bosom the pledge, earnest, and foretaste of eternal life, and to feel it to be the gift of God; **Ro 6:23**; stored up in Christ, who is himself "the true God and eternal life;" **1Jo 5:20**; manifested and brought to light in the Person of Jesus; **1Jo 1:2**; and firmly secured by covenant oath and everlasting promise. **Ps 21:2-4; 89:34-37; Tit 1:2; 1Jo 2:25**.

From this ever-flowing and overflowing fountain of eternal life proceed all other spiritual blessings, as reconciliation to God by the blood of the Lamb; free and full justification by his imputed righteousness; deliverance from all condemnation, past, present, and to come; and, as a consequence of these glorious mercies, manifested pardon of sin; peace of conscience; fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ; revelations of his presence, power, loveliness, glory, and beauty; sips and tastes of his dying love; spiritual affections; heavenly desires; holy longings after conformity to his image, for grace and strength to imitate his example and walk in his footsteps, for power to do that which is pleasing in his sight, and to live to his praise—in a word, all that sweet and sacred intercourse with the blessed Lord which is the very life and power, sum and substance of all vital godliness; and without which all religion is but an empty form, a name, and a notion. It is thus that the reality of the presence of the Lord Jesus at the right hand of the Father is made experimentally known. He is seen, felt, and believed in as the Way, the Truth, and the Life; for he is walked in as the Way of access unto God; sought unto as the Truth, the knowledge of which maketh free; and cleaved unto as the Life, from whom it was first received, and by whom it is ever maintained.

Our blessed Lord was to be "a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec." It will be remembered that Melchizedec met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. **Ge 14:19**. In the same way our great High Priest blesses the seed of Abraham; for "they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham;" **Ga 3:9**; and as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they walk in his steps who "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." **Ro 4:3,12**. But Melchizedec the type could only **ask** God to bless Abraham. He could not himself confer the blessing; but Jesus, the antitype, our great Melchizedec, whose priesthood is after the power of an endless life, **Heb 7:16**, blesses his people, not by merely asking God to bless them, but by himself showering down blessings upon them, and by communicating to them out of his own fulness every grace

which can sanctify as well as save. Even before his incarnation, when he appeared in human form, as if anticipating in appearance that flesh and blood which he should afterwards assume in reality, he had power to bless.

Thus we read that when Jacob wrestled with the angel—which was no created angel, but the Angel of the covenant, even the Son of God himself in human shape—he said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And in answer to his wrestling cry we read that "he blessed him there." Jacob knew that no created angel could bless him. He therefore said, when he had got the blessing, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." **Ge 32:26-30**. To this blessing Jacob afterward referred when, in blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, he said, "The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." **Ge 48:16**.

Thus, also, our gracious Lord, immediately before his ascension to heaven, as if in anticipation of the gifts and graces which he was to send down upon them when exalted to the right hand of the Father, "lifted up his hands and blessed his disciples;" and as if to show that he would still ever continue to bless them, "he was parted from them and carried up into heaven," even "**while** he blessed them," as if he were blessing them all the way up to heaven, even before he took possession of his mediatorial throne. **Lu 24:50,53**.

As, then, he sits in glory at the right hand of the Father, he sends down blessings upon his people. He blesses them "with the blessings of heaven from above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb, and unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." **Ge 49:25-26**. He holds all nature in his hands; the gold and the silver are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; his is the earth and the fulness thereof; all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; he holds the reins of government, doing according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? He is the sun and shield of God's people—their sun, ever to be their light; their shield, to be ever their defence. He giveth grace and glory—grace here, glory hereafter. **Ps 84:11**. He makes his strength perfect in their weakness, that they may glory in their infirmities; **2Co 12:9**; nourishes and cherishes them, as being members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; **Eph 5:29-30**; and communicates to them more than heart can conceive or tongue express out of his own fulness; for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. **1Co 2:9-10**; **Joh 1:16**; **Col 1:19**. He can see all the designs of their enemies, and defeat them; all the temptations of Satan, and overrule them; all his snares, and break them to pieces; all his enmity and malice, and can bruise him under their feet shortly. He can pity their case when bowed with grief and afflictions; can hear their sigh and cry out of the depths of trouble and sorrow; and can stretch forth his hand to deliver them from the worst of foes and the worst of fears.

And what a matter this is of living, daily experience, so as to make the presence of Jesus at the right hand of the Father no mere doctrine seen in the letter of truth, but a very fountain of spiritual life in the heart. How continually, how, in deep trouble, almost unceasingly, is the poor, tried, tempted, and afflicted child of God, looking up to this merciful and faithful High Priest and begging of him to appear and bless his soul! This is all that he needs. For the Lord himself to bless him comprises every desire of his heart. One word, one look, one touch, one manifestation of his love and blood, is all that he wants. But if he did not see him by the eye of faith at the right hand of the Father, and able to bless him with the blessing that maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it, would his prayers, desires, tears, and supplications be so directed toward him? If, too, at times he has been blessed with a sweet sense of his presence and his love, he cannot rest satisfied without some fresh manifestation of these blessings to his soul.

And how fully adapted and divinely qualified he is to communicate these rich blessings; for God, by exalting him to his own right hand, has "made him most blessed for ever;" or as we read in the margin, "set him to be blessings." **Ps 21:6**. He has "prevented him" (or, as the word means, anticipated him in his wishes and petitions) "with the blessings of goodness, and set a crown of pure gold upon his head." This is the reward of his sufferings, for "his glory is great in God's salvation," and therefore "honour and majesty has laid upon him." **Ps 21:5**. And does he not deserve it all? Has he not "obtained eternal redemption for us"? **Heb 9:12**; and is he not "of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"? **1Co 1:30**. Is he not "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" **Ro 10:4**; and "the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him?" **Heb 5:9**.

How, then, can we doubt that he is "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him"? For what is there which he has not done for their salvation in his finished work? and what is there which he cannot do in the application of that finished work to their heart? For we need his present help as well as his present obedience. When the soul, then, sinks low into trouble or dejection; when troops of sins come to view, like so many gaunt spectres of the past; when innumerable backslidings, slips, and falls crowd in upon the conscience, bringing guilt and fear in their train, how the cast-down spirit will sometimes look at and ponder over the various cases of those sinners of every shape, and hue, and dye, whose salvation, without money and without price, is recorded in the word of truth. How it looks, for instance, at a sinning David, a blood-stained Manasseh, a dying thief, a returning prodigal, a weeping Mary Magdalene, a denying Peter, a persecuting Saul, a trembling jailer, the Jerusalem sinners who killed the Prince of life. And as it views these self-condemned, self-aborred sinners, so freely accepted, so everlastingly saved, how it looks up to the Lord of life and glory that it may receive similar blessings out of his fulness.

It is in this and similar ways that a communication is kept up with the risen and ascended Lord upon his throne of grace; and as he, in answer to prayer, from time to time drops down an encouraging word into the soul, each fresh discovery of his Person and work, of his beauty and blessedness, of his grace and glory, raises up renewed actings of faith, strengthens a lively hope, and draws forth every tender affection of the heart to flow unto and centre in him. Seeing light in his light, and how rich and free his blessings are, it cries out with Jabez of old, "O that thou wouldst bless me indeed." An "indeed" blessing is what the soul is seeking after which has ever felt the misery and bitterness of sin, and ever tasted the sweetness of God's salvation. And these "indeed" blessings are seen to be spiritual and eternal.

Compared with such blessings as these, it sees how vain and empty are all earthly things, what vain toys, what idle dreams, what passing shadows. It wonders at the folly of men in hunting after such vain shows, and spending time, health, money, life itself, in a pursuit of nothing but misery and destruction. Every passing bell that it hears, every corpse borne slowly along to the grave that it sees, impresses it with solemn feelings as to the state of those who live and die in their sins. Thus it learns more and more to contrast time with eternity, earth with heaven, sinners with saints, and professors with possessors. By these things it is taught, with Baruch, not "to seek great things" for itself, **Jer 14:5, but real things—things which will outlast time, and fit it for eternity. It is thus brought to care little for the opinion of men as to what is good or great, but much for what God has stamped his own approbation upon, such as a tender conscience, a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a humble mind, a separation from the world and everything worldly, submission to his holy will, a meek endurance of the cross, a conformity to Christ's suffering image, and a living to God's glory. Compared with spiritual blessings like these, it sees how vain and deceptive is a noisy profession, a presumptuous confidence, a sound creed in the letter of truth, without an experience of its life and power; and afraid of being deceived and deluded, as thousands are, it is made to prize the least testimony from the Lord's own lips that its heart is right before him.**

Looking around then, as with freshly-enlightened eyes, it sees how the world is filled with sin and sorrow; how God's original curse on the earth has embittered every earthly good; how it has marred the nearest and dearest social relationships; how trial and affliction, losses, crosses, bereavements, vexations, and disappointments enter every home, and especially that where God is feared; how, amid these scenes of sorrow and trouble, all human help or hope is vain, that it is dying in a dying world, and must soon pass away from this time-state, where all is shadow, into eternity, where all is substance. As, then, the gracious Lord is pleased to indulge it with some discovery of himself, shedding abroad a sweet sense of his goodness and mercy, atoning blood, and dying love, it is made to long more and more for the manifestation of those blessings which alone are to be found in him.

For his blessings are not like the mere temporal mercies which we enjoy at his hands, all of which perish in the using, but are for ever and ever; and when once given are never taken away. They thus become earnest and foretastes of eternal joys, for they are absolutely irreversible. When Isaac had once blessed Jacob in God's name, though the blessing had been obtained by guile, yet having been once given, it could not be recalled. He said, therefore, to Esau, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." **Ge 27:33**. So when the Lord has blessed his people with any of those spiritual blessings which are stored up in his inexhaustible fulness, these blessings are like himself, unchanging and unchangeable; for "he is in one mind and none can turn him;" "The same yesterday, today, and for ever." Those whom he loves he loves to the end; and his gifts and calling are without repentance; **Ro 11:29**, for he never repents of having bestowed them, as everlasting love is their unvarying, unceasing source.

But these blessings have more than sweetness of their present communication. They stretch forward as well as reach backward; look into eternity to come, as well as from eternity past. By their communication and manifestation his people are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, for these blessings have a sweet sanctifying influence. Thus, believers in Jesus are said "to rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" **1Pe 1:8**; and having a hope of seeing him as he is, to "purify themselves even as he is pure." **1Jo 3:3**. Spiritual blessings are not like mere doctrinal opinions, which often leave a man just where they found him—a slave to sin, self, Satan, and the world. They have a blessed sanctifying influence upon the heart. They prepare the soul for glory; they are earnest and foretastes of it, and are an enjoyment beforehand on earth of the delights of heaven. Thus, their effect is to separate the heart with its affections from the world; to subdue and crucify a worldly spirit; to mortify pride and covetousness; to cause the conscience to be tender and alive in the fear of God; to make sin exceedingly sinful, its remembrance bitter, and its indulgence dreaded; to draw forth a spirit of prayer and supplication; to open up the scriptures in their spiritual meaning; to encourage holy meditation; to feed the soul with choice fruit out of the word of truth; to breathe into it that spirit of faith which gives life and feeling to every gracious movement Godward, and in a word, to communicate, maintain, and keep alive that inward holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Can earth show a more blessed sight than a believer upon his knees before the throne of grace, looking up to the most blessed Lord at the right hand of the Father, and his sympathising High Priest looking down upon him with love in his heart, pity in his eye, and blessings in his hand? These are, indeed, for the most part but rare seasons, and are often sadly broken through and interrupted by coldness, carnality, and death; but it is only in this way, however long the interval or dark the mind in the intermediate season, that fellowship is maintained with Jesus as the great High Priest over the house of God, and he experimentally made the soul's all in all.

THE SECOND COMING (Chapter 15)

We have another view to take of our blessed Lord as having entered into the courts of bliss. He is gone thither as his people's **forerunner**, as the apostle speaks, "Whither the

forerunner is for us entered even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." **Heb 6:20** How blessedly did the Lord comfort his sorrowing disciples when he said to them, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." He is gone to take possession beforehand of his and their everlasting home; for he is ascended to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. He has, as it were, filled heaven with new beauty, new happiness, new glory. His glorious Deity shining through his spotless and glorified humanity illuminates heaven with a peculiar glory, for he has fought the fight and won the day; he has fulfilled all the types and figures of the Old Testament, accomplished the purposes of the everlasting covenant; glorified God by the highest obedience that could have been yielded to his will, and having finished the work which the Father gave him to do, has returned triumphantly to the courts of bliss to receive the reward of his humiliation, sufferings, and death. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. His glorious Person as Immanuel is become the object of heaven's praise and adoration. The elect angels, whom he has confirmed in their standing, adore him as God-man; and the spirits of just men made perfect worship him in company with the angelic host.

What a view had holy John of heaven's glorious worship, **Re 5** when he saw the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders fall down before the Lamb; when he heard their new song and the voice of many angels round about the throne, and all saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." **Re 5:12** Nay, the very signs of the times themselves are all proclaiming as with one voice that it cannot be long before the Lord will come a second time without sin unto salvation.

And this brings us to the last point, with which we shall close our "Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of the Blessed Redeemer," his **second coming**, and the **posture** in which his people should be found, as looking for and expecting his return.

When the Lord ascended up on high in the sight of his disciples, "they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up," their faith, hope and love all following him up the shining way; and as they thus viewed his glorious track, they seemed to lose sight of every other consideration. But, "behold, two men," two angelic beings in human shape, "stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? 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." **Ac 1:11** It was as if the angels said to them, "Jesus, your Master, your Head, your King, is not gone away from you for ever. He will one day, according to his own promise, return in the same glorious Person as that in which he is gone up, in the same divine and human nature, and in the clouds of heaven which have now received him out of your sight. For this, meanwhile, look, watch, wait, and pray."

From that moment, therefore, the Lord's return has always been a leading feature in the faith of the church of Christ, especially in the early period of her history. Thus we find Peter at once proclaiming it, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." **Ac 3:21-22** That it ever after formed a prominent point in the teaching and testimony of the apostles is plain from the inspired epistles of the New Testament, in which it is continually brought forward and alluded to. Thus, not to quote numberless passages, the apostle reminds the Thessalonians how "they had turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven;" **1Th 1:9-10** and seeks to comfort them under their persecutions with the prospect of eternal rest, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" **2Th 1:7-8** as well as to console them under their bereavements with the sweet persuasion that "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." **1Th 4:14** To be looking, then, and waiting for the Lord's second coming was the especial hope and consolation of the saints of old. By this prospect their hearts were comforted when they could look forward to that glory which should be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ, for they knew that when he should come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, he would be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all them that believe. **Mt 16:27; 1Pe 1:7; 2Th 1:10** This faith and expectation had a most blessed and enduring influence on their hearts and lives. It made them feel that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; and that their Master having promised to return, and it being uncertain at what watch of the night he would come, their "loins should be girded about, and their lights burning, and they should be like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they might open unto him immediately." **Lu 12:36**

We shall not enter upon the question of the nature and circumstances of the Lord's return, or its immediate consequences, as these are disputed points, and we wish to consider the subject more with a view to edification than to controversy. It is sufficient for us to believe that Jesus will come again with all his saints, and that when he comes it will be to the salvation and joy of his friends, and the destruction and confusion of his enemies. We shall, therefore, rather address ourselves to the consideration of the **posture** in which the church should stand as waiting her Lord's return.

During our present time-state we are to be conformed to the suffering image of Christ, and to bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal body. Our present life is to be one of trial, affliction, and temptation, that we may walk in the footsteps of our blessed Lord. **Lu 22:28** We are to be

persecuted by the world, despised by professors, assailed and tempted by Satan, and walk in a path of tribulation and sorrow, that we may, as members of his mystical body, fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. **Col 1:24** We are to drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism; for "it is a faithful saying. If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him;" **2Ti 2:11** and "we must suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." **Ro 8:17** The world knew him not, and it is to know us not. It hated and despised him, and it will hate and despise us; for "the servant is not greater than his Lord; and if they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household." **Mt 10:25; Joh 15:18-19** But to suffer will not always be the portion of the church of God.

There is a day coming when Zion shall be raised from the dust; when she shall put on her beautiful garments; when the marriage of the Lamb shall come, and to his bride and spouse it shall be granted that she shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, and shall sit down with her Head and Husband at the marriage supper. **Isa 52:1-2; Re 19:7-9** Then those who have been partakers of the sufferings of Christ shall be partakers of his glory. Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Then they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever. **Da 12:3** Then the mystery of God will be finished, and there will be time no longer, for all the former things of this miserable time-state shall have passed away. **Re 10:6-7; 21:4**

Now what should be the **posture** of the church as looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God? and what influence should this blessed truth have upon our hearts and lives?

1. First, it should reconcile us to afflictions, as feeling with the apostle that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." **2Co 4:17** And again, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Weighed in such a balance, what are all our afflictions, though seemingly so heavy? Are they not light indeed, if they are conforming us to the suffering image of Christ, and preparing us for an eternal weight of glory?

2. It should raise up and draw forth heavenly desires and spiritual affections, as the apostle says, "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." **Php 3:20** Believers are called upon "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind," **Ro 12:2** and to "set their affections

on things above, not on things on the earth;" **Col 3:2** they are said to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts; **Ga 5:24** and by the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body. **Ro 8:13**

It is true that we are sorely hindered in running the race set before us, for we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, having to carry about with us a body of sin and death, which is our constant grief and plague; and the flesh lusting against the spirit, as well as the spirit against the flesh, we cannot do the things that we would. **Ro 7:24; 2Co 5:4;**

Ga 5:17 We are beset, too, by innumerable temptations, have often to mourn over our darkness, deadness, coldness, and unbelief, as well as on account of the hidings of the

Lord's face, and the absence of that blessed Comforter who alone can console the cast-down spirit. Still, though in themselves grievous hindrances, spears in our side and thorns in our eyes, these things do not utterly quench that prevailing bent of the renewed heart to look up and look forward to a brighter day, when tears shall be wiped from off all faces.

As, then, a view of the glory of Christ is obtained, and his coming again is realised by a living faith, the soul looks beyond this time-state, and all the cares and sorrows of this vale of tears, to that glorious day when it shall be perfectly conformed to the glorified image of Christ, and never sin against him more. At his second coming he will change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. **Php 3:21** And "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" **1Co 15:54-55**

Now, if these things are so, if Jesus is but gone before to prepare a place for us, and has promised that he will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also, **Joh 14:3** will not this heavenly truth, if received into a believing heart, exercise a gracious influence upon our daily walk and life? Such, at least, is John's testimony, "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. And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." **1Jo 3:2-3** If we are led by divine teaching to see and feel that this present world is an evil world, from which Christ came to deliver us by giving himself for our sins, **Ga 1:4** and as such is under the wrath and curse of God; if we feel everything in it marred by sin and sorrow, and have a good hope through grace that when the Lord appears we shall appear with him in glory, will not this separate us in heart and spirit from the world, and lead us, with God's help and blessing, to walk as becometh the gospel, and to speak and act as a peculiar people, zealous of good works?

But taking a general view of the professing church, can we say that such is its experience or its walk? The wise virgins, as well as the foolish, are sleeping and slumbering; and a cold, lukewarm profession is everywhere prevalent. Error abounds on every side; strife and

division widely prevail; and we seem fallen upon those last days when perilous times were to come. We cannot, indeed, marvel that the world is what it ever was, a foe to God and godliness, buried in carnality and death, ignorant of its misery and ruin, and unconcerned at the awful judgment that is awaiting it, and almost ready to burst upon it. But we may justly wonder that the church of Christ, which professes to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, should be sunk so low, and manifest so little of the life and power of vital godliness. Yet this is only what we are led to expect from the word of truth. The Lord himself said. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" **Lu 18:8** and, "Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold." **Mt 24:12** Thus, instead of expecting that the world will gradually get better and better, as men idly dream, or that bright and glorious days are awaiting the professing church, we may rather expect that things will get gradually worse and worse with both, until he comes who shall come and will not tarry. But come when he will, come when he may, it shall be well with the righteous. Unto those that fear his name the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings; and to them that look for him the Lord shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation.

Here, then, we close our "Meditations upon the Sacred Humanity of the Blessed Redeemer;" and can only lament that our views of this most glorious subject have been so dim, and our expression of them so faint and feeble. But such as they are, we commend them to the God of all grace; and if they have been or should be in any way blessed to the spiritual profit of his people, to Him and to Him alone be ascribed all the glory.