



THE
ADOPTION OF SONS,

ITS NATURE, SPIRIT, PRIVILEGES, AND EFFECTS:

A

PRACTICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL TREATISE.

BY

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THE ADOPTION OF SONS.

Introductory.

THE Fatherhood of God, and the Sonship of believers are subjects of transcendent importance to every human being. Both are presented in the most impressive light in Divine revelation, and are intimately connected with all right views of the glorious Object of worship, and with our character and condition in time, and our hopes for eternity. The most forcible appeal of the Jewish Lawgiver to Israel, as he reproved their rebellion, and claimed their devoted obedience, was made to rest on God's paternal relation towards them—"Do ye thus requite the Lord, ye foolish people and unwise? Is he not thy Father, that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?"* This too, Jehovah Himself declares, to be the sure foundation of restoration and spiritual blessing to penitent Israel—"They shall come

* Deut. xxxii. 6.

with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born? ”* To stand in the peculiar relation of sons to God is ever represented throughout the Scriptures as the most wonderful distinction of human beings, who were by nature alien, rebellious, and helpless. They are thus brought out of the mass of perdition—form a society of ransomed ones, that is holy and indestructible; they have an interest in the unchangeable love of the Father, and are made partakers of all the blessings which it confers. When the redeemed are represented as *living temples*—the “habitation of God through the Spirit,”—the fatherly relation of God to them is declared to be the foundation of all that is excellent in their character, and blessed in their hope, “Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons

* Jer. xxxi. 9.

and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”* In the view of a relation so distinctive and glorious, of its origin in the eternal love of God, and of its effects in the future blessedness of the saints, need we wonder at the Apostle’s lofty exclamation, and the joyful confidence of hope which he expresses—“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! 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.”† The *moving cause* of believers’ sonship is thus declared to be God’s love—and this sovereign, great, effective, and unchangeable, so that it can never be adequately expressed or conceived. This love is “given” or “bestowed on us,” not on the footing of any worth or merit, or amiable quality in us, but solely through gratuitous affection and favour. The certain result is, that “we should be called” children of God—not by an empty title, but that we should be truly what the designation imports—the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, and sharers of the illustrious honour and glory which are inseparable from such a

* 2 Cor. vi. 16—18. † 1 John iii. 1, 2.

relation. Considering the Fatherhood of God in covenant to His people, and their spiritual sonship, there is no subject of meditation and self-trial of more absorbing interest—none that is more fitted to draw forth heartfelt trust—to supply the most constraining and animating motives to all holy living and devoted obedience—to minister strong consolation to afflicted ones and mourners in Zion, and to inspire a more joyful and blessed hope. Is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ indeed our Father? There is no measure to the love, grace, and pity which He will show us; there is nothing within the compass of His power which He is not prepared at all times to do on our behalf. Are we the called, adopted children of God? Then have we the fullest, strongest ground to confide in His mercy, and hope in His salvation; as we are bound to walk worthy of Him who has called us to His kingdom and glory. Then should we give all “diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”† “And if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”‡

† Heb. vi. 11. ‡ Romans viii. 17.

CHAPTER I.

The Family of God.

Ephesians iii. 15—"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Jeremiah iii. 19—"But I said, How shall I put thee among the children? * * * *
And I said, Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me."

The title "Sons of God" applied to believers supposes a family of which the God of all grace is the Father and Head. The word Adoption, like the original term *υιοθεσια*—implies the reception into a family of one who did not belong to it by birth. He is "put among the children," and according to the full import of the word, he enjoys by transference, the full right and privilege of sonship. That we may see the excellency of this position, and the nature of the relations more clearly, it behoves us to consider, first of all, the Family that, in heaven and earth, "is named after Christ."

Among human beings, the family state is the most characteristic and interesting. It was instituted in Paradise by God himself, who ordained marriage for man's help, and

solemnized and blessed the first conjugal relation. Even after sin has entered, disturbing the harmony of God's works, and marring and polluting all human relations, the Family is the home of our affections—the centre of tender associations—that which moulds the character of individuals, and shapes, in a great measure, their future destinies;—it is the well-spring of diversified pleasurable enjoyment. In the division and allotment of ancient Israel, distinctive character and prophetic blessing were associated with the *tribe*, which was the family in relation to the patriarchal progenitor or ruler; while in the subordinate divisions, individual families were preserved separate and distinct, and marked to honour and blessing or to rejection and a curse, according to the covenant with their ancestors, and the character which distinguished them. How honourable was it to be of the seed of Abraham and of the race of Israel, or to be sprung of the house of David! Even in our own day, heraldic distinctions of the family are eagerly coveted; while to have the privilege of a pious ancestry or to be a member of a family which, however lowly in the world, is one of the Israel of God—saints serving Him in holy dedication here, and to be gathered together at

length in the Father's house in heaven—is an honour beyond all earthly dignity and glory. The Family of God is incomparably the most illustrious in the universe; and to belong to it is a distinction and honour compared with which the loftiest station in human society, and the most glorious material things in the universe, sink into mere insignificance.

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, God at first formed two families of intelligent moral beings—angels and men—separate one from another and each immediately dependent on Himself as its Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign Head. When a part of the angelic family had rebelled and were cast out of heaven, and the whole human family had become apostate in the first man—their federal Head, Jehovah, made provision that His glory should not be totally eclipsed in His intelligent offspring. In the riches of His sovereign grace, He took the portion of the angels that had kept their first estate and those whom He had chosen to eternal life of the fallen human family, and formed them into one holy family, placed under Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, and the whole in heaven and earth named after Him.*

* Ephes. iii. 15.—The *naming* of the family may be either after God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus was the divine Redeemer glorified in being appointed the vital Head of the Church and “Head of all principality and power” for her benefit; and the purpose was securely laid, that, “in the dispensation of the fulness of times, all things in heaven and earth should be gathered into one, even in Him.”* In virtue of this gracious, all-wise arrangement, the angels that had stood in their integrity were effectually preserved from all possibility of future apostacy and rebellion, and were brought, as “elect angels,” into most intimate union with the Mediator and Surety of the covenant. They were thus shown “the manifold wisdom of God,” † and were enabled to contemplate with more profound wonder the mysteries of human redemption. By the constitution, too, of this holy, happy family, effectual provision was made for the recovery and eternal salvation of fallen sinners of mankind. The redeemed are exalted in dignity above man’s primitive condition in innocency by being brought into near and most tender relationship to the second person of the Godhead—their Elder Brother, and by being associated with holy angels—the

With Calvin, we refer it to the latter, as the Lord Jesus is the nearer antecedent, and as this appears to be the more natural interpretation.

* Ephes. ii. 10.

† Ephes. iii. 10.

elder children of the family, henceforth to be always “ministering spirits to them that are heirs of salvation.”* How glorious is this Family of God in its Head and members, in its character and privileges and future destiny! God the Father, the first person of the blessed Trinity, is its Father and Head, as from Him, in His economical relation to the covenant, emanates the whole wondrous design of love and mercy. Christ Jesus, the eternal Son, is the Elder Brother, having all the right of the First-born—entire dominion over the family—the goods of His Father’s house in His possession and at His disposal, and the blessing in His hands to confer. Angels that excel in glory are a constituent part of the family, ever ready to execute Christ’s command and to act as ministers of His will, to carry forward the purposes of His love and the designs of His providence. To the saints, especially, do they minister with watchful tenderness and unremitting care. They joy in their conversion, mingle in their solemn assemblies, bear them up in their hands, encamp around them in difficulty and danger, and, at length, convey their disembodied souls to glory, and swell for ever the chorus of the new song of the redeemed,

* Hebrews, ii. 14.

ascribing all glory and worth to the Lamb slain.

The “spirits of the just made perfect” in heaven, are another part of this family; while the saints that are now “the excellent of the earth,” and those who are yet to be gathered into one in Christ form the rest of this chosen and blessed society, that, separated from the world, are destined to shine forth in “the beauty of holiness,” and to enjoy the most exalted fellowship with the blessed Godhead throughout eternal ages.

This Family into which adopted children of men are brought, is characterized by *peculiar and excellent properties*. It is a *separate society*. Called out of a world lying in the wicked one, and each individual responding to the Saviour’s gracious and powerful invitation—“Come out from among them and be ye separate, and I will receive you,” they regard a state of holy separation as a law of their existence—to be practically followed in all their relations—in their whole spirit and conduct. The “King’s daughter” forgets her own people and her father’s house when the King “greatly desires her beauty.” * Though the separation which characterizes the family of God does not re-

* Ps. xlv. 10, 11.

quire us to live as ascetics or to do violence to natural or social relations, yet is it always real and distinctive. The sons of God are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”* Their country and citizenship is in heaven.† Their honour and safety alike are here. “Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.”‡ The declaration of the parting benediction of Moses is the perpetual characteristic of the spiritual Israel—the family of God. “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew.”§

In the expressive terms of a precious fragment of Christian antiquity, “Christians are not separated from other men by country, nor by language, nor by customs. They dwell not in cities of their own, nor make use of a peculiar dialect, nor affect a singular mode of life. They live in the cities of the Greeks or the barbarians, as each one’s lot may lie; and with regard to dress and food or other matters of everyday life, they follow the customs of the country, yet they show a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all. They dwell in

* Hebrews, xi. 13. † Phil. iii. 20. ‡ Num. xxiii. 9.
§ Deut. xxxiii. 28.

their own native land as sojourners. They take a part in everything as citizens, and yet endure all things as if strangers. Every foreign country is as a fatherland, and every fatherland as a foreign country. They live in the flesh, but not according to the flesh. They pass their time on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the established laws, and yet raise themselves above the laws by their lives. They love all, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned. They are killed and made alive. They are poor, and make many rich. They are in want of all things, and abound in all things. They are dishonoured and amid their dishonour are glorified. In a word, what the soul is to the body, that are Christians in the world.”* It is a *holy family*. This is its grand characteristic. “Israel was holiness to the Lord.” “Ye are a holy nation, a peculiar people, a royal priesthood.” † God, its Father, is “glorious in holiness;” Jesus, the elder brother, our great High Priest, has inscribed on the girdle of His golden garments—“Holiness to the Lord.” ‡ The angels, who form a part of the family, stand in their original purity, “ten thousands

* Epistle to Diognetus, 5, 6.

† Jer. ii. 2; 1 Peter ii. 9. ‡ Exod. xxviii. 36.

of His holy ones." The adopted from men are spiritual associates to the Lord. They are called to be saints. The vow of holy consecration is upon them, and one day they shall appear "in the beauty of holiness"—as "the dew from the womb of the morning"—"without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Again, it is *loving*. The Father of the family is "Love"—infinite, eternal, unchangeable. His sovereign, gratuitous love moved His choice of them that were to be redeemed from among men, and gave origin to all that is done for their redemption and final felicity. Christ's love to His saints is self-sacrificing, unparalleled, and transcendently wonderful. Of holy angels and saints, whether on earth or glorified in heaven, love is the ruling principle of their hearts—that which actuates their whole spirit and conduct. They love the Father with supreme affection, and delight themselves in Him. The love of Christ *constrains* them to live to Him alone. They have complacency in fellow-saints, as bearing the image of the same Father in heaven, and as partakers of the common salvation. And, in the spirit of genuine benevolence, they love their enemies, and pray for them, and do good to them that despitefully use them and persecute them.

The family of God is, finally, the *blessing of the world*. To Abraham was given the promise—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."* Blessings of every kind—all that are substantial and enduring—not only come from God, and through Christ, the Mediator; but by the Divine family named after Christ, and in connection with them, all blessings—temporal, spiritual, and eternal—are dispensed, and to be enjoyed. Believers are "the lights of the world," and "the salt of the earth"—the preserving, purifying, and all-quickenning principle in the mass of human corruption, and the light that dispels the darkness of error and sin, and that shall ultimately fill the whole earth with the effulgence of God's glory. To the family—thus separate, loving, and holy, the assurance is given—"I will make them, and the places round about my hill a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down in his season, and there shall be showers of blessing."† Every member of this "household of faith" should be always ready to present to others the invitation of Moses to Hobab, his father-in-law, to unite in the happy fellowship—"We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come

* Gen. xxii. 18.

† Ezek. xxxiv. 26.

thou with us, and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will He do unto thee.”‡

‡ Numbers x. 29, 32.

CHAPTER II.

The Origin and Nature of Sonship.

John i. 12—"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Romans ix. 26—"And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall ye be called the children of the living God."

Our introduction into the Family of God, and our participation in its privileges, is by *Adoption*. The special act, which is designated by this term, bears a striking analogy to a practice which existed from remote antiquity. This is referred to in the early records of sacred Scripture; but it is particularly prominent among the institutions of the classic nations of Greece and Rome. As evidences of the early origin of the practice, in the family of Abraham, a child who was not the offspring of the patriarch, and Sarah his wife, was, at least for a time, regarded as entitled to bear the family name, and seemed to be heir of the family-possession. The infant Moses, rescued from a watery grave, became the adopted son of the royal princess; and the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, by the benediction of

Jacob, their grandfather, were assigned a place among his own children, and ranked afterwards with them as the heads of tribes, and in sharing the promised inheritance.

Among the Greeks and Romans, the practice of adoption was fully recognized and regulated by law, and was reckoned of great importance in the matter of domestic settlements and inheritances. In some of the Grecian states, as in Athens, it was only a citizen that could be adopted by any one, but in Rome the selection was less limited. In the case where the head of the family had no children of his own, nor the prospect of having any, he might adopt one of another nation, or take a slave of his household, and after conferring on him his freedom, give him his own name, and constitute him the heir of his possessions. While this might, in the first instance, be done in a private way, afterwards, to give it validity in law, it required to be declared and registered before the Prætor or City-magistrate. Then the adopted son was regarded and treated in all respects as the natural child of him who adopted him. Henceforth he bore his name, and was heir in law of his property.

The spiritual adoption into the Family of God has been well defined to be "An act of God's

free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.”* It has been considered by some eminent theologians as a part of a sinner’s justification, and by others as an effect flowing from it.† The explicit statements of Scripture would rather seem to view adoption as a distinct gracious blessing, a certain illustrious step of dignity added to justification.‡ A subject that had offended may be freed by his sovereign; a criminal may be pardoned, but he is not thereby taken into the family. It is by a further act of compassionate and loving favour that he is put among the children. Connected with justification, though distinct from it, Adoption has been described as “A gracious declaration of God, by which he admits those who are justified into His family as sons, and communicates to them the prerogatives and privileges of sons of God.”§

The assured promise to the overcomer is, “I will give him a white stone, and in the white stone a new name, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”¶ This

* Westminster Shorter Catechism—Question 34.

† Junius terms Justification *via adoptionis*.

‡ Mæstricht—Theoret. Pract. Theol.

§ Mæstricht—Theoret. Pract. Theol.—Tom Sec. c. vii., p. 724, 725. ¶ Rev. ii. 17.

“white stone” is symbolical of the pardon of sin. The “new name”—that which designates a son or daughter of the Lord Almighty, is *in* the stone, as inseparable from it, and an additional gift, revealed by the Spirit to the consciousness of him on whom it is bestowed, and evidenced to others afterwards by the fruits of holiness in the life. This adoption of sons is properly a Divine *act* and *declaration*. As the fruit of sovereign grace and love, “we are *called* the sons of God.” Chosen in Christ “from before the foundation of the world,” the elect are said to be “called” in God’s eternal purpose,* as if the gathering together of the children of God scattered abroad were already effected. They were “chosen in Christ” as their Covenant Head, with whom they were united as co-heirs with God.† First in the gracious purpose of the Father, they were given to Christ, the Mediator, to be redeemed and brought into sonship. Their names were inscribed in the roll of the Covenant—the Lamb’s book of life, under the name of the only-begotten Son, the First Elect; and out of it they can never be erased. They were “predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born

* John xi. 52.

† Gal. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 17.

among many brethren," "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."* The adoption of the elect thus originates from God's eternal love and sovereign grace. Its objects were children of wrath and aliens from God; of the family of the Evil One, and under condemnation. Yet, in the Father's eternal decree, they were chosen in Christ; associated with Him before the foundation of the world; predestined to sonship, and all this as expressive of His wondrous love towards them, and His infinitely gracious and tender interest in them. All the persons of the blessed Trinity had a part in this amazing transaction. In the constitution of the covenant of grace, each person of the Godhead fully concurred in the important design, and condescended to occupy a distinct place in carrying it into accomplishment. The First Cause, or the Adopter, was the Eternal Father, to whom it was befitting to have the saved standing in the relation of sons. The Second Person of the Godhead, the proper and only-begotten Son of God, had the elect given Him, to be redeemed, to bear His image, and to be "many sons" to be brought "to glory."†

* Rom. viii. 29. Ephes. i. 5.

† Heb. ii. 10.

And the blessed Spirit is Himself “the Spirit of adoption,” by whose agency they are brought into the family, by whom they are led, and whose inward witness attests their sonship. Thus the grand source and moving cause of the believer’s sonship is the superlative love of God in Trinity. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” “That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”*

In this gratuitous choice of the elect, we see the marked distinction between *civil* adoption and *spiritual*, and the transcendent excellency of adoption into God’s family. The will and consent of those whom God adopts are not required, as in the case of the ancient human custom. It is “not of him that willeth,” but “of God that showeth mercy.” God has the sovereign right to select whom He will to bring them into His family, and the efficacious influence of His grace makes them willing in the day of His power. The adopter among men had no son or heir, and hence he took an alien into his family, investing him with his name and the rights of sonship. God, on the con-

* Ephesians ii. 7, 8.

trary, besides His only-begotten Son, His “fellow” in the participation of the Divine nature, and “Heir of all things,” had innumerable holy spirits whom he had created, to reflect His likeness and promote His glory. Unlike civil adoption, there was no excellency in the adopted of God to influence the choice of them; there was nothing to attract the Divine regard toward them; there was in them no worth or worthiness. Instead, they were “children of wrath even as others”—transgressors from the womb—rebels and enemies. There were many objections against their adoption, many arguments against it, and none whatever for it. God Himself speaks as if non-plussed in the view of their character about conferring upon them this great distinction. “How shall I put thee among the children!”*—so sinful, disobedient, abominable—among them who are the loved ones of the Father, who bear His image, and who shall share His blessedness for ever? Again, in civil adoption, though the name and rights of a son may be given, the nature of a child cannot be imparted, nor the qualifications for enjoying the inheritance, but those whom God adopts, He makes “partakers of the Divine nature.” They are conformed to the image of

* Jer. iii. 19.

His Son, endowed with a disposition becoming the relationship they bear, and are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. There were cases in civil adoption wherein the relation and its rights might be set aside ; but those who were predestined to be children of God, are without fail called and justified and brought to life eternal. Thus, pre-eminent above all human relationship and privilege, the adoption of believers should ever present to the heart matter of adoring wonder, and gratitude, and praise to the riches of God's grace, that predestined sinful, lost human beings to so excellent and honourable a distinction, and that instates them in the possession of all its unspeakable privileges.

2. The *meritorious cause* of the adoption of sons is *the redemption of Christ*. The "Captain of salvation" was made "perfect through sufferings, that He might bring many sons to glory."* "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."† Deliverance from the curse and bondage of sin is essential to sonship. Those who were to be brought into

* Heb. ii. 10.

† Gal. iv. 4, 5.

God's family were fallen under guilt and condemnation, and utterly unable to free themselves from this ruined condition. That they might be rescued from wrath and misery, and fitted for a place among holy ones, it was requisite that their vast debt should be paid, and that they should be redeemed from the curse. For this purpose, the Mediator and Surety, God's eternal Son, was sent forth. He voluntarily assumed our nature. "He was made of a woman." He was "made under the law," as a broken covenant, to fulfil its condition, and bear its dread penalty. This he did by the spotless obedience of His life, and by His vicarious sufferings and death, that the guilty might be freed from condemnation, the lost recovered, and that those who were aliens and enemies might be reconciled and receive "the adoption of sons."* Thus alone could lost sinners be adopted into the household of faith. By no other process could they enter the family. Naturally they were not of it and could never of themselves become members of it, but they were brought into it. They required to be freed from their legal burden and from the bondage of sin be-

* This, in the original, is not *ὕιος*—a natural sonship, but *υἰοθεσία*—sonship conferred.

fore they were adopted. Their emancipation from this servitude is virtually their adoption. This could only be effected through the obedience and death of Christ. He died to redeem them ; and as the reward of His finished work for them, “ they receive the adoption of sons.” The original word * may denote to “ *receive again,*” or more properly to “ *receive into possession from a source.*” Through the death of Christ we are brought into a new sonship, higher and more exalted than that which Adam possessed in the earthly paradise. By faith in the redemptive work of Christ, we, who were servants and bondsmen, are gifted with the character and privileges of sons. How marvellous the way in which our freedom has been wrought and in which we are brought into the family of God ! How unspeakably great and precious is the ransom price paid for our deliverance and for the privileges which we are given to enjoy ! Before any could be delivered from wrath and obtain sonship, the Son of God, who was in the bosom of the Father, came into the world and was unspeakably abased in our humanity. He bare our sins on His own body on the tree, and for us He was made a curse. The full penalty of the violated law and all

* απολαβῶμεν.

that the Justice of heaven could demand, He suffered. The innocent suffered that the guilty might go free. Through the redemption wrought by Him, the objects of His love are rescued completely and for ever from wrath, and are brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. How manifold and great are their obligations to consider the solemn appeal—"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." * The burden of their praises on earth and in heaven must ever be—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." †

3. The actual possession of sonship is by *the Holy Spirit through faith*. Sinners that were aliens from God and dead in their trespasses and sins, are reconciled by the blood of Christ and quickened by the Holy Spirit. Adoption and regeneration are intimately and inseparably connected, though in several respects they differ. They flow from the same infinite source of Divine love and grace; the

* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

† Rev. i. 5, 6.

same persons are both the adopted and the regenerated, and are brought into this condition at the same time; and in the one case and in the other they obtain a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Whether adoption precedes regeneration or follows it, it is not important to determine.* These two great changes may be distinguished, but cannot be separated. Adoption is a *legal* act, the change which it implies is *relative*. Regeneration is an internal change by which we become partakers of the Divine nature. The privilege, however, and image of the sons of God go together. The great agent in the one case and in the other, is the Spirit of God. They who believe are born, “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.” † Called to the distinction and privileges of sonship, they are spiritually quickened; their nature is changed,

* This matter is discussed by *Charnock* in his “Discourse on Regeneration.” He says—“The new name in adoption is never given till the new creature is formed. Yet they are to be distinguished. Regeneration, as a *moral* act, gives us a likeness to God in our nature; adoption, as a *legal* act, gives us a right to an inheritance. Regeneration makes us *formally* His sons by conveying a principle, (1 Pet. 1. 23); adoption makes us *relatively* His sons by conveying a power, (John 1. 12.) By the one we are installed in the Divine affection; by the other we are partakers of the Divine nature.”

† John i. 13.

and they are new-created after the moral image of God. The grand *instrument of regeneration* is the word of truth—the gospel of salvation. “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” * By faith implanted in the heart, and brought into operation by the Spirit, the word is received and the great things revealed in it are appropriated. Especially is Christ Jesus, “the Author and Finisher of faith,” embraced as the foundation of trust, the centre and source of all joyful hope. When the Comforter comes, His office is to “glorify” Christ and to take the things which are His and reveal them to the heart. † By a living faith we apprehend the revelation—behold the Saviour’s glory—and receive the things that are His by sharing with Him the inheritance of sons. The grand gospel invitation and offer are, “Come out from among them and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” ‡ We are called to come out from a natural state of guilt and alienation from God, and to separate from the world lying in the Wicked One, and from all ungodliness. Quickened by the

* James i. 18. † John xvi. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17.

Spirit, and drawn by a discovery of the Saviour lifted up, we are inclined and enabled to make this separation. We forget our father's house, and willingly forsake all for Christ. In the act of renunciation, we are received by our heavenly Father, and become "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

The pregnant expression of the evangelist declares clearly and fully the way in which we are brought into sonship, "For as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in His name." * This bespeaks the enlarged freedom and extent of the precious relation. "*To as many*"—of whatever name or nation, Jew or Gentile, and whatever their previous condition or character. The privilege becomes certainly ours by faith. Christ offers Himself, and the primary duty or first acting of faith is to accept Him in His person, offices, and gracious relations, and not merely the benefits which He brings. We believe in His name and repose implicit confidence in Him—as He is proclaimed in the Gospel—the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Covenant; we embrace the salvation promised as the treasure and portion of the soul, and we rest with satisfaction upon

* John i. 12.

Him alone for all blessing in time and eternity. In thus receiving Christ, we commit our all to Him, we cast ourselves, and everything that concerns us, upon Him. The grand act of true saving faith is *acceptance and appropriation*. It is embracing Christ on the authentic offer of the gospel. It is looking to Him as lifted up, and being attracted to Him as the moral magnet of the heart. It is appropriating Him in all that He is and for all that we need, and relying upon Him as God's unspeakable gift for the abundant supply of all our wants. By this faith, of the operation of the Spirit, we are vitally united to Christ; and such is the nearness and undecaying nature of the union, that we are identified with Him in name and in the participation of all covenant privileges. "Believing in His name we become *the children of God*." * Faith in Christ is the grand mark of distinction in the family of God. Those in whom the Spirit has implanted it are given "power," (*ἐξουσία*)—the privilege or capability—"the *inner-enabling*" to become the sons of God." The adoption, itself, is this power or dignity. In the act of

* This is the original expression, and not "sons," as in the authorised version. It is more comprehensive in its import, and marks, too, the mode in which we become such—namely, by regeneration, or the new birth.

believing with the heart, they are adopted into God's family and placed in a new and gracious relation of which they are never afterward deprived. The adopted children of God are born "not of blood,"—not of any eminent human birth—not by the natural will, which is fleshly and depraved—nor after the way of civil adoption, or by any power which men exercise over their fellows, as by persuasion or eloquence, or by the mere presentation of truth to the mind. The work is of God alone—Not of man, "but of God." Not outward relation or standing in the Church,—no pious parentage or external baptism makes us children of God. Those, and they only, who embrace Christ Jesus as He is freely offered in the gospel, give evidence that they are born of God. The Spirit who works this faith in the heart produces true repentance as its immediate fruit. The wanderer awakened and recalled becomes sensible of his lost condition, and says, "I will arise and go to my Father, and say, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." * The Father prevents the returning penitent with yearning compassion and tender mercy, embraces him with loving kindness,

* Luke xv. 18, 17.

and welcomes him as a lost child restored to the family, to all the entertainment of the Father's house. His former backslidings are healed, his folly and sins for ever forgiven. He owns him in the fullest sense as His child ; and his restoration to the privileges of sonship he delights to hold forth as the ground of sacred joy to the whole family—"Let us eat and be merry ; for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found." * The prophetic announcement to be fulfilled in the future conversion of the Gentiles is accomplished in the effectual calling of all who are brought into the family of God. "It shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people ; there shall they be called the children of the living God." † The Spirit being the efficacious agent in regeneration and adoption, it concerns us earnestly to seek His presence and power. Our first great business is to believe on the Lord Jesus as He is offered in the gospel. Faith working in the heart by love, producing true repentance, and generating works of holy obedience, marks our sonship, making it clearer to our own consciousness, and enabling us to shine as lights

* Luke xv. 24. † Romans ix. 26.

in the world,—“the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”*

* Phil. ii. 15.

CHAPTER III.

The Fatherhood of God.

Matthew vi. 9—"Our Father, which art in heaven."
Psalm lxxxix. 26—"He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation."

Sonship implies Fatherhood, and this relation, sustained by Jehovah to the family of the redeemed, is suggestive of the most endearing associations, and fraught with the greatest blessings. It is fitted to elevate the mind, excite the tenderest affections, and lead to assured confidence and joyful hope.

In an extensive sense, God is a Father, and is so revealed in His works as well as His word. The paternal relation among men aids us in contemplating the loving relation in which God stands to His creatures—it is a shadow and representation of the Divine Fatherhood. Fatherly dispositions and dealings are ascribed to Him. By creation, He is the Father of intelligent beings. Angels are those "sons of God" that shouted for joy when "the morning stars," at the dawn of creation, "sang together."* Men

* Job xxxviii. 7.

are “His offspring,” and He is “the Father of the spirits of all flesh.” To ancient Israel “pertained the adoption,” and with them He expostulates, “Is He not thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath He not made thee and established thee?”* And in penitent confession and earnest supplication they plead, “Doubtless Thou art our Father.” “Now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou art the potter, and we are all the work of Thy hands.”†

1. But in a peculiar sense, far higher than these, is God the Father of the saints. His Fatherhood to them is a *gracious* relation, standing in the covenant of redemption, and fully exhibited in their union to Christ, the only-begotten Son. The prophetic announcement made by Nathan to David, “I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son,”‡ refers to the Saviour to come, of whom Solomon was an illustrious type. The Fatherhood of God is eminently seen in the Eternal Son. In virtue of His filial relation to the First Person of the Godhead, Jesus is the “First-born among many brethren,” and He Himself is “the Everlasting Father.” But although the

* Deut. xxxii. 6. † Isaiah lxiii. 16. ; lxiv. 8.
‡ 2 Sam. vii. 14.

fatherhood of God to Christ may be regarded as the foundation of the fatherly relation of God to believers, it differs from it in the most essential manner. The sonship of Christ respects the mode of the Divine existence, and is necessary, eternal, and ineffable. The sonship of the redeemed, on the other hand, is a gracious relation, originating from the sovereign will and grace of God. Believers are children, not by nature, but by adoption and regeneration. They are said to be “partakers of the Divine nature”—not originally, or as viewed in the covenant, but as the end of receiving “exceeding great and precious promises.” Through faith uniting them to Christ, and by the indwelling and agency of the Holy Spirit, the Divine image is renewed in their souls; and a new nature, conformable to the holy nature of God, is formed within them, with new spiritual tastes, capable of delighting in God, and finding supreme happiness in Him.

2. The Fatherhood of God to the saints is clearly seen *in the revelation made from the beginning*, and especially in the *full revelation of the New Testament*. The Redeemer promised from the beginning was, in the fulness of time, “made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that were under

the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”* He was, moreover, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” He was presented in the mystery of His person and atoning work to the faith of the Church under the old economy, long before His manifestation in the flesh. The covenant of grace was the basis of God’s merciful dealings with a fallen race from their earliest history. The Covenant is the same, though the administration is different, under the Old and New Testaments. The Spirit was given in a more limited measure to believers under the ancient dispensation, but it was through His gracious operation that they who believed embraced the promises, brought forth in their lives the fruits of a living faith, and were animated by a blessed hope. As faith in God is the mark of sonship in all ages, the glorious object of trust and confidence must have been known to believers from the beginning, in His Fatherly character and relation. It is plainly inconsistent with the idea of a “household of faith” existing from the earliest times, and opposed to many express declarations of the word, to hold, as some do, that God was made known to the Church of old as only a Lawgiver, and Judge, and was not

* Galatians, iv. 4.

revealed in His Fatherly relation till Christ came. When the seed of Abraham were taken to be God's peculiar people, to them "per-tained *the adoption*, and the glory, and the Covenants."* God was revealed to them as their Father in covenant; so by His "name Jehovah" was He known to them.† When Moses was commissioned to demand of Pharaoh their release from bondage, he is bid to declare, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my Son, even my First-born."‡ Ancient Israel included the spiritual seed, and was typical of the people of God in all ages. The acts of their solemn and accepted worship recognized fully the Fatherhood of God, and were the utterance of the heart of the saints under the former economy. These celebrated His praise when they sang, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."§ They ad-dressed Him in prayer, "Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever."|| And in times of great trial, they pleaded God's Fatherhood as an argument for deliverance and restored favour, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not : Thou, O Lord,

* Romans ix. 4. † Exodus vi. 3. ‡ Exodus iv. 22.
§ Psalm ciii. 13. || 1 Chron. xxix. 10.

art our Father, our Redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting.”*

The covenant-dealings of God with His people through the whole of the Old Testament exhibit this as the predominant feature of His character. His pity, in compassionating their affliction and misery; His loving thoughts towards them; His gracious tenderness; His readiness to interpose for their help and deliverance; and His joy and delight in their return to obedience and holy fellowship—all display the Fatherhood of their covenant God. Notwithstanding their weakness, backsliding, and rebellion, He is not ashamed to be called their God and Father. Though, like some other aspects of the Divine character, and of the wondrous scheme of human redemption, the full, bright discovery was reserved for the dispensation of the Gospel, and the “ministration of the Spirit,” excelling in glory, yet we can in no wise doubt that the Fatherhood of God was revealed to the saints of old, and taught by the Spirit to believers under the law. The Abrahamic covenant—the charter of the visible Church—holds forth the great fundamental promise, “I will be a God to thee, and to Thy seed after thee.” This the law of types

* Isa. lxiii. 16.

and ordinances could not disannul ; and it yet remains the security of all gracious privileges, and exhibits God as standing to His people in all endearing relations. Among these, the paternal relation has ever occupied, as it will always occupy, a prominent place. It is to the believer, as it has ever been, the constant object of heartfelt trust, of gratitude, of prayer, of spiritual converse, and delightful fellowship.

3. The Fatherly relation of God to believers, and their sonship, *is in and through Christ*. He is the Eternal Son, and as set up from everlasting, He was ordained to be “the First-born among many brethren.” He is the Head of the Church, the centre of unity to the family of God. From eternity the Son was set King upon Zion, the hill of God’s holiness. In all His work of obedience and vicarious suffering, He was owned as the Father’s “well-beloved Son” in whom He was “well-pleased.” The mind of Christ on earth is seen in all its workings, in the highest exercise of all holy graces,—in faith, in resignation, in zeal, in complacency and delight, in communion with the Father, and in proposing, as His highest end, the advancement of His glory. The grand end of His advent—as it was of His Surety engagement—was to do

His Father's will. From the earliest days of His ministry on earth, He was about His "Father's business." This was His meat and His drink. In His last agony He prayed—"O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." Yet He resigned Himself wholly to His Father's disposal—"Not my will, but Thine be done"—"The cup that my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" *

By His resurrection from the dead, He was declared to be "the Son of God with power."† And to express, in the fullest and most consolatory terms, the interest of the redeemed in His relation to the exalted Head of the covenant, to whom the ransom was paid, and their union and fellowship with Him in glory, He said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God."‡ The Lord ascended to heaven, and returned to the Father, not merely as He left His bosom, and came down to earth. He was, indeed, "glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was." But he had this additional glory on entering heaven, He ascended as the Son of Man. His humanity was exalted above all created beings in heaven and

* John xviii. 20. † Romans i. 4. ‡ John xx. 17.

earth. The marks of His sufferings and the trophies of His victory, He wears as the *Lamb slain* in the midst of the throne—death and hell’s mighty Conqueror. In glory, He has a Brother’s nature and heart still. His Sonship as a person in the Godhead sheds transcendent lustre on Him as the Son of Man, and displays the inconceivable glory of that communion with the Father, which, as the Church’s Head, He shares in common with His redeemed people. They are sons of God, indeed, in a different sense from Him, as the *only-begotten* and *well-beloved Son* of God. Still, their having the same exalted designation conveys the idea of their dignity and honour. He is the “First-born,” and they, too, receiving the *adoption of children*, are the “Church of the First-born which are written in heaven,”*—sharing in all His honours, and partaking of all the privileges which He has the right to confer. Christ’s resurrection, in which He was manifested to be “the Son of God with power,” is the efficient cause of our regeneration—the source of our spiritual quickening and sonship. By our new birth, we have life in a risen Saviour. He has risen and ascended to a new, powerful, undecaying life in glory—sin and death being put

* Hebrews xii. 23.

away, and conquered by His one perfect sacrifice. We are risen together with Him to newness of life, to know the blessedness of calling God our Father, and to enjoy for ever the glorious inheritance that is set before us in blissful prospect.

4. The Fatherhood of God, which believers enjoy through Christ, is to them *the source and assurance of all blessing for time and eternity*. They are entrusted to the Father's infinite and eternal love,* and nothing shall ever be able to separate them from it.† He pities them as a Father does His children. Even when they are wayward and rebellious as "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," and they are chastised with the rod of men, in yearning confession and tenderness, He heals their backslidings and restores them again. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord God."‡ His wise, tender, fatherly care is ever over them. He keeps them as the apple of His eye. The hairs of their head are all numbered. He knows that they have need of things temporal and spiritual, and this is reason sufficient why their heavenly Father

* Jer. xxxi. 2. † Romans viii. 39. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 20.

should supply them at the most suitable time, and in the most befitting circumstances. He *owns* them, even when they backslide from Him, as did the Prodigal from his father's house, and when human friends "acknowledge them not," He is not "ashamed to be called their God." He is "a Father to Israel," when Israel is unbelieving and perfidious in the covenant. All blessings that His people need—temporal and spiritual—are supplied from the Father's love and care, and out of His bountiful fulness; and this is the great prevailing argument in seeking their enjoyment. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him!"* Some things that God's children ask are denied to them, because He sees that they would not be for their good. His wisdom is exercised in choosing the best time and way of giving. But what is really good and conducive to their best interests, and what they indispensably need, He will not withhold. When they ask, He

* Matthew vii. 11.—When the evangelist Luke records the same discourse of our Lord, he gives the expression—"Give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him," (Luke xi. 13;) as if to intimate that the gift of the Spirit is the *sum* and chief of all the "good things" which our heavenly Father gives.

will graciously give; and while they are yet speaking, He will hear and answer. If the love and care of earthly parents—even though they are sinful and evil—will prompt them to supply the pressing wants of their children, how much more will the Father, who is infinitely loving and benevolent, furnish all good gifts to them that ask Him!

Our Father in Christ brings His children *to the nearest and most blessed fellowship with Himself, here and hereafter*. When asked how He manifests Himself to His disciples, and not to the world, Jesus, in His discourse in the “upper chamber,” answered, “If a man love me, He will keep my word, and my Father will love Him, and we will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him.”* This is the gracious assurance that the blessed Trinity will maintain intimate communion with believers. The coming of the Father and the Son includes the Spirit, because He reveals the Son, and sheds abroad His love in the heart, just as the Son reveals the Father. The Father and the Son come by the Spirit, really and personally, but not visibly, and make their abode with believers. The Father is recognized and embraced by the Spirit of adoption, which He

* John xiv. 23.

has sent forth as the Spirit of His Son into their hearts. Such communion the saints here enjoy, in keeping Christ's word and loving His name; and in a far higher measure will they realize it when they shall come to the Father's house of "many mansions" in heaven, and be admitted to glorious, uninterrupted fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for ever. "It is because He is our Father that we confidently expect good things from Him, that we trace all the light and love of past days to His paternal forethought and mercy," and that we cherish joyful anticipations of future blessedness. Well might Luther say, in contemplating his interest in the Fatherhood of God in Christ—"If I could only truly believe it, that God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all things, is my Father, I could conclude that Christ is my Brother, and that all things are mine, Gabriel my servant, and Raphael my charioteer, and all the angels ministering to me in my necessities, and sent to my aid by my heavenly Father." Again, in his Commentary on the Galatians, he says:—"This little word, Father, conceived effectually in the heart, passeth all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and the most eloquent rhetoricians that ever were in the world. The

matter is not expressed with words, but with groanings, which groanings cannot be uttered with any words of eloquence, for no tongue can express them.”*

* Luther's Commentary on the Galatians—p. 375.

CHAPTER IV.

Relation to Christ, the Elder Brother.

Psalm lxxxix. 27.—“I will make Him my First-born, higher than the kings of the earth.” Isaiah ix. 6.—“His name shall be the Everlasting Father.”

The Sonship of believers stands in near and very intimate connection with the person and work of the Redeemer. This we proceed to illustrate in a few particulars.

1. The Divine Fatherhood *may be ascribed to the second* as well as to any *of the other persons of the blessed Trinity*. Though it may be viewed as, in a peculiar sense, characteristic of the First Person in His economical relation, it belongs to the whole Godhead. God in Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the God and Father of the redeemed; and each of the sacred persons may be regarded as sustaining a fatherly relation to those that are predestined to the adoption of sons. As the “Seed of Abraham,” Christ is “the Father of many nations;” and the spiritual seed, which it is promised as the reward of His atoning work He shall see, are as “the stars of heaven and the

sand of the sea," innumerable. Those that are adopted in regeneration are "begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." They are new-created after His image and receive from Him the nature of sons. They are "the children whom God hath given Him," and are "for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion."* Thus Christ, the Son of God, sustains the fatherly relation to the adoption of grace—cherishes toward them all the love and tender compassion which it implies—and does whatever a Father's heart and bowels of mercy prompt in their behalf.

2. Again, the spiritual *union* between Christ and His people is inseparable from their sonship, and leads to the enjoyment of all its privileges. In the effectual application of redemption by the Spirit, believers are joined to Christ as the Head, by a vital, mystical, and indissoluble union. As they become one with Him in a sense nearer than any creature-union can fully illustrate, *His* God becomes *their* God, and *His* Father *theirs*. As indicating the closeness and excellency of this spiritual union, the parties have given to them the same names. He is the Son, and they are

* Isaiah viii. 18; Hebrews ii. 13.

sons, He the "Heir of all things," and they "the joint-heirs with Him." It is a *vital conjugal* union. He is the living Head, and believers are the living members of His mystical body. They are betrothed to the heavenly husband in righteousness and judgment, in faithfulness, loving-kindness, and mercies for ever. The Bridegroom and Head of the Church is the "King's Son," His ransomed Spouse is the King's daughter, made "all glorious within," and brought into the palace and presence of the King to abide for ever. *

3. Christ is the *Elder Brother* of those that are adopted into God's family. As He took our nature and is possessed of a common humanity with us, "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." † As He is the Son of God, so by adoption they become the sons of God too. How loving and tender is this relation! How fraught with comfort and blessing to those who are admitted to it! Christ regards His saints with the love of a brother's heart. He takes the tenderest interest in all their concerns, and He never ceases to do them good. "A friend loveth at all times." "A brother is born for

* Psalm xlv. 14, 15.

† Hebrews ii. 12.

adversity.”* The first message of tender remembrance and affection sent to His disciples by the risen Saviour, recognized them in this relation. He used a designation that he had not employed in addressing them before. “Go unto my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.”† Exalted to the throne of the universe, He has a brother’s nature and heart still; and with his brethren on earth—in all their privileges and enjoyments, in all their labours and trials,—He manifests the tenderest interest and most cordial sympathy. It is their Brother’s blood that pleads on their behalf before the throne. He ever invites and encourages their approach to His immediate presence. As Joseph, when he made himself known to his brethren, He invites them—“Come near to me, I am Jesus, your Brother?”‡ The continual work in which He delights and which is the burden of the praises equally of the Redeemer and his saints, is the making known of his name and salvation—“I will declare Thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise to Thee.”§ How greatly should we rejoice in

* Proverbs xvii. 17.

† John xx. 17. ‡ Genesis xlv. 4. § Hebrews ii. 12.

such a relation ! How zealous should we ever be for the interests of Jesus, our brother ! how tender of his honour ! Desiring and delighting in loving intercourse with him, and in the familiar tokens of his love, the longings of our hearts towards him should be, “ O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother ! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee ; yea, I should not be despised. I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother’s house, who would instruct me : I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.” *

4. The Elder Brother provides for the children of the family all that *is needful for their support, and comfort, and happiness*. Whatever his wisdom and love towards them dictates, and their wants, and conflicts, and trials demand or require, he is at all times ready to do on their behalf. His heart moves his arm of power, and as He constantly loves and rejoices over them with His whole heart, He is always prepared to exert the might of Omnipotence for their succour and salvation. The era of their adoption is their “time of love,” when “he passes by,” and says to them, “live.” † The Son makes them free, and they

* Song viii. 1, 2.

† Ezekiel xvi. 6, 8.

are “free indeed.” * In the day of regeneration they hear the voice of the Son of God and are quickened, † as at his second coming the dead shall hear his voice sounding in the caverns of the tomb, and shall live. He reveals to them the Father; ‡ and as the expression of the tenderest friendship, He imparts to them His mind and the secret of the covenant. “Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?” § The “friend that sticks closer than a brother,” thus addresses His friends—“henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” || Their life, secured by union to him and by his almighty protection, shall be brought forth to bright manifestation in the day of his glorious appearance. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” ¶ He will at length gather into one in the Father’s many-mansioned house the children of God who are scattered abroad, and “present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”**

* John viii. 36.

† John v. 25. ‡ John i. 18; Matt. xi. 27.

§ Gen. xviii. 17. || John xv. 15. ¶ Colossians iii. 4.

** Jude 24.

The full measure of their eternal felicity will consist in the Elder Brother dwelling with his ransomed ones for ever. They shall be with Him where He is, beholding His glory. “His servants shall serve him. They shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads.” * Thus excellent is the relation of the children of God to the Elder Brother—thus eminent and glorious are the privileges which result from it. How much it concerns them that the life which they now live in the flesh should be by faith in the Son of God! How should they honour Him as they honour the Father—seek growing conformity to Him—and look for the blessed hope to be fully realized at the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour—to dwell with the Son in the Father’s house and share in His dignity and blessedness for ever and ever!

* Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

CHAPTER V.

Relation of the Adopted to the Holy Spirit.

Galatians iv. 16.—“Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.” Romans viii. 14.—“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

The Holy Spirit acts an important part in conferring the Adoption of Sons and in investing with its high privileges. Of the covenant in which they were chosen and predestined to be the children, He was the consenting and approving party, and the *whole application* of the redemption provided and purchased is committed to Him. Upon Christ Jesus, the Head of the redeemed family, He descended and rested “without measure,” anointing Him with overflowing fulness of gifts and graces for the accomplishment of His undertaking. “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the

Lord.” * Rejoicing in the prospect of His work on earth, and of its blessed effects long before His advent, the Redeemer, in prophetic announcement, spoke of the Spirit’s plentiful unction—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” †

The “oil of gladness” with which the Son was anointed is given in measure to His “followers”—the brotherhood of the household of faith. They too have an “unction from the Holy One,” ‡ and the Spirit’s holy grace that was upon the great High Priest of our profession, is on all His mystical body. “Like the precious ointment upon the head, that was suffused upon Aaron’s beard, and that went down to the skirts of his garments,” § the Holy Spirit works all gracious works in the members of the adopted family, and is the efficient cause to them of all privilege and blessing.

1. He is the *Author of their regeneration*—the great change which accompanies and evidences their adoption. They are “born of

* Isaiah xi. 2, 3. † Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, 3. ‡ 1 John ii. 20.
§ Ps. cxxxiii. 2.

water and of the Spirit.” * While baptism, of which water is the significant emblem, is the outward symbol of embracing Christ and His religion, the Spirit is the great agent. Without the baptism of the Spirit, that by water is of no avail. Hence, when our Lord, in the discourse with Nicodemus, explains the nature of the new birth in the subsequent verses, (v. 6 and 8)—the water is not again named, but only the birth by the Spirit is mentioned as being the essential energy which the water itself represents, and without which even the blood of Christ symbolized by the water, can neither pardon nor cleanse us. Like the bones “in the valley of vision”—“very many and very dry”—men remain utterly lifeless and helpless until “the Spirit and breath” enters into them. Then they are quickened and stand up as part of “an exceeding great army.” † They that were dead in trespasses and sins are made alive, and where it was said, “Ye are not my people,” it is declared, “Ye are the children of the living God.” ‡

2. The Spirit *dwells in the hearts of those adopted sons.* God hath “sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts.” They are “an habitation of God.” § This indwel-

* John iii. 5.

† Ezek. xxxviii. 10.

‡ Gal. iv. 6.

§ Romans ix. 26.

ling of the Spirit is *personal* and is an eminent part of “the great mystery of godliness.” That the third person of the blessed Trinity should, in his condescending love, take up his abode in a polluted human heart and continue to dwell there, cognizant of all its waywardness and folly, until He has purged out all its defilement and renewed it in the perfect image of God, is an amazing wonder of Divine grace, only to be likened to the humiliation of Christ in assuming our nature and appearing in “the likeness of sinful flesh.” The Holy Spirit in believers is the bond, on heaven’s part, of their union to Christ and oneness with him. Christ dwells in their hearts by faith, and by his Spirit which He has given them.* They thus become “living temples”—the chosen residence of a present Deity, and the scene of the manifestation of His glory. This indwelling of the Spirit in believers is—above his influences—the source and energetic power of all gracious operations. He is the principle of spiritual life—giving faith and its appropriate functions. He is the inexhaustible Fountain from which flow “rivers of living water.” †

3. The Spirit *instamps* on the souls of the

* Ephes. ii. 22.

† John vii. 37.

children of God, the *image of Christ*, and renews them day by day. The moral likeness of God, which was lost by the fall of the first Adam, is restored through “the second Man—the Lord from heaven.” As we have borne the image of the earthly, so are we brought to bear the image of the heavenly. The Spirit enables us to grow up to likeness to Christ in all things. The sons of God are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and “put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness.” This transformation is gradual—but real and abiding—and carried forward to glorious perfection. Through the Word, as in a glass, the Son is revealed, and the adopted members of the family, beholding with love and wisdom the glory of the Elder Brother, are “changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.” * This is a *royal likeness*, indicating princely descent and dignity. Each one of them becomes a King’s son or daughter, as they are predestined heirs of a kingdom. This image of Christ, formed in the soul, is the concentration of all holy graces—the living “fruits of the Spirit”—and its increasing development lies in the vigorous exercise of grace in the heart

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

and life. The faith in Christ Jesus, by which we receive the adoption of children, is generated, strengthened, and perfected by the Spirit. The love, hope, and joy which spring from faith are the effects of His powerful operation. He too it is who alone efficaciously works patience, meekness, long-suffering, gentleness; and who enables believers to add to their faith “virtue, knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity.”* The new spiritual nature of sons is imparted—assimilated to “the mind that was in Christ Jesus,” and destined to reach its perfection in glory, by the transforming power of the Spirit.

4. The *leading of the Spirit*, is a chief and excellent part of the fellowship which believers have with Him. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.” † Christ Jesus is Himself given “a Leader and Commander of the people.” ‡ He is the “First of the family—the Head of the ransomed race.” He is the pattern Son, to whom the Spirit, renewing our nature and dwelling within us, brings us into conformity. When Israel’s Shepherd leads us out and goes before us, we are inclined and enabled to follow Him, by the internal powerful drawing of the

* 2 Peter i. 5, 7. † Romans viii. 14. ‡ Is. lv. 4.

Holy Spirit. He lovingly enlightens us—discovering to the soul the utter evil and sinfulness of sin and the surpassing beauty of holiness. Especially does the Spirit lead to Christ, showing His suitableness and excellency, and enabling to come to Him as the Author of eternal salvation. He leads, moreover, to the conflict with sin—the enjoyment of peace with God—the precious means of grace—and to communion with the Father and the Son. He leads believers into the way of holiness and peace, and at length He “conducts them to the land of uprightness.” While the believer prays :—
 “Lead me in thy truth, and teach me ; for thou art the God of my salvation,” He is enabled to cherish the assured expectation—
 “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.” * How necessary and important is this gracious leading of the sons of God ! As the Spirit speaks in the word and makes it the lamp to enlighten our path, we should hear and obey the voice thus speaking. Our grand duty and privilege are to cherish the internal motions of the Spirit as He works in the heart. We should not only *live* in the Spirit, but we should also “*walk* in the Spirit,” as influenced, directed,

* Ps. xxv. 5 ; lxxiii. 24.

and guided by Him.* By constant activity in the exercise of the Spirit's graces, we walk in love, and make progress in the way of holiness. We should beware of *grieving* our heavenly Guide, who is our most loving and greatest friend. † The Spirit is at the same time our *Teacher* and *Intercessor on earth*. While Christ intercedes for us in heaven, the Spirit does all within us,—dictating our petitions, exciting holy desires, and filling our mouth with arguments. He is grieved by all inattention to His word, by the love of sin, by pride, selfishness, covetousness, malevolent passions, and, especially, by all that is opposed to the authority and mind of Christ. By following the Spirit's leading, and yielding ourselves wholly to it, we act in character as the sons of God, and walk in the way of true and lasting felicity.

5. Moreover, in all His *offices and operations*, the Holy Spirit evidences His love to the children of God and His fellowship with them. He is their *Sanctifier*. He purifies their hearts by faith. He “purges” the living branches that they may bring forth more fruit. By mortifying the deeds of the body, He removes whatever in them would mar the Divine image

* Galatians v. 25.

† Ephes. v. 30.

and render them unmeet for the heavenly inheritance. And He positively and efficaciously works in them, renewing and transforming their spiritual nature, so that they shine as “lights in the world,” and appear in “the beauty of holiness,” like “dew from the womb of the morning.”

He is the *Comforter* promised and sent by the ascended Saviour. The blessed *Paraclete* at once *teaches, exhorts*, is their *advocate*, and imparts all gracious *consolation*.* All His graces in the heart are fitted to give holy joy and strong consolation. The truth which he communicates is the “joy-inspiring sound;” the light which he imparts is pleasant to behold. In sanctifying, He dispels the clouds of error, cleanses from sin, and removes all that hinders the joy of salvation. There is solid peace in advancing holiness—there is calm tranquillity and confidence in the Spirit’s advocacy, and intercession in prayer, and in communion with God. Wisdom’s ways, into which the Spirit leads, are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. The “God of hope” fills His people “with joy and peace in believing, that they

* The original term—*Παράκλητος*—is very comprehensive, denoting, in different aspects, a Teacher, Exhorter, Advocate, and Comforter.

may abound in hope, according to the power of the Holy Ghost.”*

Again, the Spirit “*bears witness* with our spirits that we are the children of God.”† The great matter attested by a twofold witness is our sonship, and, as the consequence, our heirship and inheritance. The first that bears testimony on this all-important subject is “*our own spirit.*” This is our conscience purified and enlightened by the word, and often termed in Scripture our *heart*. “Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”‡ The powers of the mind, intellectual and moral, apprehending the evidences of saintship which the word presents, may come to a comfortable conclusion that we are the sons of God. If I receive Christ by faith, I have “power,” or *inbred ability* to become a son of God. Receiving Christ proves sonship, and entitles to all its privileges. The heart witnessing to the fact may come to the comfortable conclusion that one is a child of the family of God. “*To them that believe, He is precious.*”§ A believer may say without presumption that He has the experience that Christ has been, and is unspeakably precious to

* Romans xv. 13.

† Romans viii. 16.

‡ 1 John iii. 19.

§ 1 Peter ii. 7.

him ; and as He is only such to believers, that he is therefore of the household of faith. If we love the brethren, saints as such, and because we discern the features of Christ's image in them, we have "passed from death to life." When we are made conscious that we love the people of God, and have delight in them just in proportion as they love Christ and resemble Him, we may be assured of our regeneration and adoption. We know that we love God, and give a real expression of love to Him by keeping His commandments. Even when sensible of the manifold imperfection and sin of our obedience, we may have this testimony of our conscience that the habitual desire of our heart and aim of our life are to keep the Divine commandments. If we know and love Him, this proves that He "first loved us," and "hath given us eternal life." We thus conclude that we are his children, and that the adoption of sons is ours.

But the Holy Spirit, as a Divine Person, also bears testimony to our sonship *to* and *with* our spirits. By presenting vividly the evidences of the new birth in the word, working gracious dispositions in our souls, and invigorating and shining on His own work, He enables us to draw the conclusion on right grounds that we are children of God. Thus

He witnesses to our own witness. But He also witnesses conjointly *with our spirits*. The Holy Spirit has immediate access to the minds He has made and quickened. He personally gives evidence by shining on Divine promises and invitations, showing us our interest in them, and applying them with a secret, all-subduing, and assuring power. He “sheds abroad the love of God” in the heart, and excites, in return, filial love to God, and assured confidence in him. Sometimes He fills our soul with joy and peace in believing, and so works upon gracious affections that the person is constrained to cry out, “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.” * At times “the Spirit of grace and supplication” draws out the soul in prayer, and gives a sense of nearness to God, and the assurance of prayer being heard and graciously answered. He can bring to vivid remembrance the word which Jesus has spoken, present Christ and his salvation in attractive beauty and lustre to the heart, and bring a sense of pardon and acceptance into the soul, like a draught from rivers of God’s pleasures. He can show heaven opened, and the glories of the land of inheritance, so that the believer

* Song ii. 5.

cannot doubt of the Father's great love toward him, and of his own interest in the Covenant, and the things of eternal salvation. Besides, the Spirit, making us more like Christ in spirit and disposition, and enabling us to reflect his likeness, bears witness to ourselves and others that we are the children of God. From all eternity we were predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son; and so the Spirit, by producing this conformity, witnesses to our election, and thus, too, to our sonship. When such testimony is borne *to* and *with* our spirits, it brings its own evidence with it, and gives a certain and joyful assurance of the future glorious inheritance.* "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." "The assurance of grace and final salvation, being a fruit of saving faith, and not of its essence, may be, at

* Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. xviii. Sec. 2, 3. "This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which those promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it; yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto."

times, wanting to the children of God, and even after it has been enjoyed, may be obscured and interrupted. Yet it is attainable. Founded as it is upon the Divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, and the testimony of the Spirit of adoption with our spirits that we are the children of God, we may know our election of grace, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” Finally, the Holy Spirit is to the children of God the *seal* and *earnest* of the heavenly inheritance. “He which establisheth us with you in Christ and hath anointed us is God; who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption.” “In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.”* The Spirit, as a Divine person, dwelling in the heart, is himself this seal of the living God to separate and secure the saints, and likewise to confirm to them the inheritance of sons, and fit them for its full enjoyment. They are sealed *after* they believe; and, like as the Son was sealed by the Father for his great

* 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. Ephes. iv. 30. Ephes. i. 13, 14.

undertaking and all His offices, the sons of God are sealed by “the Holy Spirit of promise” for the duties and privileges of their new gracious relation. As He makes them holy, and confirms to them Divine promises, He assures them of the love of the Covenant, and clears up their title to the inheritance of the saints in light. As “an earnest,” is, beyond a pledge, the begun enjoyment of future glory, His gracious work in the heart—the spices flowing forth—are heaven already in possession. As the fragrance of a land of spices is wafted over the sea to neighbouring countries, so the gales of the Spirit are as the breezes of heaven refreshing the heart. Like the large and luscious grapes of Eshcol, these are “the fruit of the land” of promise.* Different in degree, but not in kind, from the bliss in the Father’s house in heaven, they give the strongest assurance, the experience of which the heart is conscious, that we number with “the many sons” that are to be brought to glory. So excellent is the “love of the Spirit!” So wonderful the fellowship which we enjoy in the congregation of saints! Never should we doubt His condescending love or undervalue His gracious operations. The work of the Spirit

* Numbers xiii. 23, 24.

within us is to be daily tested and tried by his word *without* us. And just as we experience the presence and graces of the Spirit in our hearts, so will we cleave to the Word of God and delight in the ordinances of His house. Come, O blessed Spirit! enlighten and sanctify us by the truth. Witness with our spirits when we are in darkness or doubt to our sonship. Help our manifold infirmity in prayer * by Thy powerful inward intercession. Make ready the heart, sealing it and the inheritance to it, unto the day of redemption, and be Thyself the "first fruits" of heavenly blessedness!

* Romans viii. 26.—The reading sustained by the best MS. authority is in the singular "infirmity," not "infirmities." This is significant and expressive, as our greatest weakness, as all saints are ready to acknowledge, is in heartfelt spiritual prayer which the Spirit alone can help us to offer. He is emphatically "the Spirit of grace and supplication."

CHAPTER VI.

The Communion of Saints—Fellowship in the Adopted Family.

1 Corinthians, x. 17—"We being many are one body and one bread, as we are all partakers of that one bread." 1 John i. 3—"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."

The loving intercourse of the members of the same family, united by the tenderest ties, and cherishing a deep and constant concern in all that pertains to their common and individual good, furnishes an example of the most endearing fellowship on earth. It affords the finest scope for the vigorous and healthful exercise of the social principle. In mutual love, saints rejoice together in the prosperity and comfort of one another: they bear each other's burdens, co-operate cheerfully in promoting the welfare of the family, as, by cordial sympathy in suffering and trials, the evils of life are mitigated, and there is joy experienced from the tenderness of

friendship even in seasons of sorrow and affliction.

The adopted family of God exhibits the fellowship of human beings in aspects more pure, elevated, and lasting, than aught that the nearest and most loving intercourse of earthly relationships holds forth to our esteem and admiration. The ties of grace, binding heart to heart, are stronger and more enduring than those of nature; and as the result of union to the blessed Father and Head of the ransomed family, the children of God, called to the fellowship of the Gospel, display the excellency of their spiritual association. Next to communion with God Himself, the fellowship of saints is one of the most exalted and endearing privileges that can be realized on earth. “*I believe in the communion of saints*” is a fundamental article of our Christian profession.* It is inseparably connected with the enjoyment of spiritual benefit from the Word,—the fruit and evidence of its saving power,—and, as a practical principle, it largely promotes our edification and comfort in the Divine life. The apostle John represents this communion as the end of the ministrations of the Gospel: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto

* Apostles' Creed.

you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* We are thus taught (1), That a principal design of declaring the Gospel, whether by preaching or private intercourse, is to bring believers to a holy fellowship ; and (2), That this communion of saints is immediately connected with the highest fellowship with the blessed Godhead—it is an eminent means of introducing to its enjoyment. By believing the Word, we are brought to this fraternity of saints, and introduced into near and loving intercourse with the God of salvation, and to the enjoyment of its unspeakable blessings.

In the communion of saints, the members of the redeemed family feel a joint interest in matters of the highest importance. They are of one spirit; like-minded; have mutual joys and sorrows; are united in work and sympathy; and are made partakers of the same blessed hope.

1. The fellowship of the adopted family results from their *union* to the *one glorious Head*. They are children of the Father, whose image they bear, whose love has lighted upon them, and is shed abroad in their hearts, and

* 1 John i. 3.

His glory is the great end of their existence. Christ Jesus is to them the Head of vital influence and honour. By their union to Him, they are separated from the world, and incorporated into *one spiritual body*. They become thus, not only members of Christ, but at the same time "members one of another." The fellowship to which the saints are admitted with the Redeemer they delight to share with Him, and with all that bear His image. They have privileges and joys in common, live to the same high ends, cherish the like holy expectations, and are animated by the same blessed hopes. Hence result the offices of a sacred brotherhood. A loving interest and complacency in saints is a fruit of the new birth, and its certain evidence. It characterizes all who belong to the household of faith. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him."*

2. In the communion of saints, we are partakers of the *common salvation*. However different their former condition—however diversified the features of their natural characters, they are now, through the grace that bringeth

* 1 John iii. 14., v. 1.

salvation, freed from the wrath to come—they are the chosen servants of God, enlisted in the same spiritual warfare, and made conquerors and more than conquerors through Him that loved them. There is a community of the closest kind in joint privilege and blessing, as there is the ready communication of benefits to those who are brought into it. The rays of light interpenetrate each other, while they intensify and heighten the effect of the whole. Thus the children of the light and of the day, walking in truth and love, strengthen and comfort one another, and diffuse an attractive radiance around them. The redeemed walk in “the way of holiness,” and go on from strength to strength till they appear before the Lord in Zion. This holy fellowship is effected *by the Spirit, through the power of the word*. “If there be any fellowship of the Spirit.”* Believers, whatever was their previous state, are made “partakers of the Holy Ghost,” and are, in consequence, “of one heart and one spirit.” “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”† The Spirit impresses upon them the same image of holi-

* Phil. ii. 2.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

ness. He imparts like precious faith, and peace, and joy, and hope. By the word of truth, which the Spirit employs as his great instrument, He assimilates their moral nature, and makes them one in heart and disposition, aim, and pursuit, and end. The sons of God have fellowship with the blessed Spirit himself, when they cherish his motions, and walk by his guidance and grace. And, through Him, they realize communion with the whole family in heaven and earth named after Christ.

3. The fellowship of saints is enjoyed in their entertaining the same *views and sentiments* on the things revealed in the word. The eyes of their understanding are spiritually enlightened. The "Father of glory" has given them "the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him."* They see light in God's light. Hence they have the like views of sin and salvation, of the glory of Christ, and of the excellency of his salvation. The grand principles of their creed and life are identical. All of them have been led to know the demerit and pollution of sin, the vanity and evil of the world, and the surpassing glory of the kingdom of Christ. The law of God is put in their minds and written on their hearts. They

* Ephesians i. 17, 18.

“stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.”*

4. In the *exercise of spiritual affections* the children of God realize the fellowship of saints. Loving the Father, they are constrained to love every one that is begotten of him. Having been by nature at enmity with God, they were “hateful and hating one another;” but when saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Spirit, love becomes the ruling power in their hearts—the directing, governing principle of their conduct. Fellow-saints are loved with a pure heart fervently. Brotherly love, rising far above that of benevolence to all men, is the love of complacency. In yearning desires for their growth in grace, usefulness and felicity, in tender compassion for their trials and wants, and joy in the salvation and honour of fellow-saints, believers manifest the love of the brethren, and partake themselves of the blessedness of such communion. This special love of saints refuses to be confined within the bounds of sect or party, or to be limited by earthly relationships of kindred or place. It flows out toward all who bear the image of God, and who belong to the redeemed family. By our love to the brethren, the evidence grows

* Phil. i. 27.

clearer and clearer that we are ourselves children of God. This, too, is the grand proof that attests our Christianity to the world. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another."* And through this likewise our spiritual consolation abounds, and we attain to a deeper acquaintance with the mysteries of the Gospel. "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."†

5. The communion of saints is maintained *in acts of joint spiritual worship*. The public services of the sanctuary, and those of the prayer meeting, are greatly valued, not only as ordained means of communion with God, but also as ordinances in which saints have fellowship with one another at the throne of grace; and not in these alone, but when hindered from coming together to any local meeting-place, and even when widely separated by distance, we have communion one with the other. In united prayers and praises, we come to our Father's throne, and receive blessings that are mutually needed, in answer to the prayers of the brother-

* John xiii. 24.

† Col. ii. 2.

hood of faith. This is often the realized support and joy of the communion of believers on earth. Separated as they are at times in the world—not having seen one another in the flesh, or parted so that they meet not here again,—by mutual intercessory prayer they may meet daily in the presence-chamber, and be made conscious of receiving blessings in work and trial, in life and death, in answer to prayer.

6. The fellowship of saints is enjoyed when they are engaged in *common work and conflict*. Few things there are that unite human hearts in stronger and tenderer affection than labour in a work of importance and common interest. The mutual aid that we receive from others sharing in our trials—the interest taken in the progress of the work—in the difficulties overcome, or that are yet to be surmounted, and in the prospect of its completion—all these go to strengthen the bonds of attachment, and to furnish motives for renewed activity and perseverance in labour. If this is felt in relation to work that only concerns this present world, and its transitory interests, much more is it realized in joint labour in works that respect human salvation, and the advancement of God's glory and the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth. When engaged in such works, not only are we

“co-workers with God,” and with holy beings in a higher sphere—angels and the spirits of just men made perfect—but our capacity for sustained labour is increased, and our happiness is augmented. When the Apostle Paul offers to one of the primitive Churches the highest commendation of a minister—Epaphroditus—it is in these works—“My brother, and fellow-labourer, and fellow-soldier,”*—the epithets rising in intensity, each indicating the closest fellowship and strongest attachment. He is not only regarded with affection as a brother, but a colleague in toil, and a companion in arms, one who stood by him in scenes of conflict and danger. This communion of saints in the work of Christ is the subject of devout thanksgiving and praise. The apostle gives thanks to God “on every remembrance” of the Philippian Church, “on account of their fellowship” *in regard to* “the Gospel.”† This fellowship is more than participation in the privileges of the Gospel. Nor does it only mean community of interest, or entire accord. Rather it denotes sympathy and co-operation in all that belongs to the defence and propagation of the Gospel. Such fellowship in arduous

* Philippians ii. 25.

† Philippians i. 5.—So the original words may be properly rendered.

and honourable labour has often gladdened the hearts of ministers, when members of their flocks, male and female, have willingly aided them in performing the Lord's work. This, too, has sustained the missionaries of the Cross in their conflict with darkness and idolatry, and in labouring for the world's conversion. And often, in the last utterances of the dying testimonies of the martyrs of Christ, emphatic and grateful mention has been made of the privilege of communion in work and suffering with fellow-confessors.*

7. The spiritual communion of the family of God is manifested in *sharing with one another all good things* that they may possess, and in *sympathy and mutual help administered in evil*

* When Dr Carey went out to India, on his mission to the heathen, *Fuller* and the brethren who remained at home pledged their support in his arduous undertaking in these terms—"When you go down to the deep well, we will hold the rope to keep you from sinking, or to draw you out when in danger." In the close of the last testimony of the youthful martyr, *Renwick*—the parting from earth, and the welcome to heaven, are in these words--"Farewell, beloved sufferers of the Lamb. Farewell, sweet societies and desirable general meetings. Farewell, night wanderings for Christ and all sublunary things. Farewell, conflict with a body of sin and death. Welcome, scaffolds, for precious Christ! Welcome, heavenly Jerusalem! Welcome, innumerable company of angels! Welcome, crown of glory! Welcome, above all, O Thou blessed Trinity and one God! O Eternal One, I commit my soul into Thy eternal rest." "Spiritual Support and Consolation in Difficult Times --(Letters of the Rev. James Renwick)," p. 50.

things—in wants, afflictions, temptations, and conflicts. We bear each other's burdens, and willingly communicate to the necessities of brethren. The primitive Christians, after the Pentecostal shower of the Spirit, called nothing that they had their own, but "had all things common." So we, having received all that we have from Christ for the advancement of His glory, should willingly recognize the claims of the members of His mystical body to share in all that He has given us. Of earthly goods which we possess, we are only stewards to a sovereign Master. As exemplifying His rich overflowing benevolence, we should be ever ready to communicate to the necessitous, and we should esteem it an honour and privilege to be almoners of His bounty to the least of His brethren. Whatever spiritual gifts and graces we have received, we should regard as conferred upon us, that we may use them for the edification and comfort of all who are gathered with us into the same family of faith. Our own comfort and blessing will be found in the liberal communication, whether of spiritual gifts or temporal benefits. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Honouring the Lord with our substance, and with the first fruits of our increase, our barns are "filled with plenty,"

and our “presses burst out with new wine.” “The liberal soul shall be made fat,” and “he that watereth others” shall himself be watered.”*

Finally, the fellowship of the family of faith will be fully realized when the ransomed of the Lord shall at *length be gathered together in glory*. Then they are brought to the sanctuary above—the place of exalted worship. They share in the same triumphs, and sing the same loud and joyful songs of praise. Their knowledge is perfect and intuitive. They have the same bright and beatific views of the character of God—of the Person of Christ—of the government of Providence—of the wondrous scheme of human redemption. “The Lord is their everlasting light, and their God their glory.” All that could mar the closest, tenderest, most exalted fellowship of the saints is for ever done away. There is no separation, nor distance nor alienation of affection. All imperfection of views or estrangedness is unknown in the redeemed company, when they are brought home to heaven. Christ Jesus is the grand object of attraction—of life and glory to all its blessed inhabitants. Brought to stand with the Lamb upon Mount Zion—having “His Father’s name written in their

* Acts xx. 35. Prov. iii. 9, 10 ; xi. 25.

foreheads," they have all that can unite them to the living Head, and in the most endeared communion to the glorified members of His body—the church, and to holy angels for ever. Their joys are one. One loud Hallelujah to the King will be the burden of all their rapturous praise. Whatever works of practical benevolence may be the employment of glorified saints throughout eternity, we are sure these will not be fitful, or performed apart, by isolated effort, or in painful trial or sorrow, as on earth. Saints in glory will co-operate in the labours of celestial beneficence, and their advancement in capacity of enjoyment, and their progress in bliss, will be connected with their complete and unreserved devotedness to the will and service of the King of glory. "They go no more out." "They serve Him day and night in His temple," and "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

* Rev. iii. 12. ; vii. 15, 17.

CHAPTER VII

The Spirit of Adoption.

Romans viii. 15.—“For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”—Galatians iv. 6. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

The adopted children of God are distinguished from others by their spirit and disposition, chiefly in its actings toward their heavenly Father and their brethren of the household of faith. “The *Spirit of Adoption*” is given them, and this not only raises them above themselves and transforms their moral nature; but also enables them to realize and enjoy the high privileges which nearness to God confers. Contrasting the state in which saints once were, to that to which they are brought by regeneration and adoption, the apostle expressly declares, “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”* The people of God, under the

* Romans viii. 15.

Mosaic economy, though heirs of the promise, were in their minority, and their state differed little from that of servants and slaves, "They were under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father." * The law from Sinai "gendered to bondage." The spirit of the dispensation was necessarily servile. "Every transgression and disobedience received," often immediately, the award of punishment; and hence fear, anxiety, and apprehension of wrath frequently pervaded the minds of ancient worshippers. We too, Gentiles by nature, while unregenerate, were in bondage to the god of this world, to the lusts that warred in our members, and to the law which ruled our conscience. By the law was the knowledge of sin; and however imperfect was this knowledge, it was sufficient to convince us of sin, to excite the dread of punishment, and to lead us to despair of ever pleasing God or finding acceptance with Him. We were actuated by slavish, disheartening fear in the performance of all duties, and felt rather as the servants of a hard master than as the children of a loving and compassionate father. The gospel comes, "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve the Lord without

*Galatians iv. 2.

fear.” * Soon as we embrace it and experience its saving power, we receive, instead of the spirit of bondage gendering fear, “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

The “Spirit of adoption” may be regarded as the *Holy Spirit* dwelling in the hearts of believers. The context would seem to countenance this view, as the parallel passage in Galatians iv. 6, expressly declares that the Third person in the Trinity, the “Spirit of the Son” is sent forth into the hearts of believers. “Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” The Holy Spirit is termed the Spirit of God’s Son, not only as He proceeds from the Son, equally as from the Father, but also as He was given Him without measure, and as He is sent by Him, the fruit of His atonement and intercession. He is in the hearts of believers the Spirit of sonship. As the Son of God, the Head of the ransomed family, has the fulness of the Spirit in Him, so the members of the household, sharing the honour of this high designation, are made partakers of the same Spirit. To indicate the perfect unity and intimate fellowship that subsist between Christ and believers, they are called sons of God, and

* Luke i. 74.

the Holy Spirit that sanctified His humanity and dwelt in Him, in the plenitude of all holy graces, is given them,—the seal of their sonship, to distinguish them from others, as a peculiar people and a chosen generation. The personality of the Spirit is clearly implied by the parallelism of the expression,—the mission first of the Son and then of the Spirit on the part of the Father. The Spirit which dwelt in the Son is given to believers as the token of their adoption, for it is the bond of union to the Elder Brother—“the First-born among many brethren.” He was sent into their hearts—the centre of emotion of their inner life and power; and His special function is to work in them a fuller resemblance to Christ, the Son of God, and to lead them to manifest the mind and disposition by which He was characterized.

While the Spirit of Christ, “the Holy Spirit of promise,” is thus, in an eminent sense, the Spirit of adoption in believers, the privilege may be best apprehended by considering the frame of mind—the feelings and habits which He generates. The mystery of the Spirit’s indwelling is best understood by the inward state and feelings which He imparts and which He draws forth in the activities of the life. By

Luther, and others, the genitive is regarded as that of the source, a *filial nature*,* or “the disposition which flows from sonship”—that which renders their adoption evident to themselves and others. The expressed contrast in the passage, Romans viii. 15.—“Ye have not received the spirit of bondage but ye have received the Spirit of adoption,” is that between two opposite dispositions of heart and habits of mind. In the one case, there is a feeling or sense of bondage, producing fear; in the other, a free, loving, trustful, and hopeful spirit. The Holy Spirit cannot be said to be “the author of bondage,” as some have alleged. † The spirit which produces slavish fear, is, when we are regenerated and become sons of God, exchanged for the spirit that henceforth rules in the heart and controls the life,—a spirit befitting their calling and character, and indicating their future destiny.

The workings of the Spirit of adoption may be seen in various aspects. In relation to *God our Father in Christ*. It discovers His *paternal character*, and opens to the view of believers *His loving heart*. Christ Jesus reveals the Father, and when we are brought to know

* Einen kindlichen Geist. † Hodge on the Romans.

Him, we see the Father. When one of Christ's disciples inquired in the upper chamber—"Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,"—the Saviour's emphatic reply referred to Himself as the manifestation of the Father—"Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip; He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." *

Christ Jesus on earth was the grand representative of God to man. His life is the bright exhibition of God as a Father. To His chosen disciples when He companied with them, He always presented the Father, rich in mercy and full of piety; and by His example He inculcated toward Him, love, confidence, and joyful expectation. In the Spirit of adoption, we see the God of nature and providence revealed in Christ as our loving Father. Beholding and admiring the wonderful works of nature, we can say, "My Father made them all." The mysteries of Providence are unfolded in the sovereign control, and the manifold wisdom and care of the Redeemer who reconciles us to God. The marvellous displays of His goodness in providence are made by the paternal hand of Him who makes all to work together for the good of His children. In their great-

* John xiv. 8. 9. Mat. xi. 27.

est afflictions, believers have cause to rejoice in the thought that their Father is at the helm, controlling the billows of trouble, and guiding them to the desired haven. When the thought of the majesty and greatness of God overcomes us ; when we are terrified by His inflexible justice, and the sense of our sin and unworthiness makes us afraid, the Spirit of adoption enables us to look to Jesus as He reveals the Father, and in rejoicing confidence, to exclaim, "I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song ; He also is become my salvation." "He shall cry unto me, thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation." *

Again, this spirit persuades *us of God's love to us, and gives us access to Him with boldness.* The love of God is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit which He hath given unto us." † In the unspeakable gift of the Saviour, in His matchless person and finished work, we have a constant noon-tide manifestation of God's love to sinners. He "*rests in His love,*" ‡—all His actings toward His saints, beginning in love and ending in it as the glorious issue. The Spirit of adoption makes it clear to us that

* Isaiah xii. 2. Psalm lxxxix. 26. † Romans v. 5.
‡ Zephaniah iii. 17.

God loved us before we loved Him, and that our love to Him originated from His toward us. With an “everlasting love” He loved us, and, therefore, with loving-kindness has He “drawn us.”* In the grateful emotions of a filial heart, we can declare, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love.” † In this spirit we draw near to God. “Through Him,” the Mediator, as the “new and living way,” we “have access by one Spirit to the Father.” ‡ “In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of Him.” § With greater freedom and confidence than a child goes to its earthly father to tell its wants, make known its cares, and enjoy the tokens of his affection, may we, by the Spirit of adoption, come at all times to our heavenly Father, pour out our hearts before Him, and cast all our burden upon Him.” “It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.” ||

The Spirit of adoption, moreover, inspires a *sense of reconciliation to God*. He is in Christ “reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” We joy

* Jeremiah xxxi. 3. † 1 John iv. 16. ‡ Ephes. ii. 18.
§ Ephes. iii. 12. || Ps. lxxiii. 28.

in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” * Thus we are led to acquiesce in the whole blessed plan of redemption—the amazing device of the sovereign wisdom and love of God; and we would not alter the least matter in the wondrous contrivance. We are well-pleased with all that our Father has done and said in His word, and with all that He requires of us. Especially do we delight in the Son, in whom the Father is ever “well-pleased.” God, in Christ, appears all glorious and amiable—“The chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” Through His blood we have “redemption, even the forgiveness of sins,” and we are “accepted in the Beloved.” A sense of pardoning mercy prevents us from ever quarrelling with Divine sovereignty, and is the burden of our grateful praise—“Blessed is He whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” †

The Spirit of adoption, thus viewing and resting in God as our Father in Christ, *excites into exercise all gracious affections.* It produces filial love toward Him. “We love Him

* 2 Cor. v. 19; Romans v. 11. † Ps. xxxii. 1; ciii. 24.

because He first loved us.” We love Him supremely because of His transcendent excellence, and inasmuch as His gratuitous love is the basis and source of our love to Him. With the love of gratitude and delight, we love Him for the unspeakable benefits which He has bestowed upon us. Our love to God is that of a child to an excellent and loving father. It is the familiarity of grateful affection, producing freedom and holy boldness in the presence and service of God. Coming to our heavenly Father, we love Him with the whole heart, and rejoice in the prospect of being engaged in delighting in Him and praising Him throughout eternity.

This Spirit of sonship leads to *willing obedience* to the *authority of God, and to hatred to all that offends Him*. We serve Him “as a son his father.” Obedience becomes pleasant and delightful. We “*run* the way of His precepts, when He has enlarged our hearts.” * To serve such a loving, condescending Father, is felt to be the highest honour and privilege. In “keeping His commandments, there is a great reward.” † According as we are conscious of the workings of the Spirit of adoption within us, we esteem our Father’s command-

* Malachi iii. 17. Ps. cxix. 32. † Ps. xix. 11.

ments, “in all things to be right, and we hate every false way.” * Whatever would offend God or dishonour Him, we learn more and more to separate from and hate. Sin in ourselves—wickedness in the world—all that opposes the cause of Christ,—“the works of the devil,”—are objects of detestation and abhorrence. Our love to God is shown in hating what He hates. Like Him, while we hate the sin, we compassionate the sinner, or only dislike him as he stands in opposition to the character and will of God. The measure of esteem of a loving and dutiful child toward others, is that regard which they manifest to the father who occupies the highest place in his affections. So the children of God learn, under the influence of the Spirit of adoption, to view all objects in their relation to God their heavenly Father, to love what He delights in, and to separate from and hate whatever is opposed to Him. “Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.” † This spirit is, moreover, displayed in *holy zeal for God’s cause in the world*. When the Saviour, during His earthly

* Ps. cxix. 104.

† Ps. cxxxix. 21, 21.

ministry, purged the temple, it was in fulfilment of the prophetic announcement, “*The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.*” All who by faith “receive power to become the sons of God,” are made to drink into the same spirit. An enlightened zeal for the honour of God’s name, for the purity, peace, and prosperity of His church, for the destruction of evil in the world, and for the establishment of the Redeemer’s kingdom in the earth, is a feature of the mind of Christ, totally unlike the blind fiery zeal which leads men to contend for the interests of party, or to hate men’s persons, or to persecute those that differ from them. Sanctified zeal is the fruit of the Spirit of truth and holiness. Like heaven-born charity, of which it is a manifestation, it “rejoices not in iniquity, but in the truth.”* All indifference in relation to the claims of truth or the avowal of error, and all neutrality in the cause of God, are wholly inconsistent with that zeal which is of the Spirit and mind of Christ. The Spirit of adoption working in the heart ever impels to holy decision, and to earnest effort for the triumph of truth and righteousness in the earth. Like the light increasing,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

it shines more and more unto the perfect day. * As the pure flame, that transmutes objects with which it comes in contact into combustible matter, so the fire of enlightened zeal which is kindled in the hearts of the children of God, imparts its heat to others, and continues to glow with more intense vigour, even when the force of natural powers is decreasing, in the near prospect of the glory of the Lord filling the earth, and of perfect blessedness in the everlasting kingdom of their Father.

Finally, the Spirit of adoption *finds utterance in the strongest expression of filial love, submission, and confidence.* “*We cry, Abba, Father.*” The use of the synonymous Syro-Chaldaic and Greek word for Father, may be designed to express the harmony of Jew and Gentile in the filial worship of God. † Rather it is the heart-language of those who have been brought into “the glorious liberty of the sons of God.” The slave-child of old was not permitted to call its parent, Abba. The Spirit of adoption alone, received and enjoyed, enables us to understand what true freedom is, and prompts us to its joyful expression. In this element of our inner life, “*we*”—one and all the children of God—“*cry,*” with vehe-

* Proverbs iv. 18.

† So say Calvin and Scott.

ment desire and firm confidence. Like as one who under the power of excitement and strong emotion, when the heart is suffused with tenderness and overflows with earnest desire, employs the words of his mother tongue, so the believer pours out his heart to God in prayer, "crying, Abba, Father." The only begotten Son, when learning "obedience by the things which He suffered," in His last agony, employed these words, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt." * This was at once the utterance of His most intense desire, the expression of entire resignation, and the language of assured confidence. Learning from the Elder Brother, the perfect model of prayer, the children of God when using the same words, express the importunity of request and pleading, the love and confidence of the heart are declared; and the mouth is filled with arguments.

The spirit of adoption is not satisfied with a single or occasional cry, however earnest or vehement. Rather is this its *habitual expression*, this its interpretative utterance even when audible words are not used. As children soothing earthly parents seek to prevail with them,

* Mark xiv. 36.

by appealing to their paternal affections, so, under a sense of need, believers with freedom have access to God the Father. With boldness they come, by the blood of Jesus, into the holiest of all, and cry, "O my Father, help me in trouble, deliver me from enemies and evil, supply my need, dispel the clouds and fears that oppress my spirit, cause Thy face to shine upon Thy servant; restore to me the joys of Thy salvation." The whole desire of the renewed heart finds expression in the cry, "Abba, Father." The eloquence, power, and prevalence of prayer are here. It is the pleading of a child sensible of its own weakness, and that all dependence and confidence should ever rest in its Father's wisdom, love, and power; it is, at the same time, the strongest wrestling of one that has power with God and prevails. Well might *Luther* declare of this utterance of the spirit of adoption, "Though it is a faint cry, yet it doth pierce the clouds, that there is nothing else heard in heaven of God and His angels." And again, "The little word 'Father,' conceived effectually in the heart, passes all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and of the most eloquent rhetoricians that ever were in the world. The matter is not expressed with words but groanings, which

groanings cannot be uttered with any words of eloquence, for no language can express them." *

* *Luther* on Galatians (ch. iv. 6.)

CHAPTER VIII.

The Work of the Children of God on earth.

Luke ii. 44—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Mal. iii. 17—"And I will spare him, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Holy and devoted obedience is characteristic of all that constitute the family of God. The Elder Brother came into the world to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered."* Angels delight in a perpetual ministry to Christ, the Head of all principality and power, and to them that are "heirs of salvation." They do the will of God with alacrity, constancy, and delight; and they welcome the meanest services for the advancement of His glory, equally with the honourable work of serving around the throne. The sons of God, redeemed from among men, are called to the service of a glorious Master. This is their

* Hebrews v. 9.

distinction and honour in the world ; thus they bring to Him a revenue of praise and glory : and this, too, is the appointed way in which they reach the reward of heavenly blessedness.

The work of the children of God on earth is not only that to which they were appointed in His eternal purpose, and called by His authority and grace, but it is that, too, in which His power is continually put forth, and in which is displayed the bright manifestation of the glory of His perfections. The work is God's, and they are His selected instruments for performing it. They become "co-workers with God;" and in the commencement, progress, and completion of their work on earth, His will be all the glory.

Believers are required in all places and conditions to be, as the Saviour—about "their Father's business." This is their first and grand concern—that to which their calling as sons was designed to separate them, and to which all other employments should be subordinated. Their whole work is the service of a Son to his father—who feels the highest obligation to love Him, reverence His authority, and promote his interests, and who, in serving him, knows that he thereby secures

His own best interests. It is a loving, confidential service, in which those who are engaged in it are treated as friends, to whom the Master confides his plans, and makes known familiarly his counsels. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."*

In doing the work of their Father on earth, the sons of God—First, *seek to know the Father's will.* The obedience which they render to their heavenly Father is not blind or irrational. The will of God requiring it, while it is sovereign and supreme, is holy, and wise, and good. His commands in all things are right. It was from the perfect knowledge that the Son incarnate had of the Father that He constantly said—in full submission and resignation—"Not my will, but Thine be done." The revealed will of the Father, contained in the Scriptures, makes known the whole course of holy obedience. The fuller and closer our acquaintance with the Word, the greater will be our freedom and delight in obeying the Divine commandments. The Word is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path. As we look to

* John xv. 15.

it, and use it for practical purposes, the course of duty becomes clear and pleasant; and, with the heart enlarged, we run the way of God's precepts. A first and chief concern of a dutiful child is to know his father's will, that he may be prepared to render a ready and willing obedience to his commands. Thus do the children of God love and study the revelation of the Father's will contained in the Bible. They "search the Scriptures" that they may know them. They read and hear the Word that they may do it. And as "the word of God" dwells in them "richly in all wisdom," their loving service rendered to the Father, who ever speaks to them *gracious commandments*, and encourages them by *exceeding great and precious promises*, is found to be freedom and perfect peace.

Secondly, The *authority of the Father* is recognized as *sovereign and supreme*, and His command is regarded as *the grand formal reason of obedience*. The children of God view their Father as the Lord of heaven and earth, the blessed and only Potentate. When He requires obedience to any of His commands, He asserts His claim by simply declaring, "*I am the Lord.*" Believers obey, not because they see fully reasons for performing a duty, or be-

cause they discern its beneficial results; but simply because He who made and redeemed them, and who has the exclusive right to the homage of their heart and life, has enjoined it. When Abraham received the command to go out from his native country, He immediately and unhesitatingly obeyed. "He went out, not knowing whither he went." There was given him no reason for the strange requirement. The country to which he was directed was not named to him, and he was not told the way to it. His faith consisted in his receiving the command as of paramount obligation—resting on the Divine promise, and depending on Almighty power and wisdom for its accomplishment. And when, subsequently, he was required to offer up the child of promise as *a burnt offering*, he recognized God's sovereign right to command the sacrifice, and by faith, "he that had received the promises," without questioning or delay, made the surrender required. They who by faith are the children of Abraham, in the same spirit, regard their Father's authority as supreme and all-controlling, and all His commands as holy, and just, and good. The joy of devoted service is experienced, in yielding implicit obedience to Him who rules in their hearts, and who, at the same

time, that He is their loving Father, is unspeakably the Best of masters. "Therefore, I love Thy commandments above fine gold." "Therefore, I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right."*

Thirdly, They seek *to do always the things that please Him*, as they aim to glorify Him in all things. Filial service seeks its reward, and has its strongest motive in obtaining the Father's approval. The sons of God, taught by the Spirit, and "filled with the knowledge of His will, keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."† The Master, whose they are, and whom they serve, has His pleasure in the truth professed, and exemplified. His delight is in holiness. He dearly loves Zion's ways. In the person and work of His Son, He is ever well-pleased. In communion with His saints, He has complacency and rest. In these things, saints find well-springs of spiritual enjoyment. Their work is all performed under the eye of the Father, who loves His own image in His children, and who regards their weakest efforts to promote His glory with the most tender and condescending interest. He sends them forth to labour in the enclosed place which He de-

* Ps. cxix. 127 ; v. 28.

† 1 John iii. 22.

lights to visit, and from which He gathers His pleasant fruits. His call to honourable service is—"Go, my Son, work this day in my vineyard." Serving in His immediate presence, we are put upon a work from which the Owner of the vineyard may derive a revenue of glory. The approving glance of His eye, the acceptance of the service, and the assurance that our work will conduce to the advancement of His glory, are our highest inducements to labour; and these form a present "great recompense of reward." The wisdom and understanding which the Holy Spirit imparts lead the children of God to propose this as their great end, "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."* The sons of God, who are led by the Spirit, alone realize the great end of life—to "do all to the glory of God."† The Elect Servant, in whom the Father delighted, did always the things that pleased Him. In the different acts of His surety-obedience, it was declared, once and again, with a voice from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And at the close, He commended His work to the acceptance of the

* Col. i. 10.

† 1 Cor. x. 31.

Father—"I have glorified Thee on the earth ; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."* In the same spirit, those whom He calls not servants, but sons, seek not to please themselves, nor to walk as pleasing men. Their meat and drink is to do the Father's will. Their earnest desire and joy of spirit are to walk worthy of Him who has called them to His kingdom and glory. No higher honour can they expect, when the service allotted them here is completed, than to be enabled to declare, ' We have glorified Thee on the earth. We have finished the work that hast given us to do.'

Fourthly, A principal part of their work is *to promote the good of the family*. They seek its peace—they labour for its purity. By "love, they serve one another." Bearing each other's burdens, they fulfil the law of Christ. They pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and earnestly desire the prosperity of Zion's palaces. By the power of the truth and love, and the influence of a holy example, they labour to bring others into the family. Like children rejoicing at the entrance of the latest born into the family circle, they have pure delight in the conversion of a

* John xvii. 4.

sinner, and the addition of a saved one to the Church. The children of God, born in the Church, have their sphere of effort peculiarly *within* her. There they share lofty privileges, and are made themselves a blessing in the earth. They declare in Zion the work of the Lord their God. They fight the battles and achieve the victories of faith. The sons that Zion has brought up are the instruments of her deliverance and salvation. True to their character and obligations, they labour intensely for her revival and enlargement. Whatever would corrupt her fellowship, or mar her spiritual beauty, they cannot but condemn and oppose. They are “repairers of former desolations,” and “the restorers of paths to dwell in.” The future universal establishment and glory of the Church are destined to be thus effected. The Lord’s remembrancers “keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”* In the future increase and glory of this Church, the “barren woman is made to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.”†

Fifthly, *What is yet to be done* for the advancement and triumph of the Redeemer’s cause in the earth *is eminently the work of the children*

* Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

† Ps. cxiii. 9.

of God. All that has hitherto been effected for the spread of the Gospel in the earth, and the spiritual illumination of Jews and Gentiles—all the victories of truth over error, and superstition, and idolatry—have been accomplished by men taught by the Spirit, and actuated by filial love and devotedness. Men who were called to the fellowship of the Gospel, and who could declare, “Now are we the sons of God,” were employed by the Saviour to make known His truth, and set up His kingdom in the world. The first victories of the Cross were won by those who were “led by the Spirit,” and who received “the Spirit of adoption;” and all its subsequent triumphs have been through the same instrumentality. The rapid progress of the Gospel in the days of primitive Christianity is to be ascribed, in a great measure, to the circumstance that the first Christians, after the Pentecostal visitation, realized their sonship; and, glowing with love to Christ, and with fervent desire to promote His glory, they dedicated themselves, and willingly surrendered all they possessed—worldly substance, influence, and personal effort, for the establishment of His kingdom in the earth. They were men “full of faith,” and “full of the Holy Ghost.” They went everywhere, in firm trust in the ascended

Saviour, and the power of the Spirit, preaching the Word, and multitudes were “turned to the Lord.” Their “line went into all the earth, their words to the end of the world.” Faith in the person, work, promise, and Mediatorial authority of Christ is the *principle* of Christian missions, as *love to Christ* is their *spirit* and *power*. The men in whose hearts these are in active operation are fit instruments for making known God’s light and salvation to all nations. Such have been approved labourers for the world’s conversion in past times. The revival of the Lord’s work in the earth has been through such instrumentality; and in the future universal subjection of the nations to Christ the agency acknowledged and blessed will be men baptized by the Spirit, and constrained by the love of Christ to live, not to themselves, but to Him who died and rose again.

The Church, endowed with faith in the Redeemer’s promise and Mediatorial Headship, will bring forth its appropriate fruits in love to perishing souls, in the cheerful, liberal dedication of substance and personal effort, and in wrestling, persevering prayer for the world’s conversion. Numerous and suitable instruments will not be wanting for this great work, so soon as the Church will awaken to a due

sense of its importance and her own responsibility; and whenever she shall ask in faith “the Lord of the harvest” to “thrust out labourers,”* and in united, fervent prayer shall plead—“Thy Kingdom come,” “Ask of Me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”† “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and make His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon the earth, Thy saving health among all nations.”‡ That which is mainly wanted to ensure the progress and success of Christian missions is that the work be in the hands of the sons of God, and prosecuted in the spirit of faith and love becoming their high vocation. Then will worldly resources be supplied in abundance, and devoted men will never be wanting of those who have yielded themselves to the Lord, and who esteem life only valuable for the opportunities which it presents to advance His glory in the earth.

This work of the children of God is *honourable* and enobling. It associates us with all that is glorious and excellent in the universe. In performing it, we give ourselves to carry into

* Mat. ix. 38.—Such is the import of the original term.
 † Psalm ii. 8. ‡ Psalm lxxvii. 1, 2.

accomplishment the purposes of Infinite wisdom and love to our fallen race. We become co-workers with God, with elect angels, and fellow-saints in heaven and earth. The contrivance, effective agency, and glory of all that is done are the Lord's. "We are His workmanship, created anew unto good works, which God hath foreordained that we should walk in them."* "It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."† "Thou, also, hast wrought all our works in us."‡ How elevating the thought that, however weak in ourselves, Almighty power is with us! "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds."§ How honourable and ennobling to be employed in the work in which the blessed Trinity co-operate throughout all time! Like the Saviour rejoicing in spirit, the believer, confessing and thanking God, may say—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."|| With the Spirit shed on us abundantly, received as the Spirit of adoption, and witnessing to our sonship, we know the power and happiness of our Lord's assurance—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works

* Ephesians ii. 10. † Philippians ii. 13.
 ‡ Isaiah xxvi. 12. § 2 Cor. x. 4. || John v. 17.

that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father.”* And when we come to the close of our earthly labours, we are enabled to declare with joy, “I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.”†

* John xiv. 12.

† John xvii. 4.

CHAPTER IX.

The Privileges of Sonship.

Romans viii. 17—"And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." 1 John iii. 2—"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."

By the grace of God in adoption, not only are we brought into the family of the First-born, but we are, at the same time, given "the right to all their privileges." These are so manifold and excellent—they so far transcend in kind and degree all earthly benefits, that it is difficult to offer any adequate enumeration or description of them. Besides, they only who enjoy them can have any right conception of their greatness and value. They are "the secret of the Lord" that is with them that fear Him.* In the "White Stone"—the symbol of the believer's pardon—is "a new name written,"—that of a son or daughter of the Lord

* Psalm xxv. 14.

Almighty,—“which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”* Adoption is itself the grandest distinction and highest privilege that God confers upon any human being, and whether viewed in its origin, nature—the relation of the adopted to the blessed Godhead,—the redeemed family—the spirit that characterizes the adopted,—or their work on earth, it is a blessing of the most glorious kind. We cannot speak on this subject without declaring the riches of Divine benevolence towards the saints, and the peculiar honour and happiness which, in consequence, they enjoy. Already there have been exhibited much of “the lot of the inheritance” of the saints, and the foundation of all that remains to be possessed—the object of their fervent desire and assured hope. But as we may view the *relation in a family* separate from *the immunities which it confers*, it may be of use to consider somewhat particularly the privileges of sonship. Thus will the excellency of the state of adoption be more distinctly perceived, and those who are of the family of God may learn to appreciate aright their privileges, and to improve them in a life of holiness and spiritual comfort.

Our Westminster divines speak of the graci-

* Rev. ii. 17.

ous act of adoption as when it brings into the number of God's children, conferring, at the same time, "a right to all the privileges of the sons of God."* More fully in the "Larger Catechism"† the enumeration of privileges is condensed from the "Confession of Faith" (ch. xii.), and adoption is described as "an act of the free grace of God, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of His children, have His name put upon them, the Spirit of His Son given to them, are under His fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory." In both these statements, it is evident there is a distinction made between the *condition* or *relation* into which the redeemed are brought, and *the privileges* of which they are made partakers, in consequence of belonging to the family of God. These immunities and benefits are such as are worthy of their covenant God and Father to bestow, and such as are befitting the nature and character of the children of His love to receive. Their right to their possession rests on the

* Shorter Catechism—Question 34. † Question 74.

meritorious righteousness of the Elder Brother ; and when this is imputed to them, and they appropriate it by faith, they may justly lay claim to the full enjoyment, and cherish the comfortable assurance that, without fail, they shall be theirs in time and throughout eternity.

1. First among the high privileges of the children of God may be mentioned *an interest in the love of their heavenly Father*. From all eternity, He loved them with a sovereign, gratuitous, and unspeakable love. This love He *commended* to them, or set forth in the most attractive manifestation, “in that while they were yet sinners, Christ died for them.”* The Divine love found them in their state of guilt and alienation, and conferred on them the adoption of sons. “Behold, thy time was a time of love.” “I drew thee with cords of love, and bands of a man.” “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.”† The love which led to their election from eternity and calling in time, in all its diversified aspects and manifestations, is ever afterwards centred upon them. They are united to the Well-Beloved as their Head and Husband. They are to Him as the “apple of His eye,” and are

* Romans v. 8. † Ezek. xvi. 8 ; Hos. xi. 4 ; Jer. xxxi. 3

set as “a seal upon His arm and heart.” With a Father’s pity, He regards their weakness and distress. His bowels of tender compassion yearn over their waywardness and affliction, and even when they wander and backslide, His love goes after them, and restores them to their Father’s house rejoicing. His dealings toward them are all in paternal love and mercy. ‘Having loved His own that are in the world, from the beginning, He loves them to the end.’* The greatness, tenderness, and unchangeable character of the love of God to His saints can never be fully conceived or adequately expressed. Like the lining of the chariot of King Solomon, “love for the daughters of Jerusalem”—the love of God in covenant towards the redeemed is nearest to them in every thing. Nothing can possibly separate them from it in time—in life or death. And throughout eternity, the burden of their songs of praise in glory will be, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.”†

2. They have *access with boldness into His presence*. A “new and living way” has been

* John xiii. 1.

† Rev. i. 5, 6.

opened for them into the Holiest of all, and they have boldness to enter in by the blood of Jesus.* As children to a father, they may ever come to Him, and use all freedom in drawing nigh. They are bid welcome to tell Him all their wants and cares, and to unbosom to Him all their thoughts and griefs, and the desires of their hearts. They may come to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in their time of need. "Through Christ, they have access by one Spirit to the Father."† At all times, they may enter the presence chamber. Instead of being offended with their frequent complaints and requests, their heavenly Father is pleased with their importunity, and their prayer is "His delight." He anticipates their petitions by His readiness to meet them with His loving-kindness. There is no interposing veil now to bar their entrance into the Most Holy place. He that dwells between the cherubim is infinitely more ready to bestow blessings than His children are to ask them. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."‡ "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask any

* Hebrews x. 19, 22. † Ephesians ii. 18.

‡ Isaiah lxxv. 24.

thing according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.”*

3. They enjoy *the surest Divine protection*. The Lord is their defence, and He brings them safety. He is a “wall of fire around them, and the glory in the midst.”† As His “vineyard of red wine,” the Church of the First-born is assured of the Divine protection and blessing. “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”‡ For the protection and safe-keeping of the children of God, a special providence, ever watchful and gracious, is employed, like “the pillar and cloud of fire” that in the night stood between Israel and their enemies. The angel-ministry, as the host of God, encamps around them, preserving them from danger, and controlling all that threatens their safety, or would disturb their peace. Around the Church—“the bed of King Solomon,” are three-score valiant men, expert in war, “every man with his sword on his thigh, because of fear in the night.”§ The Lord Himself is their “shade at their right hand.”

* 1 John v. 14, 15.

† Zechariah ii. 5.

‡ Isaiah xxvii. 3.

§ Song iii. 8.

And “as the mountains surround Jerusalem, so is He round about His people, from henceforth even for ever.”* The children of God are protected on all sides, and from evils of every kind. They are completely safe amid enemies and dangers, seen and unseen. Till their work is done, they are immortal, and none can effectually harm them. To every one of them the assurance is given of an absolute promise, resting for its accomplishment on the power and unchangeable faithfulness of Jehovah. “He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust. His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.”†

4. There is *abundant provision made for all their wants*. The supply for all the necessities of the children of God, temporal and spiritual, is laid up in the stores of the new covenant, and put into the hands of the Trustee of the covenant, the Elder Brother, to administer. Their wants were all foreseen, and provided for, in the wisdom and love of the Father, from eternity. His name and memorial is “*Jehovah Jireh*”—the Lord will be seen—the Lord will provide. The fountain of gracious supply is ever

* Psalm cxxv. 2.

† Psalm xvi. 4.

near, as it is accessible and inexhaustible. As a tender, considerate father provides for his children, and deals out supplies to their wants, according as his love dictates, and in a manner conducive to their good, so the Father of the redeemed family makes the wants, great or little, of each child in it, an object of His deepest interest and constant concern. He that numbers the hairs of their head has guaranteed to them, beyond fear of failure, all suitable temporal provision. "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." His knowledge of their necessities is sufficient to ensure to them the supply in season. Provision for all their spiritual wants is made in the promises of the covenant. It is laid up in the fulness of Christ, out of which is constantly dispensed what satisfies their most enlarged desires. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good."* Dwelling in the munitions of rocks, "their bread is 'given,' and their 'water' made sure." Confiding in the ample provision made by the Father, and in its communication at the right time, and in the best manner, from the hands of their Elder Brother, well may the children of God trust without anxiety—well may they declare with a servant of God, who was in

* Psalm xxxiv. 10.

† Isaiah xxxiii. 16.

perils often, and in hunger, and thirstings, and nakedness, "I have all and abound; I am full," and assure brethren of the household of faith, "My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* In bestowing upon them the unspeakable gift of His Son, their Father has already given them what transcends all other blessings of grace and glory, and what is the sure pledge of the enjoyment of them all. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"† "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours. And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."‡

5. *Divine guidance and support are secured to them.* While angels of light are appointed to guard the saints, the Spirit is promised as their constant and infallible Guide. They are led by Him into the way of peace, and are conducted in the paths of righteousness, in which the redeemed of the Lord walk, and "the way-faring man, though a fool, cannot err."§ The

* Philippians iv. 18, 19.

† Romans viii. 32. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

§ Isaiah xxxv. 8.

word of the Lord is a lamp to their path. His providence opens up their way, and makes them at times to hear a voice behind them saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," when they are prone to turn to the right hand or the left. Israel's Shepherd guides Joseph like a flock through paths of difficulty and danger, safely from the snares and onsets of enemies, and through the desert, till they arrive at the promised rest. By Divine counsels, they are led and guided, so that they do not stumble, or fail of reaching the land of inheritance. They are led in a way that is right, to bring them to a city of habitation. Trusting in their Divine Leader, and committing themselves to His sure guidance, they may declare with confidence, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."* They are upheld by Divine power, while they are led forward without fear. Their steps are kept from falling. While covenant grace is sufficient for them, Almighty strength is made perfect in weakness. The "Captain of salvation," who collects the host, and makes of enemies and rebels adopted children, goes before them, fighting all their battles, till he brings "many sons to glory."† How freely should they fol-

* Psalm lxxiii. 24. † Heb. ii. 10.

low where he leads! How confidently rely on the guidance of paternal wisdom and love, that it will not fail them till they come to the land of uprightness!

6. *They are guaranteed deliverance and final victory.* The children of God are taught to pray, "Deliver us from evil." For them their Advocate on high constantly pleads, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."* The deliverance which believers need is from the powers of evil—devils and men—and from evil within and around them. They need to be rescued from the Evil One—from the curse of God's violated law, from condemnation, and from the power and pollution of sin in their own hearts. They are exposed to moral evils, manifold and potent, with which they are surrounded. The place of their sojourning is "this present evil world," from which they constantly need deliverance. It is evil in its character and spirit—in its customs and laws—in its aim and standard. The children of God are but strangers and pilgrims here, as in a foreign land; and they must overcome the world by faith, if they would obtain the heavenly inheritance. They are, moreover,

* John xvii. 15.

exposed to physical evils of various kinds—sickness, poverty, affliction—“the numerous ills that flesh is heir to.” At times, they are tried with strong temptation, and are called to tribulation and suffering for the truth’s sake. When evil around them is felt to be connected with sin within them, then they experience its power and malignity, and are taught the greatness and value of deliverance. The love of the Father has provided full and final deliverance for every one of His adopted children, and in due time it shall be theirs in sure possession. He is able and willing to deliver them. In and through Christ, He ransoms them from sin and the power of the destroyer. The Head of the covenant delivers them from all evil. Present afflictions and trials are over-ruled, and made the means of spiritual good. Enemies are conquered, and are powerless to harm. Death, the culminating point of evil, is unstinged, and its power destroyed, and to the believer it is gain. All that to them is really evil, was borne by the Surety; and when He was delivered for their offences, He rescued them from it all. The deliverance through Christ becomes theirs, as they are called to the conflict with evil. They have painful experience of temptation and indwelling.

sin; and they are beset with enemies and assailed with fears of being overcome of evil. But when they come in actual contact with what they dread, they are delivered. They are even now “conquerors and more than conquerors.” * Through their living Head, final and perfect victory is secured to them in joyful prospect. The “Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom.” †

7. They are made *heirs of an everlasting inheritance*. True sonship is always, in the Scripture sense, connected with heirship. To Abraham, God said concerning His servant and steward—“This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.” ‡ Our adoption into the family of God secures to us, beyond the possibility of alienation, a glorious inheritance. “If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” § These words, put in the original in the way of special emphasis, declare in the most expressive manner, the right, the certainty, and inalienable character of the possession. Being sons of God they are “heirs of the promise,”—of “the grace of life,”—of

* Romans viii. 37. † 2 Tim. iv. 18. ‡ Gen. xv. 4.
§ Romans viii. 17.

“salvation,” of a glorious “kingdom.” “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* The argument of faith is unassailable and conclusive—“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” †

This inheritance of the saints comprehends all possible good, and its possession ensures the highest felicity. Beyond the enjoyment of purchased spiritual blessings and of temporal benefits secured in the covenant—above all created good, God Himself, in His perfections and infinite fulness, is its blessed object. “*If sons, then heirs of God.*” Who can conceive the amount of enjoyment in such an inheritance! All that God is, all that He has, all that He has done and will do, the believer may claim, and it is amply secured to him. Nothing can be wanting that is needed to perfect His character and to fill up the measure of his happiness. Not only are the saints, through their sonship, heirs of God—they are at the same time “co-heirs with Christ.” They partake of the good of which Christ Himself is the recipient. Whatever joy and blessedness the Son has in common with

* Galatians iii. 29.

† Galatians iv. 7.

the Father, and the glory with which He is glorified, they shall share with Him for ever. At death they enter into the joy of their Lord. They sit with Him on His throne, “as He has overcome, and is set down with His Father on His throne.”* They are with Him where He is, beholding and partaking of His glory. This inheritance, inseparable from sonship, is partly possessed here, but its full enjoyment is reserved for heaven. Believers, while on earth, like heirs in their minority, have their estate in reversion. It is declared—mapped out in the promise; the title is secured in the purchase of Christ; meetness for its full possession is now given; and at times the children of God, by the Spirit, obtain the pledge and earnest of the heavenly inheritance. By the resurrection of Christ, the adopted are begotten unto a *living hope*, of which the glorious object is “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”† In contrast with the richest and most desirable possessions of earth, which are decaying, defiled, and perishing, the heavenly inheritance is susceptible of no change, and is of stainless life and glory for ever. “In substance, it is *incorruptible—in purity, undefiled*

* Rev. iii. 21.

† 1 Peter i. 4.

—in *beauty, unfading.*”* The future portion of believers is “the inheritance of the saints *in light,*”† for which the Father has “meetened” them. The light of perfect knowledge fills the intellect, the beauty of holiness is thrown around them; the lustre of the Divine image is reflected from their perfect character, and the material glory of the heavenly dwelling is only surpassed by its spiritual splendour. This light of the saints’ future inheritance is liable to no interruption or diminution. The Lord God and the Lamb are the light of the heavenly temple. “The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” ‡ The moral fitness for possessing this glorious inheritance is wholly the work of the Father. All that qualifies his children for their patrimony is from Him alone. By the pardon which He bestows, He confers the title: by the new nature which He imparts, He assimilates them to the state of bliss. He purifies them by His Spirit, enlightens and nourishes them by His truth, and animates them by a living hope. The whole preparation of the saints for heaven is thus a paternal process, as its boundless and endless felicity will be the full fruition of their covenant God Himself in all His ineffable bles-

* Alford. † Col. i. 12. ‡ Isaiah lx. 19, 20.

sedness. In the contemplation of these excellent and wondrous privileges, how should the children of God exult in their Portion! How should they live separate from the world, and overcome it by faith! How should they cherish, in every condition, and at all times, an humble, contented, confiding, and joyful spirit! Above all, as begotten to the heavenly inheritance, they should attest their growth in holiness, and the vigour of their spiritual affections, by giving utterance to the deepest emotions of their hearts, in thanks to the Father. This will be the clearest evidence that the meetness conferred is ripening to perfect enjoyment. When it shall have been fully attained, the consciousness that it has been reached through the amazing grace of their Father, and that the blissful inheritance is theirs for ever, will excite the most fervent thanksgiving and praise. No tongue will then be any more silent; the harps of glory will never be unstrung. No note of sadness or sorrow will mar the hallelujahs of the saints in glory. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."*

* Isaiah xxxv. 10.

CHAPTER X.

The Government and Discipline of the Family.

Matthew ii. 6.—“Out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.” Hebrews xii. 6, 7. —“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”

In human relations, the father is the head of the household. The character of the family as well as its future fortunes, depends greatly on the order established therein, the government exercised and the discipline applied to restrain and correct evil. A wise, firm, considerate paternal rule displayed in thoughtful and impartial discipline, has been universally acknowledged to be of the highest advantage to children. When these rise up to eminent usefulness, and families become a blessing in the land, these results are very generally ascribed to faithful parental rule; and on the other hand, when domestic government is neglected or badly administered, children can

only be expected to be froward and rebellious, useless to themselves and sources of pollution to others.

1. The Divine Government is seen in its most impressive and attractive aspect in the *household of faith*. It is that of a father over the children he intensely loves, and for whose welfare and usefulness he is constantly and tenderly concerned. This government is transcendently excellent, and is, indeed, the perfect model of all right rule in human relations. The Family and the State, which are both divine institutions and moral subjects, are to be ordered and governed on the unalterable principles and according to the eternal laws of God's government; and it is only as the heads of either seek to conform their spirit and conduct to the order of the Supreme Governor that they meet His approval and obtain His blessing. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." * Our heavenly Father, in the government of His people, first subdues them to Himself, and then sets up His throne in their hearts. They are the prey rescued from the mighty, the spoil taken from the strong man armed. In the day of their effectual calling,

* Isaiah ii. 3.

the weapons of their rebellion are taken from their hands, and willingly cast down at the feet of the Almighty Conqueror. By the word sent out of Zion, as the rod of His strength and the sceptre of a Prince, He rules amid His enemies, and a "willing people come to Him in the day of His power." *

2. The rule over the family of God is *delegated to the Mediator of the Covenant*. This is a chief of His prerogatives as the First-born among many brethren. In the ancient typical economy, the right of primogeniture carried with it lordship or dominion over the house of the father. The first-born was king and priest of the household. To him belonged a double portion of the goods of the father's house, and his was likewise, in an eminent degree, the paternal blessing. Nothing can more attractively display the exercise and privilege of the Divine government over the saints than that of its being in the hands of the Elder Brother. He that loved and chose them from eternity; He that died to redeem them; He that hath begotten them by the power of His resurrection, and that espoused them to Himself as their heavenly Husband, rules in and over them. "*The government shall*

* Psalm cx. 2, 3.

be upon His shoulder."* He reigns in Jacob, and to the ends of the earth gloriously. "The daughters of Zion go forth with joy to behold him adorned "with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart."†

3. The government of the saints is *internal and over all that concerns them*. The kingdom of God is *within* them. ‡ The Redeemer sets up His throne in their hearts, and He carries on His princely rule by bringing their whole mental and moral nature into willing subjection to His sovereign authority. The "haughtiness of man is brought down, and the loftiness of man is laid low, and the Lord alone is exalted." § The dominion of Christ in His saints is *spiritual* in its *origin, ends, and administration*, and in the *principles* on which it is conducted. He reigns in the souls of His saved people; and it is by the indwelling and agency of His Spirit that He conducts His government in and over them. The legitimate instruments of His rule, too—the *word*, the *cross*, the *example of Christ*, are all spiritual. Hence is their power to control, purify, and elevate the moral nature, and to govern the whole man. "The weapons of our

* Isaiah ix. 6. † Song iii. 11. ‡ Luke xvii. 21.
§ Isaiah ii. 17.

warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." * "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." † The King of saints reigns within His people, by putting "His laws into their mind and writing them in their hearts." ‡ Their understandings are first enlightened, and their affections are then drawn. He is revealed to their hearts as their Covenant God, and they yield themselves to Him as His willing people. This gracious government operates to bring all into subjection to Messiah the Prince ; and is the source of all that is holy and excellent in the renewed character, and of all that is pure, and of good report in the life. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink ; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." § Though the seat of the Saviour's dominion in His saints is chiefly the inner man, it extends to all the external relations,—to all that concerns their life, safety, support, comfort, and happiness. He that reigns in their hearts is, at the same time, Ruler over all. He is "Head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." || In conducting

* 2 Cor. x. 4. † Zech. iv. 6. ‡ Heb. viii. 10.
 § Rom. xiv. 17. || Ephes. i. 22.

His government over His redeemed church and over every individual member thereof, the Mediator controls and brings down all their enemies, employs all elements and agencies to promote the good of His people, furnishes a suitable and seasonable supply for all their wants, and orders everything for the advancement of His own glory. His kingdom in nature and providence is the disclosure of His glorious purposes, and is subsidiary to His gracious dominion in the hearts of the saints. Their abundant comfort is, that the Father who loves them is supreme in heaven and earth; and that the Captain of Salvation who will "bring many sons unto glory," has all authority and power delegated to Him, as all fulness dwells in Him, that He may uphold and protect them, supply all their wants, of whatever kind, and, at length, confer upon them the crown of everlasting salvation. How full of comfort and blessed hope to a believer is the thought that he is ever under the Divine fatherly government: that the same Almighty power which rules in his heart, transforming into the likeness of God his whole moral nature, controls all hostile influences, provides for all his possible necessities; and that over death and the invisible world his Lord and

Saviour has absolute dominion, as He will reign for his benefit throughout eternal ages!

4. The government of the family of God is distinguished by *excellent properties*, the consideration of which is fitted to minister support and strong consolation to the saints. It is *sovereign*, carrying into accomplishment always the good pleasure of the Father. Clouds and darkness at times surround His throne, and His way is in the mighty waters; yet as Prince supreme, the blessed and only Potentate, He orders every event and conducts the whole administration. When we are unable to unfold His wondrous purposes, it behoves us to adore the depths of sovereign wisdom and grace. "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" * It is *gracious and loving*. In the covenant of grace, from all eternity, the plan of the Mediatorial rule over the saints was settled. The Redeemer, who, by His blood shed as "a ransom for many," has obtained the sole right of dominion, performs all gracious acts in His princely rule; and the blessed Spirit, in applying redemption, begins, carries on, and completes the reign of grace in

* Romans xi. 33.

the hearts of the heirs of salvation. The "hands of Zerubbabel laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and He will bring forth the headstone with shoutings, crying Grace, grace, unto it."* "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." † The government of God over His adopted family is that of the most loving father over the children who bear His image, and with whom are the rest and delight of His heart.

5. This rule over the saints is conducted *to the best ends, and is efficient of the most beneficent results.* That God in all things may be glorified, was the grand purpose for which the Mediatorial government was planned and established. This is effectually secured in every stage of its progress. The glory of God's wisdom, justice, holiness, power, and truth, is illustriously displayed in all that the enthroned Redeemer has done and will do, while He rules in heaven and among earth's inhabitants. The glory of the Almighty Lord shall continue for ever and shall fill the whole earth; and when the reign of the Mediator shall pass into the everlasting kingdom in heaven, He will come "to

* Zech. iv. 6, 7.

† Romans v. 21.

be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe.”* A dominion thus powerful and glorious cannot but be productive of the highest good to its subjects. Its grand aim is “good will to men.” Divine benevolence dictates all the acts of administration; and ceaseless beneficence characterizes all its proceedings. “All things”—both good and evil—hostile and friendly—work, and ever must “work for good to them who love God and are the called according to His purpose.”† The *end* of this gracious government is blessed beyond all conception. It is salvation complete and eternal—pleasure without alloy or diminution—bliss unspeakable and eternal. “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” “Oh! how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee! which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!” ‡

* 2 Thessalonians i. 10.

† Romans viii. 28.

‡ Jer. xxix. 11; Ps. xxxi. 19.

II.—DISCIPLINE OF THE FAMILY.

Discipline, which has been termed “the practical application of government,” is instruction by means of correction and chastisement. The words in the sacred originals for *instruction* and *chastisement*, are either identical or closely related, indicating that correction is for the purpose of training or teaching in relation to duty and to the course of life and conduct. The government of the Father over His family is throughout conducted with the design, not only of preserving them from dangers and rescuing them from evils to which they are exposed, but, likewise, of subduing corruptions in their hearts and of perfecting them in holiness. In human relations, the discipline of the household is an important and indispensable part of moral training. When it is conducted with wisdom and firmness, and tempered with love and tenderness, it tends powerfully to the formation of an upright character, and is ever found connected with future usefulness. “Chasten thy son, while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” * “Correct thy son, and

* Proverbs xix. 18.

he shall give thee rest ; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." † The chastisements of the children of God are among their most precious privileges, and are special tokens of the Father's love toward them. " Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." ‡ This is a fundamental law of the government of the house of God. The love of adoption is the cause of chastening, and this is its certain effect. Divine love and chastening are inseparable. " Whomsoever the Lord loveth, He chasteneth." None are exempted. Divine instructive chastisement extends to all the family. Hence there is nothing of a penal nature found in the chastisements of believers. While the corrections administered by the Father are applied to them as being sinful, the end of them is to mortify sin that dwells within them, and to make them increase in grace and holiness. Unlike the punishments of the wicked which are inflicted with a regard to justice, Divine chastisements are appointed to the saints in love to their persons : and in the way in which they are sent and the salutary fruits which they yield, they furnish the most conspicuous proof of paternal love.

* Proverbs xxix. 17.

† Heb. xii. 6.

This paternal discipline of the children of God is, 1. *Through the Word and the institutions of the Church.* The Scriptures, divinely inspired, are profitable for “reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” * Much of the Bible is given expressly to exhibit the evil of transgression and to rebuke the transgressor. The ministers of Christ are sent to be reprovers; and this is a special part of their office, the due discharge of which is the test of their fidelity. The mission of the Comforter is to “reprove the world of sin,” and wherever His saving power is experienced, He works by and with the word to “convince of sin,” † chastise wandering and folly, and to bring to loving obedience. Conversion to God is turning at the call and reproof of heavenly wisdom,—“Turn ye at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you.” ‡ Equally with the word, *the institutions of the Church* are designed to instruct by correction and chastisement. The ordinances of discipline are the provision of ecclesiastical government for the preventing, correcting, and removing of offences that corrupt the fellowship of the church and

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

† In the original, the word rather means to convict.

‡ Prov. i. 23.

mar her efficiency. While they are designed to promote the Church's purity, and thus to advance her real prosperity, to the children of God, they are the means of special grace. In the separation of the precious from the vile, and the correction of evil in themselves through the discipline of the house of God, believers behold with admiration the authority of Zion's king, and rejoice in the purity and beauty of the church. "His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor." "This is the law of the house. Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold this is the law of the house." *

2. *Afflictions of diversified kinds* are to the children of God *disciplinary* and *medicinal*. Trouble of whatever kind—affliction of body, trials in the estate and relations in life, temptations and public trials—are not penal and wrathful, but disciplinary, and designed to "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." They are the common lot of the family of God and a part of their designed preparation for future glory. Viewed as sent by the Father to the children of His love, they are fraught with comfort and blessing. "He doth not

* Mat. iii. 12; Ezek. xliii. 12.

afflict willingly the children of men." Not for the sake of punishment, or as having delight in the pain and sorrow of His people, does the Lord visit their sins with rods and their iniquities with chastisements; but He does this to cure their follies, to heal their backslidings, draw them near to Himself, and render them partakers of His holiness. Concerning a wayward child, He says, in the tenderest compassion and yearning sympathy, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." *

3. These disciplinary chastisements of believers have *distinctive properties*. They are *necessary*. So it is frequently declared in the word. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Through manifold tribulation we must inherit the kingdom." The children of God, who are kept by Divine power for the inheritance reserved for them in heaven, are now, "for a season, if need be, in heaviness through manifold tribulation." That the evil of former sins may be felt, that corruptions may be subdued, that they may be wooed to the path

* Jer. xxxi. 20.

of duty, and that their nature may be transformed after the image of Christ, it is needful that they should pass under the rod of chastisement, and drink of the cup of affliction. They are in *covenant-love*. The sufferings of the Head were in God's everlasting purpose inseparably connected with the afflictions of the members, and both were designed preparations for the blissful reward. As the Captain of salvation was made "perfect through sufferings to bring many sons unto glory," so the perfection in bliss of these children is effected by their loving fellowship with Him in sufferings, and in being made conformable to His death. Thus the mercy of the Father is ever kept to the Mediator and for those whom He died to save; and His covenant stands fast with Him for evermore. The chastisements of the saints are from *the hand* of their *compassionate Elder Brother*. Well has it been said, that "the hands that were nailed to the Cross never can do an untender thing." The hand of the Redeemer, while it chastises, at the same time sustains and upholds. "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." * He sets limits to the chastisements of His saints, and makes at all times a

* Song ii. 6.

marked distinction between them and the punishments of the wicked. Even when, for the iniquity of their covetousness, He smites them, He says "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth, for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. I have seen his ways and will heal him. I will lead him also and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." * At the time when the vials of judgment are poured out upon the nations, the saints are hidden in the chambers of the covenant. Jacob is in rest and quiet, and raised above the fear of man. "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee, though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." † In *infinite wisdom and compassionate tenderness*, the Redeemer corrects His own. Like Joseph in Egypt, when dealing with his brethren, at times He "makes Himself strange to them," and "speaks harshly to them," not because He delights in their distress, but that He may bring them to repentance and prepare them to receive blessings from His hand. His bowels yearn over

* Isaiah lvii. 16, 18.

† Jer. xxx. 11.

them in all their trials, in every pang that His hand inflicts, and His language in every affliction is, "Come near to me, I am Jesus, your Brother." He that smites heals them, and the wounds that His chastising rod inflicts He tenderly upbinds. With the meek resignation of the aged father of Richard Cameron, when the head and hands of his martyred son were thrown to him in the prison, may the afflicted believer say of the Saviour in all afflictive trials, however sharp, "*I bless the Lord who can never wrong me nor mine.*"

4. The discipline of the Covenant is productive of *precious fruits* to the children of God. It is ordered in sovereign wisdom, and the means employed are the best to effect the appointed end, and can never fail to conduct to a right and salutary issue. Fatherly chastisements are under the agency of the blessed Spirit, and He uses them for the purpose of renewing the moral nature and promoting the spiritual good of the saints, "He, for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." * The afflictions of believers, in the hand of the Spirit, work for the mortification of sin in their members, and for the exercise and increase of holy graces. Their faith is

* Hebrews xii. 10.

tested and strengthened by trial; their love is drawn forth and invigorated; and their hope is animated as it sees through the dark cloud the rainbow of promise. They learn to rejoice in tribulation. Especially are the *suffering graces*—meekness, resignation, patience, and fortitude, without which a holy character would be defective, called into exercise and displayed in mellow and attractive lustre. “Not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.” * The results of paternal chastisement are every way beneficial to the saints both in relation to their present state and future blissful prospects. Though not for the time “joyous, but grievous,” they yield afterwards the “peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” † When the correction is patiently endured, the harvest of precious fruits—patience, submission to the Divine will, weanedness from the world, purity of heart, heavenly-mindedness—is reaped. “The work of righteousness shall be peace.” The fruit yielded by sanctified affliction is *peaceable*, as it is the evidence and pledge of our peace with God, and as it increases internal

* Romans v. 3, 4, 5.

† Heb. xii. 11.

peace, so that we possess our souls in patience, and as it disposes and enables us to live peaceably with our fellow-men. *

Divine chastisements to the children of God serve wonderfully to show the *fulness of the promise*, and to make its sweetness to be felt. "In faithfulness," the Father afflicts, and when His people are brought under the rod of chastisement, He is ever wont to give them the fullest proofs that His words of promise are "all faithful."† It has been justly said that "Affliction is the only blessing that the Lord gives, without requiring us to ask for it."‡ Yet when it comes, we receive in the fulfilment of precious promises "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The *sympathy and gracious presence* of the Redeemer are guaranteed to His people in their affliction, and form a chief part of the benefit which they realize under it. Long before His manifestation in the flesh, it was declared of Him, "In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them : in his love and his pity, He redeemed them ; and He bare them, and carried

* A servant of God who had been exercised with varied afflictions, bore this testimony, "That his joyfullest days were his mourning days."

† Ps. cxix. 75.

‡ Bridges on Psalm cxix., p. 186.

them, all the days of old.”* He can be “touched with a fellow-feeling of their infirmity, for He was in all points tempted or tried as they are, yet without sin.”† Having borne their sorrows, and endured their griefs, that He might unsting them, He knows them by the experience of their weight and bitterness, and He can thus regard their afflictions with the most cordial sympathy. When they pass through the waters of trouble, He is with them; and when floods rise high and threaten to overwhelm them, He limits and assuages their fury, and leads His people through them in safety to the haven of peaceful rest. The “royal road” of affliction is the patent way to the heavenly kingdom. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory.”‡ Believers “for a season are in heaviness through manifold temptation,” and there is a necessity for this—that “the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”§ The path of affliction is that by which all the sons of God have passed to the heavenly inheritance. The Only-begotten suffered and entered into

* Isaiah lxiii. 9. † Hebrews iv. 15. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.
§ 1 Peter i. 7.

His glory, and those who are “joint-heirs with Him” are, “through manifold tribulation,” to inherit the kingdom. The afflictive trials to which they are subjected form their disciplinary training for the glory to be revealed. Their endurance here will greatly enhance their future bliss. This will be to them rest after trouble and wandering, fulness of joy after manifold sorrows, and the rewards of victory after powerful and protracted conflict.

Reviewing the whole course of disciplinary instruction and paternal training of the family of God, well may each child of the household declare, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”* The correction was appointed in the transcendant grace and love of the “counsel of peace.” It is from Him who is goodness itself, and who is ever doing good. The hand that chastises is loving and tender, and the issues, whether here or in the world to come, are joyous and good. So have all the tried servants of God found the afflictions which are allotted to them by their heavenly Father. They have all been divested of the curse, and been sent to them as healing medicine. They have been a rod expounding the word, and sealing precious promises; and thus has the Divine

* Psalm cxix. 71.

Teacher effectually applied both. *Samuel Rutherford* speaks of his enforced silence and imprisonment at Aberdeen as “his Patmos,” in which “the Lord daily feasted His poor prisoner,” and he declared that his *six months’ imprisonment*—“the hammer and file” of his sweet Lord—was of more spiritual benefit to him than *nine years of his painful ministry*.* *Luther* styles affliction “the *Theology of Christians*” (*Theologia Christianorum*), and says of himself, “I never knew the meaning of God’s word until I came into affliction. I have always found it one of my best schoolmasters.” And the excellent *Andrew Rivet*, who passed through much afflictive trial, says towards the close of his course—making confession to God, “I have learned more divinity in these ten days, that Thou art come to visit me, than I did in fifty years before. Thou hast brought me to Thyself. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, and was in the world; but now I am conversant

* “If all the sad losses, trials, sicknesses, infirmities, griefs, heaviness, and inconstancy of the creature be expounded to be, as I am sure they are, the rods of the jealousy of a Father in heaven, contending with all your lovers on earth, though there were millions of them, for your love, to fetch it home to heaven, single, unmixed, you will forgive (if we may use that word) every rod of God; and ‘let not the sun go down upon your wrath’ against any messenger of your afflicting and correcting Father.”—*Rutherford’s Letters*.

in the school of my God. He teacheth me after another manner than all those doctors, in reading whom I spent so much time." Heaven to redeemed saints will be bright and glorious by contrast with the wilderness through which they passed to the land of promise, and their endless felicity will be enhanced by the remembrance of the afflictions which they endured on their way to its enjoyment.* "Everlasting joy" settles on their heads, as a diadem of beauty, when "sorrow and sighing have fled away." "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are those which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."†

* See Bridges on Psalm cxix. page 173.

† Isaiah xxxv. 10 ; Revelation vii. 13, 14.

CHAPTER XI.

Want of Evidence of our Sonship— Spiritual Conflicts.

Isaiah l. 10—“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” Psalm xlii. 11—“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

Notwithstanding the love of the Father toward the children of God, and the innumerable benefits which He confers upon them, they are at times in trouble and perplexity of spirit. Besides the afflictions of this present life, which they have in common with others—the members of a fallen race—they have distress of spirit, which is peculiar and often poignant, arising from want of light respecting their sonship, and the doubts, fears, and conflicts which in consequence disturb their peace and agitate their hearts. They are “Children of light

walking in darkness.”* Such a spiritual condition is not unfrequently the lot of true servants of God. Though the faith that is saving always has in it a measure of assurance, yet this rather respects the objects believed and trusted in than the state and character of the person who believes, or his final salvation. To doubt of the truth of the word of promise, or the love and faithfulness of God in giving it, or the ability and willingness of Christ to save, is unbelief, as it is the rejection of the testimony that God has given of His Son. But doubting concerning our own personal piety and salvation is consistent with true religion and progress in sanctification. It arises from calling in question or rejecting the evidence which is furnished by our minds respecting ourselves—an evidence which is at the best imperfect. Such doubting is, at times, not only reasonable, but profitable, as it may bring a person to serious self-trial—produce penitence and godly sorrow for sin, and lead to seek a larger measure of grace. The expostulation with Peter, when he began to sink in the water, as he withdrew his single, steadfast look from

* The title of an excellent treatise of Dr Thomas Goodwin—one of the most prolific and ablest writers of the Puritan Divines—is “A Child of Light walking in Darkness.” See Goodwin’s Works, vol. iii., p. 321—349.

Jesus, "Wherefore didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith," plainly implied that he had faith, and that whatever were his doubts concerning himself, his immediate and constant duty was to trust in the Saviour for all support, deliverance, and blessing.

The children of God are brought into darkness, and go mourning and in heaviness, when the evidences of their union to Christ and sonship are obscured. In such a case, in their apprehension, they have not the character and marks of God's children. Clouds and darkness surround God's throne. He hides His face from them, and they are troubled. Their prayer appears to be shut out in His wrath, and He rebukes them in his hot displeasure. Their manifold transgressions testify against them, and their secret sins God sets in the brightness of His face. In such a forsaken condition, they refuse all consolation. They write bitter things against themselves. Divine promises, however pointed and gracious, are not for them. The threatenings of the Word against the unbelieving and impenitent, against formalists and hypocrites, fill them with terror. They go mourning all the day, they lie down in sorrow; and if they are kept from utter despair, they are without comfort, and hindered in all spirit-

ual duties ; and their work of glorifying God, and of usefulness to others, is greatly retarded.

The inquiry whether the withdrawal of God's countenance from His children is sometimes in sovereignty, or is always in consequence of their sin, need not be discussed at length. It is the sentiment of *Dr Wardlaw* and others that such a dispensation is always to be ascribed to the sin—neglect of duty, and careless and unfruitful walk—of the believer, and never simply to an act of Divine sovereignty. While it may be freely admitted that the provocations of God's people most generally serve to deprive them of the light of their Father's countenance, yet is it not inconsistent with His covenant character and love that, in gracious sovereignty, He may at times permit His people to walk in darkness. Like as an earthly father hides his face from the child of his affections, to try whether he has a chief place in his heart, so God may withhold from His children special tokens of His love, to excite them to greater diligence and tenderness in the walk of holy obedience. The fact of God's servants being at times in darkness and distress from want of clear evidence of their sonship, and from apprehension of the Divine displeasure against them, is attested by the case of distinguished saints recorded in the

Bible. It is found in the experience of serious and devoted Christians in our own day; and it presents one of the most difficult and painful cases with which faithful pastors have to deal. In briefly considering it, and offering some directions respecting it, we shall notice—First, some CAUSES of felt desertion and distress of God's children. These are diversified, according to the peculiar temperament, habits, temptations, and conditions in life of God's people.

First, *Bodily organization and temperament* not unfrequently affect the mind, either in the way of exciting lively frames and pleasurable emotions, or of depressing the spirits, and bringing into mental distress and despondency. A state of vigorous and sustained health is often connected with a cheerful spirit and lively hopes; and when this is enjoyed by those who are subjects of grace, they not unfrequently realize tranquillity of mind, undisturbed by the fears and great depression of spirit that afflict others. On the other hand, an imperfect bodily organization—a morbid state of the animal functions, and the weakness or pain of disease, tend to repress the lively actings of the mind—to cause internal darkness and distress, and to induce a sense of desertion, and forebodings of evil. The cases of such servants of

God as *Brainerd* and the poet *Cowper*, brought at times into the deepest spiritual distress and despondency, may be ascribed in part—whatever other causes were in operation—to constitutional temperament. In *Brainerd's* case, there seems to be little doubt that his frequent depressions and spiritual distress were intensified by a criminal neglect of the state of the body, while he was engaged in exhausting work as a missionary. In distress connected with temperament and constitutional tendency, a first duty is to consult for the recovery and preservation of health. The organ through which the mind acts, should, in due dependence on the Author of life, be kept in tune. The mind should never be suffered to brood upon bodily maladies, as the tendency of this is to produce or intensify the evils which we deplore or would avoid, and to unfit the mind for spiritual exercises. “*A sound mind in a sound body,*”* which the heathen poet speaks of as a blessing from the gods, is, in a higher Christian sense of the phrase, intimately connected with the comfortable enjoyment of spiritual privilege, and is an attainment to be sought after, if we would be preserved from spiritual darkness and disbelieving fears.

* “*Mens sana in corpore sano.*”

2. *Erroneous and defective views of Divine truth* often cause darkness, and lead to spiritual distress. The Spirit that guides the sons of God is the Spirit of light and truth. Never does He work savingly through ignorance or error; and the comfort and joy of salvation are not realized where false and mistaken views are entertained in relation either to objective truths or to subjective religion. Some persons lay undue stress on internal frames and feelings, instead of relying wholly on Christ's finished work for pardon and acceptance. Even true Christians, through indistinct views of the economy of grace, are liable to be elevated by unscriptural views and delusory attainments; and, when these fail them, to be unduly perplexed and fearful. The remains of "a legal hope" are found even in advanced Christians. It is exceedingly common to place dependence for peace and comfort rather on the Spirit's work *within*, than on Christ's work *without* us. Imperfect and erroneous views concerning the covenant of grace—the perfection of the atonement of Christ, and the fulness, freeness, and unchangeable character of the purchased salvation, tend to mar spiritual comfort, to excite unworthy thoughts of God, and to generate fear and bondage of spirit. Christ's

words are spoken to us that our “joy may be full.” Clear and enlarged views of the covenant of peace, and of Christ’s person and work, and constant recourse to Him as “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” will free from slavish fear, and fill with joy and peace in believing. Correct spiritual knowledge of revealed truth is essential to Christian liberty and spiritual joy. “Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on Him, If you continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

3. The *power of indwelling sin* causes darkness and perplexity. Sin remains in the regenerate; and while it continues unmortified, its constant tendency is to exclude peace of mind, to darken the evidences of sonship, and to excite doubt and despondency. The “lusts of the flesh war against the soul.” The “law in the members” opposes “the law of the mind,” and brings it “into captivity to the law of sin,” so that even the child of God is forced to exclaim, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”† The corruptions of the heart, manifesting themselves in vain thoughts and sinful imaginations—in evil passions and unmortified tempers

* John viii. 31, 32.

† Romans vii. 23, 24.

—in pride, envy and discontent—in evil-speaking—in yielding to temptation—in indolence and a worldly spirit—are utterly opposed to communion with God and to progressive sanctification. When any of these things prevail, internal peace and comfort are marred; and the soul is liable to be plunged into distress and perplexity. The felt power of indwelling sin, and the reflection that it has constantly adhered to all our mental acts, and polluted our best services, will often lead to unfavourable conclusions respecting our sonship, and excite painful misgivings, and distrust of the Divine favour. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that we cannot do the things that we would.”* An indolent Christian, and one that indulges an unmortified temper and a worldly spirit, and that does not watch against envy and evil speaking, may expect to be often left to walk in darkness. It is only in holy activity and in mortifying such deeds of the body, that we walk in the light of the Father’s countenance, and that we are enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

* Galatians v. 16, 17.

4. The *agency of Satan* is a principal cause of the doubts and fears with which the children of God are beset; and it is only by resisting the devil, and by constant watchfulness and prayer against his temptations, that we can hope for deliverance. It behoves us not to be ignorant of “his *devices*.” He is Satan—the grand *adversary* of God and the saints. He is the cunning *serpent* to deceive and beguile, and a *roaring lion*, going about seeking to devour. He is the constant *accuser of the brethren* to God, and to their own consciences; and frequently does he succeed, if not to bring them into despair, at least to diminish their comfort, and to retard their progress in holiness. In various ways, the Evil One seeks and obtains advantage over the children of God, in their present imperfect state of sanctification. He knows their weak side, their natural temperament and besetting sins; and he lays hold of internal corruptions as favourable positions on which to plant his most potent temptations. If at any time vain and self-confident, the children of God are exposed to Satan’s assaults. Thus, by painful experience, they are taught lessons of humility and modesty. Their physical condition and outward circumstances are made by the Tempter a ground of attack. The weak

and hypochondriacal are tempted to doubt of their safety. Outward losses and afflictions are construed as tokens of God's displeasure against them. Satan's malignant influence is not unfrequently mingled with the natural sorrow of the mourner. The fever and bodily weakness that unhinge or prostrate the mind are taken advantage of by the Wicked One, to assail the child of God, and even in the feebleness of death, he may not be exempted from the onset of the Destroyer. The varied workings of inward corruption, with the sense of personal demerit and shame, and the joy of spiritual privileges, are taken by the enemy as occasions of powerful temptations. He strives to harden the heart, and sear the conscience, so as to lead a person to make light of sin. Again, he transforms himself "into an angel of light;" administers opiates to lull the soul into false security, or to withdraw from entire trust in the grace that bringeth salvation. And if he fails in blinding the mind and hardening the heart, he will present, in dark array, former sins, representing them as great and aggravated beyond the power of grace to pardon; and thus leading to the dismal apprehension of total rejection from God, and of endless woe.

From whatever causes the darkness and

fears of God's children may arise, being under Divine control, there can be no doubt that they are made to subserve His purposes of wisdom and love. Thus those who fall into sin are reprov'd and punished; they are drawn off from carnal confidences; they attain to deeper humility. God's power and faithfulness are the more exhibited as the only sure ground of trust; faith and other graces are thereby tried and strengthened; believers are stirred up to pray more earnestly, to prize more the light of God's countenance, and to cherish a deeper sympathy with those who have been called to like trials; and thus to be more eminently useful. And when they have passed through the depths of internal trouble, and have been delivered from their fears and distresses, they will see more brightly the glory of the Saviour's power and grace in working their deliverance; and with fuller notes of joyful praise will they commemorate His wondrous goodness; and their happiness will be enhanced for ever through the vivid contrast with former distress and misery.

The DUTY of such as walk in darkness, and have not a comfortable persuasion of their sonship, may be exhibited in a few plain, practical directions. To restore effectual spiritual com-

fort to those who go mourning is the province of the blessed Spirit—the promised Comforter; and without His presence and agency, all human instrumentality will be vain and unprofitable. Notwithstanding, some practical hints may be given, which, through His blessing, may serve to relieve internal distress, and to bring into the heart the joys of salvation.

First, *The causes of spiritual distress should be diligently searched out.* Our first duty is to examine ourselves respecting our spiritual state and frame—to “search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord.” In general, it will be found that our own corruptions have obscured our evidences and caused the withdrawal of the light of the Father’s countenance. Our carnality of mind, yielding to temptation, want of watchfulness, pride, unbelief, and unfruitfulness, are main causes of our desertion and spiritual distress. By carefully searching these out, we may become humbled because of them; and by the mortification of inward corruptions we may be delivered from the bondage that leads again to fear, and may be brought to go on our way rejoicing.

Secondly, *A simple, childlike embracing, and trust in the promise of the Covenant* is a relief from spiritual darkness. Those who fear the

Lord have as their main duty to “obey the voice of His Servant.” To “the upright” God assures us, “there ariseth light in darkness.” The promises of the covenant are not yea and nay, but are absolute and unconditional. Our first duty is to embrace and rest upon them, confiding in the grace and faithfulness of God who gave them to fulfil them. Though the desponding Christian is prone to put away from him the comfort of the promise, under the plea that the blessing offered is only for the regenerate and for such as walk in holy obedience, and not for one so froward and unsanctified as he is, yet reliance on the promise is a commanded duty, and we have the fullest warrant to believe God’s word. It comes to us, not on the footing of any worthiness on our part, but wholly through the merit of Christ’s perfect work ; and all our salvation is of free grace. We are certainly welcome, coming to Christ, to appropriate the promise, however sinful and unworthy in ourselves, and to claim all the blessing which it offers. Even where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds. God is honoured by our trusting Him, even when we cannot see Him ; and He takes to Himself a revenue of glory by conferring upon His erring rebellious children the benefits held forth in His largest,

fullest promises. “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Spirit’s graces and their exercises are matters of assured promise; and we should come to God and plead the fulfilment of His faithful word, that we may experience their operation. The promises of the Covenant of grace were made from eternity to Christ the Head, and they flow through Him to the elect as His seed. “All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”* Assured trust in the promise is an eminent way of deliverance from internal trouble and distress, and of upholding the soul in confidence on the Rock of salvation.

Thirdly, *Active devoted obedience* often leads to peace and spiritual comfort. In doing the will of God, it is promised that we “shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.”† “What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall He teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease.”‡ Active child-like obedience serves to banish doubts and exclude fears, by concentrating the thoughts upon the character and claims of Christ, the Best

* 2 Corinthians i. 20.

† John vii. 17.

‡ Psalm xxv. 12.

of masters, and upon one's permanent obligations to love and honour Him. Delight is experienced in doing the Father's will, and the sense of gracious support and acceptance is a present and great reward. The best way to rise above disquieting doubts and fears is often to turn away from pondering evidences, and to betake one's-self to active service. Engagement of the heart and spirit in God's work will elevate the mind and impart joy and peace in believing. "Those that honour God will He honour,"* and where He is, "there shall His servants be."† The experience of all true devoted servants of Christ has been, in a great measure, uniform—that in proportion as they gave themselves fully to the performance of commanded duty, they rose above discouragement and fear. Light has broken upon their path, as they have been brought to feel that their chief and grand business was to do their Father's will and to have a single eye to His glory in all things. In general, the happiest persons in life have been those whom the love of Christ constrained to live not to themselves but to Him who died and rose again. Whatever fears, depressions, and conflicts they have experienced at times, their death has generally

* 1 Samuel ii. 30.

† John xii. 26.

been peaceful and triumphant when they have been found “abounding in the work of the Lord;” and their last works have been more than their first. *Fuller* relates that, in the early days of his ministry, a large number of his flock were in spiritual distress because of the want of evidences concerning their personal salvation. He studied, prayed, and preached with the object of clearing their doubts and imparting to them spiritual comfort, and still the darkness increased. He was, in consequence, himself distressed in spirit, and led to conclude that his ministry had not the seal of the Divine approval. At this time the mission to India, which had shortly before been started under Dr Carey, arrested the attention of Fuller’s flock. All, both old and young, became deeply interested in it, and laboured personally for its advancement. The immediate effect was that spiritual doubts and perplexities were overcome. The people, he records, became all happy rejoicing Christians, and he himself was the happiest of all. The reason of the change was obvious. They devoted themselves to the great work of making known God’s light and salvation. They learned to exhibit a chief feature of the mind of Christ—zeal, and self-sacrificing benevolence, and He

blessed them with the light of His countenance.

Fourthly, *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust in the Lord as a Covenant God and portion*, dispel doubts, and are an effectual remedy against discouraging fears. The child of God, walking in darkness, is enjoined to “trust in the name of the Lord,” and to “stay upon his God.” * “The name of the Lord” designates the Saviour. Of the angel of the Divine presence sent to guide Israel, it was declared, “My name is in Him.” “This is the name whereby He shall be called—Jehovah our Righteousness.” † The immediate duty of the distressed and disconsolate is to trust in this blessed name. They should flee to Him for deliverance and safety, commit their whole case into His hands, rely with confidence upon His power and promise, and expect salvation from Him according to His word, and to the glory of His perfections. To “stay upon” Him, means to lean upon Him for support when we are weak and helpless in ourselves. The great object of this reliance is “His God.” It is God in His covenant character and relations. We have the fullest warrant, thus, to

* Isaiah l. 10.

† Exodus xxiii. 26.

‡ Jeremiah xxiii. 5.

appropriate Him even when our evidences of sonship are obscured, and when clouds and darkness surround God's throne. The grand proposal of the everlasting Covenant is, "They shall *be to me a people, and I will be to them a God.*" The Saviour in His last agony, when under the hiding of His Father's countenance, yet gave utterance to the strongest language of appropriating faith, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" * So has the child of God, when in fear and doubt, the certain warrant to take hold of God's covenant, and believing on Christ, to trust His covenant God for all that he needs for support, deliverance, and complete salvation. In the expressive language of *Luther*—"in the short words *My* and *Thy* lie the crown and cream of the gospel. God may be withdrawn and hidden to sense, and yet my God still." Faith in Christ is enjoined as the first duty upon all to whom the proposal and offer of the gospel comes. "This is," pre-eminently, "the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent." † To receive Christ and rest upon Him alone for salvation, is the first and last duty of every one who hears the gospel. The offer of life and

* Psalm xxii. 1.

† John vi. 19.

salvation to sinners, as such, is free and unhampered. All to whom it is addressed are assuredly welcome to come to Christ just as they are; and without money and without price, they may take the water of life freely. Christ is the "Light of the world," and those who walk in darkness are encouraged to look away from themselves to Him and be enlightened. The great commandment and gracious promise are inseparably connected, "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*" In all cases it is our paramount duty, as it is our highest privilege, to look unto Jesus, the great Object, "the Author and Finisher of our faith."* We should ever trust Him, as we come to Him at first, to obtain rest. When our evidences are dark and we want assurance, we should go to Him anew and embrace Him with the heart, that thus we may know that we have eternal life. In darkness and difficulty we should hope in His word and wait for Him as those who look for the light of the morning. And for the increase of faith and the "full

* Heb. xii. 2.—"*Looking unto Jesus.*" The original word -- ἀπορροισις -- involves the idea of looking away from ourselves and all other objects to Jesus alone. *Isaac Ambrose* works out this idea in his treatise on "LOOKING TO JESUS," which has been always much valued by simple-minded godly persons.

assurance of hope, we have only one way—to “trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” It is not from the working of faith in ourselves, but from the blessed Object of faith seen and laid hold on, that we are to receive light and consolation. The *direct actings* of faith upon the Divine promise, and on Christ and His salvation, are the appointed way to the joy of salvation. These bring into the soul a peace and rest which no reflection on past experience, no pondering of our evidences of grace, can ever yield. *Samuel Rutherford* judiciously remarks that the act of believing on Christ brings with it its own clear evidence, as a person in simply beholding an object has the best evidence at once of the reality of the object and of his seeing it. While Peter went looking to Jesus he walked steadily on the water; and he only began to sink when he lifted his eyes off the Saviour, and brooded upon the tumultuous waves. Even so, doubts and fears prevail, when we look within or brood on objects that cause distress and perplexities. These are relieved when faith again receives and rests upon a present all-sufficient Saviour. Faith is the clinging trust and confidence of a child reposing in the love and pity of a father who

is able and willing to help. In laying hold of Almighty strength, we are delivered from enemies and dangers—we emerge out of darkness and distress, and attain to joy and peace in believing. Our grand duty is to trust Him directly, unhesitatingly, and with assured confidence. “O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.”*

“But of Thy power I’ll sing aloud,
At noon Thy mercy praise ;
For Thou to me my refuge wast,
And tower in troublous days.
O God, Thou art my strength, I will
Sing praises unto Thee ;
For God is my defence, a God
Of mercy unto me.”†

Finally, it is *by the Spirit in the way of fervent prayer* that the believer is enlarged in distress, and delivered out of darkness. Being in an agony, Christ “prayed the more earnestly,” and “He was heard in that he feared.” This was David’s constant way. “Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.”‡ “When my soul is overwhelmed, I pour out my prayer unto Thee.”§ This, too, has been the way of support and deliverance for all God’s saints. “Is any afflicted? let him pray.”|| Present relief is obtained in pouring out the heart to

* Psalm lxxxiv. 12. † Psalm lix. 16, 17—Scottish Metrical Version.

‡ Psalm cxxx. 1. § Psalm lxi. 2. || James v. 13.

God in prayer. Coming to the throne of grace, "we obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."* In waiting, wrestling prayer, the distress of the heart is relieved, and the sadness of the countenance is changed. The prayer of faith is never offered in vain. Gracious acceptance is guaranteed to the humble suppliant. The Divine answer given at the appointed time brings to the soul preservation from trouble, and fills the mouth with songs of deliverance. "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee, in a time when Thou mayest be found : surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him. Thou art my Hiding Place ; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble ; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."† The Holy Spirit is the great agent of light, peace, and strong consolation. An eminent part of His office in applying redemption is to reveal Christ in His glory, so as to dispel darkness, and to gladden with the light of God's countenance. As the promised Comforter, He savingly enlightens the mind, wipes away the tears of mourners, gives the earnest of glory, and seals till the day of redemption. All that the Spirit does in leading the children of God

* Hebrews iv. 16.

† Psalm xxxii. 6, 7.

—as the “spirit of adoption” given them—and in that holy fellowship which the saints have with Him, of which we have already spoken,* is adapted to relieve believers in spiritual distress and fear, and to enable them to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. When “the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost,” we “glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed.”† The Spirit of the Lord God upon Christ, and given to believers through Him, is sent “to comfort all that mourn,” from whatever cause, and to “give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, that He might be glorified.”‡ This is His eminent work in the children of God. We honour Him by relying upon Him in all cases for its performance. The abundant grace of the Almighty Spirit is amply sufficient to free from the spirit of bondage, to give settled peace of conscience, and to fill with the animating and joyful hope of salvation.

The *issues* of spiritual darkness and distress to the children of God are made, through the

* See chapters v., vii. † Romans v. 2, 5. ‡ Isaiah lxi. 2, 3.

wisdom and love of their Father, most profitable and blessed. Thus are they effectually taught the unspeakable evil of sin, and are led to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. They are brought to know the value of the consolations of the Covenant, and to look alone to the Redeemer's person and work for pardon and acceptance—for all light, and strength, and blessing. Their inward distresses and conflicts qualify them for imparting consolation to mourners ; and the deliverances wrought for them become motives to greater activity and devotedness. Their final happiness will be greatly enhanced when viewed in contrast with the fears, and dangers, and distresses through which they passed on the way to its attainment. The rest in the heavenly Canaan will be the sweeter, that it was reached by lengthened travel through a waste howling wilderness, and by passing through “the swellings of Jordan.” The songs of the redeemed in glory will make mention of severe trial, and affliction, and enemies, and ascribe deliverance from all these to our covenant God and Father. “Thou, O God, has proved us. Thou hast tried us as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net. Thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our

heads ; we went through fire and water, but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.”*

* Psalm lxvi. 10, 12.

NOTE.—*Goodwin* gives the following reasons why “the name of God, and what is in God, is prop sufficient for faith to rest on:—*First*, Because the name of God—that is, God’s attributes, and Christ’s righteousness, do sufficiently, and adequately, and fully answer all wants and doubts, all objections, and distresses we can have, or can be in.” Referring to the proclamation of God’s name, in Exodus xxxiv. 5, 6, he says that every letter in that name answers to some temptation or trial that may befall us—“Art thou in misery and great distress? He is merciful ; ‘The Lord merciful.’ The *Lord*, therefore, *able* to help thee ; and *merciful*, therefore *willing*. Yea, but thou wilt say, I am unworthy : I have nothing in me to move Him to it. Well, therefore He is *gracious* ; now grace is to show mercy freely. Yea, but I have sinned against Him long, for many years ; if I had come in when I was young, mercy might have been shown me. To this He says, ‘I am *long-suffering*.’ Yea, but my sins every way abound in number, and it is impossible to reckon them up, and they abound in heinousness ; I have committed the same sins again and again ; I have been false to Him, broke promise with Him again and again. His name also answers this objection—He is *abundant in goodness* ; He abounds more in grace than thou in sinning. And though thou hast been false again and again to Him, and broke all covenants, yet He is *abundant in truth* ; also better than His word, for He cannot to our capacities express all that mercy that is in Him for us. Yea, but I have committed great sins, aggravated with many great circumstances, against knowledge ; wilfully so. He forgives *iniquity, transgression, and sin* ; sins of all sorts. Yea, but there is mercy thus in Him for a few, and I may be none of the number. Yes, there is mercy for *thousands*. And He *keeps* it ; treasures of it lie by Him, and are kept, if men would come and take them.” A *second* reason why His name is sufficient, though you have, and see nothing in you, nor any promise made to any grace in you to rest upon is, because all these promises made to conditions in us, which we ordinarily look unto, are ‘yea and amen’ only in this His name, and

His Son's name. As the worth of bonds depends upon the sufficiency of the man who makes them, so all these promises depend upon His name. Therefore, when you rely upon His name, having as yet no promise made to anything in you to rely upon, you then rely upon that which is the foundation of all these promises. You rely on that which all those others are resolved into, and which, therefore, is sufficient, though all the rest fail you in your apprehension. *Thirdly*, His mere name is support enough for faith, because it is for His name's sake and His Son's name's sake that He doeth all that He doeth—for nothing in us, but merely for what is in Himself. Ezekiel xxxvi. 22, 32—'For my name's sake, and not for your sake.' Isaiah xliii. 25—'I am He that blotteth out thy transgression for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' If it be for His name's sake, He doeth all that He doeth, and fulfils all promises made to us, then when thou seest nothing in thyself to which any promise is made—nothing which may appear to be any argument or motive that He will pardon thee, then trust Thou in His name; that because He is God, and hath mercy in Him, that therefore He will do it. For that which is the only or main motive to God Himself to do anything for us, must needs be, when apprehended and believed, the strongest and surest ground for our faith also to persuade the heart that He will do it."—Goodwin's Works, vol. iii., p. 327, 330.

CHAPTER XII.

The Future Manifestation of the Sons of God.

Romans viii. 19.—“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” Colossians iii. 4.—“When Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.”

The adopted children of God are, to a great extent, in their present condition, unknown in the world. Though redeemed from the earth, and separated from others, they do not live apart from human associations, and they are not distinguished by an ascetic spirit and ascetic practices. Yet their character, principles, and the ends of their life are, in a great measure, unknown to the multitudes around them with whom they are conversant. They are “hidden ones.” The world knows them not, even as it did not know the Only-begotten of the Father when He tabernacled on the earth. Destitute of spiritual knowledge and of any principle of spiritual discernment, the ungodly see no excellency in the saints; and instead of regarding them with

interest and affection, they cherish toward them aversion and hatred. The sons of God are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Their names are often in obscurity or cast out as evil. They are as "lilies among thorns," their character not shining forth in its goodly proportions, their beauty marred, their usefulness hindered, and they receive injury from those with whom they co-mingle in society.

To themselves, moreover, the evidences of their sonship are at times not clear. Through the power of corruption within and the temptations of Satan, they are in darkness and bondage of spirit. Sensible of their unfruitfulness and manifold imperfections, they regard themselves as utterly unfit to enjoy the privilege of being put among the children;* and at times they fear lest they should have no part in the family inheritance. Considering the high calling of the children of God and the obligation which it imposes to devoted service to Him who has called them, it is sad to reflect how little resemblance they exhibit to their heavenly Father, and how little they do for filling the earth with His glory. Yet, 1. Their sonship is *a blessed reality*. "Now are we the sons of God," though we cannot conceive the manner

* Jeremiah iii. 19.

of that ineffable love which brought us into this excellent relation, nor adequately declare what we shall be hereafter; and 2, The family of the redeemed shall be one day *fully gathered* and their *sonship will be brightly manifested*. The reality and excellency of the sonship of believers have been already discussed. We shall now notice briefly the *future manifestation* of their sonship. This is distinctly declared in various passages of the word, and is held forth for the consolation of the children of God under present discouragements and trials as the object of their joyful hope. They walk in darkness now, but hereafter they “shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” They are for a “season in heaviness through manifold temptations,” but their faith, when tried, shall be “found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” * They are often externally poor, mean, and despised. “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?” † By others they are esteemed disreputable, they are reproached and contemned by the world. “As deceivers, and yet true.” “We are made as the filth of

* 1 Peter i. 7. † James ii. 5.

the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.”* Their *privileges* too, as well as their character, are hidden. They eat of “the hidden manna,” and have “a white stone, and in the stone a new name written,” but this “no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.” † Their “joy is unspeakable and *full of glory* ;” their “peace passeth all understanding,” but both are hid in their heart. The “secret of the Lord” is with them, which the men of the world cannot unfold, and they can never fully declare or make others understand what they possess and enjoy. Their whole “life is hid with Christ in God,” ‡ not only in its fountain, and for safety and security, but, as it is concealed in its nature, power, and excellency from others who are not partakers of it.

But however hidden, concealed, and unknown, the sons of God will be manifested at a period which has been definitely fixed. So exalted and wonderful is the future display of the character and dignity of the saints, that in one bright and most expressive passage, (Romans viii. 19-24). It is represented as an object of interest and eager desire to the whole material universe. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth

* 1 Cor. iv. 13. † Revelation ii. 17. ‡ Colossians iii. 3.

for the manifestation of the sons of God," &c. The "*creature*" here does not mean the whole rational and irrational creation, including angels and all things animate and inanimate, nor the body of believers exclusively, nor the heathen world as distinguished from them, nor the whole human race. For the "expectation" mentioned does not characterize men in general, and the context is not applicable to angels; and there is an obvious distinction made between the creature and those who have "the first fruits of the Spirit." It denotes the material creation, the earth and its tribes of being, animate and inanimate, man excepted. This is viewed as under the curse, degraded, brought into bondage, and groaning because of man's sin. By a vivid and expressive figure, creation is personified, and emotions and passions are ascribed to it which are peculiar to man. It is in a state of "earnest expectation," and "waiting" for a glory to be revealed in God's redeemed, which will reflect unspeakable honour upon all the objects of the lower creation. The compound original term, (*ἀποκαραδομία*) is singularly expressive and emphatic. It is taken from erecting the head, and stretching out the neck in eager looking. The intensive particle conveys the idea of earnest and persistent expectation—such an

expectation as waits out the time and fails not till the object is attained. The object of this future desire and hope is “the manifestation of the sons of God”—the time when they shall appear and be owned in perfect saintship—the honour and dignity which shall be theirs, when they shall be displayed in their true character and glory as sons of the family of heaven.

The period for which the creature thus waits in earnest and hopeful expectancy has been regarded either as (1), that of the promised Millennium; or (2), that of the general resurrection and the final Judgment. There is every reason to think that it is to the latter, and not the former, of these eras that the apostle’s lofty description applies. Whatever glory shall be put upon the church of the redeemed, on the establishment of Christ’s kingdom of power at the millennium; whatever deliverance from physical evils shall be wrought on the earth, the travail- ing pains and groans of creation will not cease till the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory. Nor will the corporeal state of Christ’s faithful servants who reign with Him in the millennial period be such as to reflect honour and glory upon all created objects. The time of this manifestation is, beyond doubt, the second coming of the Redeemer, when He shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and shall judge angels

and men at His glorious appearance. It is not only, in a figurative sense, looked for by all the lower creation, as that which will be to it most advantageous, and reflect upon it the highest honour; but to the saints themselves it is the object of vehement desire—"We who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our bodies." The redemption of the bodies of the saints in their glorious resurrection from the dead is the set time of their manifestation, and the time, too, when "the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."—(v. 21.)

The general judgment will be emphatically "the revelation of Jesus Christ,"* when the world's Saviour, unknown and despised by vast multitudes, shall come in power and great glory, and shall be revealed in transcendent lustre to the entire universe. His saints shall share in His glory. At "the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour," they shall realize fully their "blessed Hope." His "revelation" is at the same time *their* "manifestation." The redeemed are all gathered into one "general assembly." The family of God is fully made up; and with a glory which was

* 1 Peter i. 13.

before inconceivable, they shine forth as a bride adorned for her husband. This glory is said to be “adoption,”* “even the redemption of the body”—the two phrases being equivalent in import. The saints’ glorious resurrection is included in their adoption, and is one of its most prominent parts. There is a beautiful progress and wondrous development in the adoption of the family of God. As predestined and chosen to this privilege, it was a secret in God’s counsels of love from eternity. In our effectual calling, it is made known to us, but is a secret to all others. The glory of the saints’ resurrection will reveal their sonship to all. “In election, God wrote our names in the book of life, which is His family register. In regeneration, He gave us a new nature—sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and put us among His children. In the resurrection, He will openly acknowledge us as His children, and place us before His face for ever.”† When our bodies shall have been raised from the dust, and when both our souls and bodies are fully transformed into the likeness of Christ, then is the complete and glorious manifestation of our sonship.

* The original word has not the article.

† The Believer’s Triumph—by Rev. James Smith, p. 170.

1. The *relation* of the adopted to God the Father, and to Christ, the Elder Brother, is then *publicly owned*. The Saviour coming in great glory, and seated on His throne of majesty, confesses His saints before His Father and His angels. They have been gathered to meet Him in the air, and are admitted as assessors with Him in judgment. He welcomes them to His presence as the “blessed of the Father,” and owns them as His brethren—His elect spouse, and approved servants. His purpose of love towards them—the grand object of His death for them, and the ends of the Gospel ministration—are fully accomplished; and it is befitting that they should be acknowledged as the chosen of God, faithful, and those whom the King delights to honour. Here they were unknown, despised, and rejected by the world. Their greatest concern under trials and reproaches of men was that in their painful service they might be approved of the Master whom they loved and devotedly served. Their greatest fear at times was that they might not be found of Him in peace at His coming. In the day of the glorious revelation of Christ, the saints realize their highest hopes. They are owned by the King as faithful and tried servants to be rewarded—as of the “many

sons” that are “brought to glory.” In the presence of enemies, and before an assembled universe, they are presented by the Saviour to His Father and theirs, with ecstatic joy, “Behold I, and the children that God has given me.”* What a wondrous manifestation is this—that those who were far off are brought nigh—that those who were rebels and enemies are now owned as friends and children, among whom God will dwell for ever!

2. In the future manifestation of the sons of God, their *character*, now perfected, is *conspicuously exhibited*. Their “righteousness is brought forth as the light, and their salvation as a lamp that burneth.” All that was defiled and imperfect is done away. The character formed by the intermixture of various elements, tried and matured by the exercise of various graces, is fully developed. What is weak and dark is done away, when that which is perfect is come. The children of God have reached the “stature of perfect men” in Christ Jesus. They are arrayed in “the beauty of holiness;” and assimilated to Him who is the First-born among many brethren, they shine forth as refulgent stars in the upper firmament, reflecting the splendour of “the Sun of righteousness.” The

* Hebrews ii. 13.

sons of God at the second coming of Christ—tested by the trials through which they have passed—refined and purified by the temptations and afflictions which they endured—display a character of diversified excellence and attractive beauty. The Redeemer will come at last, not merely to be seen and admired by His people, but, from what His grace has wrought in them, He will “come to be glorified *in* His saints, and to be admired *in* all them that believe.”*

3. Christ’s glorious appearance will be the bringing forth *into noon-tide effulgence of the hidden life of His saints*. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” † Christ’s glory is now hid from the world. So the believer’s inner life of communion with God is “hid with Christ in God” as the element and sphere in which it is exercised. At the day of His second coming, Christ, the Source and Essence of the believer’s life, will gloriously manifest Himself, and then their hidden life shall be clearly and fully manifested. The supports, comforts, and power of the believer’s spiritual life were, while here, but imperfectly known. Even Christians themselves do not always recognize the life of one another, and at times

* 2 Thess. i. 10.

† Col. iii. 4.

they stand in doubt of their own. Their full manifestation is at, and in the revelation of Christ—the Head of vital influence and of glory. When He, who is our life, shall be manifested, then our life, which was before weak, obscure, and hid, shall stand forth in the full manifestation of power and purity, of fullness of joy and transcendent glory. At Christ's appearance, and not till then, will the saint's life in Him be fully displayed. The new life which the Spirit imparted to their souls, was in its initial stages and in the progress of gradual developement up till this blissful era. It now has reached its state of glorious perfection. By the Saviour, as the glorified vital Head of the body, are brought forth in their full vigour, beauty, and lustre, all the members. The infinite Source and perfect Model of that life stands at the head of the ransomed Church diffusing copious supplies of life to all the members, and shedding upon them the bright radiance of His glory.* Then are believers, to a degree to which they could never attain while here, "complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power."†

* See Haldie on Colossians, chap. iii. 4.

† Colossians ii. 10.

4. In their future manifestation there is put upon the *children of God unspeakable honour*. Their “present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” * The full revelation of their adoption, at Christ’s second advent, for which the saints wait, will be “the redemption of their bodies.” † Their ransomed spirits have been already rescued from the curse of the law, the power of sin, and the second death. Their future manifestation includes the complete deliverance from all “the ills that flesh is heir to”—from all disease, corruption, and dishonour. Thus is their “redemption” complete, obtained for them at an inestimable price, and effected by the exertion of Almighty power. When the Redeemer shall stand at “the latter day upon the earth,” He will proclaim aloud glorious freedom to His people; “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.” ‡ The body is brought forth from the grave as a prisoner from his dungeon, and is ushered into the light and liberty of the “resurrection glory.” That which was sown

* Romans viii. 18. † V. 23. ‡ Hos. xiii. 14.

in corruption is raised incorruptible, that which was laid in the grave in dishonour is “raised up in glory.” The redemption of the saint’s body is its complete deliverance from all the defects of its earthly nature, and constitutes it a “spiritual body,” glorified like Christ’s. * “The dead in Christ rise first,” † and are immediately after seen seated with Him on thrones of judgment. He is the “First fruits,” and they that are Christ’s are with Him at His coming, as the full ripened harvest of immortality. They are the displayed trophies of His victory, the “jewels” made up of His mediatorial crown, that shine in His light and reflect brightly the effulgence of His glory. “This honour have all His saints.” ‡ They were predestined to it from the beginning, and are secured its final possession by the work of the Spirit. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” § This seal imprints upon them God’s mark, by which they are exhibited as His, and it renders them safe and secure in respect to the honour and blessedness which are to be enjoyed at the future day of redemption. The seal of the living God can never be

* Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 51.

† Ps. cxlix. 9.

‡ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

§ Ephes. iv. 30.

broken. His “gifts and calling are without repentance.” The honour that awaits the saints in the day of their coming manifestation is *unspeakably great*—such as the Father puts upon the Son of His love—that which is befitting the Saviour to confer on His saints as the high reward of His finished work, and the full expression of His ineffable favour and love towards them. “They shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy.” “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” *

Lastly, *The lower creation shall partake of the glories that pertain to the manifestation of the sons of God, and that attend the redemption of their bodies.* This is “*the earnest expectation of the creature.*” Now, the material creation, animate and inanimate, is “subject to vanity, not willingly”—by no natural principle of corruption or decay. It has been so subjected in accordance with the will of Him who rendered it subject, in hope that the creature itself should share in the glorious redemption of the saints. The present is the bondage and groaning in pain, and travail of the whole

* John xii. 26.

lower creation. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now."—(Romans viii. 23). The earth is cursed through man's sin. The beasts are in bondage to cruel instincts, and are either oppressed by man's dominion or are hostile and destructive to their oppressor. Every thing is perverted from its original design. The objects of creation are employed to minister to man's evil passions and vices, to foster rebellion against the Creator, and as objects of idol worship. Disorder and confusion abound everywhere, and the groans of creation resound throughout the world. But the condition of the creature is not hopeless. It shall yet be freed from the bondage of corruption and delivered from a state of frailty and degradation. At the close of the present dispensation, the creature will be renovated and restored. In some way that we can but imperfectly apprehend, it shall partake of "the glorious liberty of the children of God." It shall be delivered and introduced into the "liberty of glory," which to the saints is the end and consummation of redemption. The groans of creation shall cease. Its travailing pangs shall be succeeded by freedom and joy. It shall share in something of the same liberty which charac-

terizes the state of the bodies of the saints in their resurrection. The second Adam, in His glorious appearance, shall be “the Repairer of the breach;” and His future advent is “the time of the restitution of all things.” This lower world witnessed the humiliation of the Son of God, and sympathized with Him in the agonies of His death. It shall also witness the completion of His triumph, and shall share in the bright revelation of His glory. The material elements that form component parts of the saints’ bodies, will be glorified in the resurrection. The globe that we inhabit—that was defiled and degraded by man’s sin—will be restored and renewed by the saints’ resurrection. It shall be freed from the curse, and delivered from all the evil that came by sin, and from all that subsists by corruption. In an emphatic and glorious sense, it shall be brought into the sure freedom from blight and debility—from decay and corruption—from all suffering and pain—in which the children of God, when raised up in glory, shall exult for ever. There shall be “a new heavens and a new earth,” wherein shall eternally dwell righteousness. The Seraphim, in their lofty worship, as they veil their faces and cover their feet in the presence of the King, exclaim, “The whole earth is full

of Thy glory.” * At the “day of the revelation of Christ” and of “the manifestation of the sons of God,” this earth, with the things in it, being dissolved, shall be renewed and refined by passing through the fire of the general conflagration. It will be reorganized and elevated. Sin and all its effects being removed, it will appear more lovely than it did on the fair morn of creation, before the Destroyer entered among the works of God. Distinguished above other worlds as the theatre of the surpassing wonders of the incarnation and atonement of Christ, and as the place where the Church of the redeemed was gathered, where it suffered, triumphed, and was prepared for glory; it seems destined, in its future renovation, to shine forth the most glorious orb of the myriads that revolve in boundless space. The risen saints may have assigned them in it their blissful abode, where their happiness, in lofty communion with God and with holy angels, will embrace all the elements of ecstatic enjoyment, enhanced to them by the reflection that this earth was once the scene of their trials, and sorrows, and conflicts. The new heavens and the renovated earth shall stand forth as a glorious monument of the perfections of the God and Father of

* Isaiah vi. 3.

the redeemed. The saints raised from corruption and glorified in soul and body, shall see in it bright displays of the wisdom and power of God, in frustrating the designs of Satan and over-ruling all events and changes in time for His own glory and their good. They shall behold in the new creation the transcendent goodness and grace of God, subduing all evil, and shining forth illustriously over all His other works. Death is for ever abolished, and in the new scene of the saints' felicity are everywhere displayed the glorious triumphs of sovereign grace. The sons of God are manifested as heirs and rulers of this restored world. "Behold I make all things new. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and He shall be my son." "They shall reign for ever and ever." *

* Revelation xxi. 5-7; xxii. 5.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Father's House ; and the Future Happiness of the Sons of God.

John xiv. 2—"In my Father's House are many mansions.
. . . . I go to prepare a place for you." Matthew
xiii. 43—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the
Sun in the kingdom of their Father."

The purposes of God in relation to His children, and all His dealings toward them, look forward to their final home-bringing and rest with Him in heavenly glory. Predestined to the adoption of sons, they were chosen to life eternal. The Captain of salvation was made perfect through sufferings, that He might bring many sons to glory.* They were called, justified, and led by the Spirit in sanctification, that they might be glorified. As of ancient Israel, God said, "I have called my Son out of Egypt;" and in leading them through the wilderness, He carried "them in His bosom as

* Hebrews ii. 10.

a nursing father beareth the sucking child,"* till He brought them to the land of promise ; so the Lord, in covenant mercy and love, brings the redeemed from their natural state of guilt and bondage, conducts them in safety through the wilderness of this world, and ministers to them an entrance into the heavenly Canaan. This is the appointed end of all the dispensations of grace and providence to them—the blessed issue of all their labour, and trials, and conflicts. All that befalls them in the path in which they travel, as well as all the changes that take place in their condition and character, are covenant-guidance, and the results are gracious and sure. "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."†

We have already spoken of the "inheritance in light" which the adopted sons of God, as "joint heirs" with Christ, possess. But this was viewed as realized in part here in the communion which, as members of the invisible Church, they have with Him in grace, and partly in the state into which their souls enter immediately at death. Their home-bringing is after the present dispensation has come to a close, having served the purpose of its establish-

* Numbers xi. 12.

† Psalm cvii. 7.

ment. The righteous go into life eternal, after the general judgment, and their final happiness is that which, in soul and body, they shall enjoy after the resurrection throughout eternity.

1. The state of heavenly felicity into which risen saints are brought is represented in various forms of expression in Scripture, as their admission to a *glorious place*. Though we should beware of associating with the future happiness of the children of God, ideas taken from local relations on earth, yet it seems undeniable, from Scripture representations, that this felicity will be realized, not as a *state* which saints may enjoy in any part of the universe, but in a fixed and determined part of creation. This is the place where Jehovah dwells with His saints and holy angels, and where there shall be made peculiar manifestations of His glory. It is termed the "*Third Heavens*," the "*Heaven of Heavens*," "*the land afar off*." Whether this is a vast material world in the centre of all God's works, influencing the movements of all the planetary systems, or the "*new heavens and earth*" that shall emerge out of the general conflagration, it must be a material place, where the saints, in their glorified bodies, with the risen Redeemer, and those who entered heaven without passing through the gates of

death, shall have their abode for ever. It is represented as a place of effulgent light, whence night and darkness are for ever excluded. It is the "*inheritance of the saints in light.*" "The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." It is called a "city that hath foundations"—permanent and undecaying—"whose Builder and Maker is God"—a "*country*" better than any earthly, of which ancient Canaan, on which the eyes of the Lord were perpetually, was the shadow and type; a *Kingdom of glory*, of which the saints are heirs, allotted to them before the foundation of the world, and given them by the good pleasure of the Father. It is "*the Palace of the King,*" into which the Bride, the daughter of the King, is brought with gladness great to abide for ever. It is the *heavenly "Sanctuary"*—not made with hands, typified by the ancient Holy of holies, into which the redeemed come for their exalted worship. Heaven is the "*Paradise of God,*" where is the "river of the water of life," and the "tree of life" in the midst of it, under the shade of which the saved from earth are gathered, to eat of its mellow harvest fruits,*

* Rev. xxii. 1, 2—The original terms, which in our version are rendered "twelve manner of fruits," properly mean "twelve harvests," expressing the idea of fruits rich and fully ripened.

renewed for ever. And, as more nearly associated with the idea of a family, heaven is exhibited by the Saviour Himself, in His last discourse of comfort, as His "*Father's House*," in which are "many mansions"—that which He goes to prepare for them, and to bring them to which, He will at length come and receive them to Himself. All those vivid representations prominently hold forth the heaven to which the children of God are looking forward as a glorious place—the end of their wanderings and conflicts—the blissful rest that remains for them at the close of their toilsome labour. It is the pilgrim's joyful destination—the loved *home* of the saints, to which "the children of God scattered abroad" ultimately return, where they shall see their Father's face in righteousness, and shall be for ever "satisfied with His likeness."*

2. To this glorious place *all the adopted sons of God will be finally gathered*. The nations of them that are saved enter into the city of God. The ransomed of the Lord return from distance and wandering, and come to Zion. "Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."† How joyful the thought, how enrapturing the prospect, that all the children of

* Psalm xvii. 15. † Psalm lxxxiv. 7.

the redeemed family shall be gathered together at length into the Father's house in glory! On earth, they were gathered into one "in Christ,"* but separated, often widely, by time and place—divided by party names and distinctions, and not unfrequently unknown to each other, they could not be brought together in any local meeting; and even had this been possible, there was much to prevent their happy fellowship. But when the saints are raised up in glory, all that could separate or alienate them is forever done away. As when the members of a loving family on earth, after being dispersed in different places, experience delightful joy when they meet under the paternal roof in the home of childhood, so, but unspeakably greater, will be the joy of the children of God when they are gathered together at last in the general Assembly and church of the First-born met in heaven. Then are they at home with their Father and God, and they behold His face in righteousness. None are missing of all the family; and of weakness, and imperfection, and estrangement, there is nothing to mar their blissful communion. Gathered from all ages, and from all countries, they are brought into

* Ephesians i. 10.

one glorious meeting place—the many-mansioned house in heaven—a number which no man can number, of all kindred, and people, and tongues. The centre of their exalted fellowship is Christ the Lord, as He was the Head to whom they were united on earth. Wherever He is in His revealed glory, there is Heaven in all its blissful effulgence. Brought home to His presence, the saints go no more out; and their gathering together in glory shall be amazingly enhanced, that however actively engaged in the service of the King, nothing can ever occur to estrange or separate them for ever.

3. The *Felicity* which will be the portion of the family of God thus gathered, which each one of its members shall fully enjoy, will be great—surpassing the loftiest conceptions which we can here entertain concerning it. It will consist in

1. *Deliverance from evil of every kind.* Frequently is it delineated by *negative* terms in the inspired word, because we are unable to set forth, in positive expression, the nature and elements of the saints' future blessedness. When the Apostle Paul was caught up into the Third Heavens, he heard and saw things which “it was not *possible* for a man to utter.”*

* 2 Cor. xii. 4—Such is the import of the original term.

By no adequate form of words could he set forth the glory of the heavenly state, and the perfection of the happiness of the saints in heaven. And even could he have done so to those on earth to whom the declarations were made, he could have conveyed no intelligible ideas. The redeemed, who, through great tribulation, have reached their lofty position around the throne, "hunger no more, and thirst no more; nor does the sun light on them, nor any heat."* The inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."† No unclean thing can ever enter the heavenly city. There is a complete and everlasting separation between glorified saints and all that would injure or annoy, or mar their perfect enjoyment and felicity. The sight or thought of sin can never cause any disturbance of their joyful rest. "The Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it."‡

2. *Their Holiness, as well as their knowledge, will be perfect.* "They are without fault before the throne of God."§ The redeemed

* Rev. vii. 16. † Isaiah xxxiii. 24. ‡ Isaiah xxv. 8.
§ Rev. xiv. 5.

brought home to heaven have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* The church of the First-born is presented to Christ “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”† This constitutes a main part of the future felicity of the saints. Their perfection in holiness was the grand design of their election from eternity, as it was a primary object of the Saviour’s work on earth. Christ died to “redeem them from all iniquity.” His blood shed was a “Fountain opened” to cleanse them from all defilement. The work of the Spirit in them was the renewal of their nature, and their complete transformation into the likeness of Christ. This, too, was the object of their fervent aspirations, eager effort, and frequent conflicts. They knew that without holiness they could not see the Lord. The chief element of their enjoyment in religion here was holiness in heart and life, even though imperfectly attained; and, amid their deep struggles with indwelling sin, they looked forward with earnest hope and expectation to the state of perfection in glory. In their gathering together in the Father’s house these hopes are fully realized. The pilgrims

* Rev. vii. 14.

† Ephesians v. 27.

have dropped their defiled garments behind, and have put on shining raiments. The last remains of corruption have been purged away. When they are brought to the “*undefiled*” inheritance, there is nothing in them to dim its splendour. They shine forth in “the beauty of holiness;” and as they see God, they reflect the moral purity of Him who has “presented them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding great joy.”* Their minds, completely sanctified, are full of light. They see no longer through “a glass darkly,” or by an imperfect medium, but face to face. They “see as they are seen, and know even as they are known.” In the perfection of their intellectual powers, glorified saints behold the grandeur of the material creation; and the wondrous scheme of providence and redemption is fully discovered. The vision of God and His works, which they enjoy, is *intuitive* and *beatific*. The light of holiness and truth illuminates the understanding, affections, and conscience; and the will, exulting in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, presents the homage of cheerful service to God. The Father’s house in glory is the “Holy of holies,” of which the inmost inclosure of the ancient Tabernacle was the type.

* Jude 24.

There the exalted High Priest, clothed in His robes "of glory and beauty," appears with the inscription, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD," beaming on His forehead. This is the true *Shechinah*—the dwelling glory that enlightens it for ever. The saints, brought in to the most Holy Place, in the immediate presence of the Lamb, behold His glory; and, transformed into His likeness, enjoy unalloyed felicity.

3. *The fellowship of saints and holy angels will be perfectly enjoyed* in the Father's house in heaven. The communion of saints, which was imperfectly realized on earth, will be complete in heaven. All the children of the ransomed family are gathered into the house of their Father, in the presence of His glory; and as the subjects of His ineffable love, they have the nearest and tenderest fellowship with one another. Those whom distance divided on earth; those who lived in different ages; those who were mutually unknown or alienated in affection, and such as death parted, are brought together, where every thing that separated them is completely removed. Amidst the clear and full revelations of glory, there appears to be no ground of doubt that saints in heaven will personally know one another, though no longer after the flesh. This enters into the idea of the highest

state of social existence, and is essential to the saints' perfect felicity. The redeemed, brought to Mount Zion in glory, come, in the fullest sense, to "an innumerable company of angels," and those blessed spirits who ministered to them on earth rejoice in their admission to heaven—hold delighted converse with them, and swell the chorus of their song of praise, when they adore the Divine perfections, and ascribe all honour and glory to the Lamb. The saints "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," with prophets, apostles, martyrs, at the feast of bliss in the kingdom of heaven. Though there is no "Temple" in heaven, and ordinances, such as existed in the church on earth, are no longer required, yet the saints in glory unite in the most exalted social worship. Much of their employment in heaven is enraptured and incessant praise. They converse together on subjects Divine and heavenly—on the perfections and character of God—on the wonders of creation, providence, and redemption—on the scenes of the wilderness way—the deliverances wrought for them, the victories won, and the great salvation attained. The saints' fellowship in heaven will, through oneness with Christ, be with the utmost peace and concord—the perfect unity of hearts knit together in love—all discordant and

disturbing elements for ever excluded, and holy spiritual affections in constant and most vigorous exercise. In one delightful employment—that of exulting praise—glorified saints give united expression to their gratitude and joy; and while they have blissful communion with each other, their fellowship is, at the same time, with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. “They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness.” “They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.”* If such be the lofty fellowship of saints and holy angels in the Father’s house, need we wonder that the servants of Christ while on earth have been sustained and animated betimes, amid trial and sufferings, in the assured hope of it? Beza, the Reformer, when Calvin was removed by death, spoke of a chief part of heavenly felicity to himself being the prospect of rejoining his loved brother and companion, and of conversing with Him in glory on the mysteries of providence and redemption, concerning which they had often spoken on earth. Among the last utterances, too, from

* Psalm cxiv. 7, 11, 12.

the scaffolds of Scottish Covenanted martyrs, were a farewell to *fellowship meetings* on earth, and a joyful welcome given to the communion of saints in glory.

4. Transcending all other happiness which the saints have in heaven is the *fruition of God Himself* as their portion for ever. When they become sons of God, they are made “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” So soon as they are received into the family, they enter upon their inheritance, and the enjoyment of God ranks the highest of their privileges while they remain in a state of minority. Believers enjoy God in glorifying Him, by doing and suffering His will; and the measure of their conscious enjoyment is in proportion to their active devotedness and resignation to His sovereign appointment. The full and perfect fruition of God is reserved for the heavenly state. The saints there see God as He is—they are ever with Him; they are assimilated completely to His moral likeness, and are filled unto all His fulness.* The enjoyment of God is the enjoyment of all the persons of the Godhead, in all excellent and endearing relations. It is the fruition of the Eternal Father, as their

* Ephesians iii. 19.—The proper rendering of the original is “filled” *unto*—not “with all the fulness of God.”

Father in unspeakable love—of the Son as their redeeming Head and Husband, and of the blessed Spirit as their Teacher, Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter. All Divine perfections are brightly displayed and honoured in conferring on the saints and perpetuating to them the felicity of heaven. In God's light they see light. His blessedness is theirs, so far as finite natures are capable of apprehending and receiving it. This perfect fruition of God, to which the saints are predestined, and which they see only through a glass darkly while here, will confer on them a glory both in soul and body surpassing all conception and expression. Present afflictions, which are light and momentary, work out for them "a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."* This glory is not only that which they behold in Christ, but it is revealed *in* them. Their souls in all their faculties are pervaded with it, and their bodies, fashioned after the body of the Saviour's glory, shine as etherialized vehicles for the pure spirits which inhabit them. As the result of all this, the bliss of glorified saints is *complete*. In their Father's presence is "fulness of joy"—at "His right hand there are pleasures for evermore." As God is an

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

infinite and inexhaustible good, the enjoyment of Him by His saints in heaven will open up to them fresh and ever-increasing sources of ecstatic bliss throughout eternity. The "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal," that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, as it flows on, gladdens the heavenly city; and the "Tree of Life" in the midst of the Paradise of God, to which the redeemed have near and constant access, restores to them vastly more than the happiness of primeval innocence. It bears twelve harvests of ripe and luscious fruits, continually renewed, and "its leaves are for the healing of the nations."

Finally, The felicity of the redeemed in heaven, in every part and degree of it, will *flow to them through Christ*. He will give Himself to them with all the diversified excellencies that meet in Him, for their full and everlasting enjoyment. When He brings them to heaven they shall not only behold His glory as their Sovereign Lord, but He shall entertain them as friends and brethren admitted to the nearest and tenderest fellowship with Him. The exaltation of the Redeemer in heaven is not that of a private person for Himself, but that of His people's Head. He is exalted in their name and upon their account,

as the "First fruits," and as representing the whole harvest. The members have the same relation and union with the Head that they had before, and they are honoured together with Him. Their union to Him will be nearer and more perfect than they ever could realize on earth. As He was about to finish His work, He comforted His disciples by assuring them that He would come again and receive them to Himself that they might be with Him. In fulfilling this gracious promise, He welcomes them to His and His Father's house, and to His and their glory. He leads them in the tenderest and most familiar manner to "living fountains of water;" and they share with Him endless delights. His joy is fulfilled in them when they are set down with Him at His table in His kingdom, and they are partakers of the rich feast which He has provided. The saints' intercourse with Christ in heaven will be vastly more intimate, and their access to Him more free than in their state of imperfection on earth, they could possibly realize. The full acquaintance and glorious manifestations of love which Christ designs for His people, are reserved for the heavenly world. His "back parts"—the imperfect and transient discoveries of His declarative glory—could only be

seen here, but in heaven they shall see “His face” in righteousness—the full splendour of His glory—and “His name shall be in their foreheads.” It was most probably, in reference to this, that the risen Saviour said to Mary at the sepulchre when she was about to embrace Him:—(John xx. 17.)—“Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father;” implying that the intercourse of His saints with Him would, in the future state, be most intimate and endearing. In heaven there will be nothing to hinder the fullest enjoyment of Christ by the saints, nothing to mar the satisfying of the utmost cravings of their souls. By this exalted communion with the Redeemer, the saints will have the most glorious union and enjoyment of God the Father. They are brought by Him to God; and being members of the Son, they are in some sort partakers of His relation to the Father. The Church brought home is the daughter of God, not only as she was begotten by His word and Spirit, but also as she is the spouse of the eternal Son. Thus the saints in glory become partakers, according to their measure, of the Father’s love to the Son and His complacency in Him. “That the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them.” * “The Father

* John xvii. 26.

Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.”* Through their nearness to Christ and partaking of His glory, the saints in heaven are advanced to an immensely higher, more intimate, and fuller enjoyment of God than otherwise they could have been. The infinite intimacy and communion between the Father and Son are expressed by His being “in the bosom of” the Father. The saints being in Christ shall, in their measure and manner, partake with Him in the fellowship, and in all the ineffable blessedness that results from it. †

* John xvi. 27.

† A number of the ideas which are presented in this last particular, are stated and illustrated in his own vivid and attractive manner, by President Edwards, in his discourse on “The Excellency of Christ.”—See Works, Vol. I., 688, 689.

CHAPTER XIV.

Practical Uses of the Adoption of Sons.

Malachi iii. 17.—“I will spare them, as a man spareth his son that serveth him.” Ephesians v. 1.—“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.” Philip-
pians ii. 15.—“That ye may be blameless and harm-
less, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of
a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine
as lights in the world.”

The doctrine of believer's sonship is eminently practical. As it is exhibited in Holy Scripture, it holds forth the most solemn warning, and presents the clearest tests for self-trial. And especially do our introduction to the family of God and the enjoyment of the high privileges of children, supply the weightiest and most affecting motives to all holy living. It were fearful, indeed, to have set before us the inspired account of the Divine grace and love that chose sinners to eternal life, the amazing work performed by the Redeemer, that they might receive the adoption

of sons, the distinction made in their separation from others when they became the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty and the future glory to which they are destined, and yet to remain indifferent and unaffected, without concern of heart to be numbered with the adopted, or to do their work and enjoy their privileges. On the other hand, the due consideration of this matter is fitted, through the blessing of the Spirit, to awaken sinners and to lead them to seek the grace and blessing of sonship. No other subject can furnish higher and more constraining motives to vigorous effort, firm trust, and assured and joyful hope.

1. It shows *the fearful state and misery of those who are not of the adopted family.* These are declared to be “the children of wrath”—“without Christ”—“far from God”—“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”—“strangers from the covenants of promise”—“having no hope, and without God in the world.”* They are “children of disobedience,” under the malign influence of “the Prince of the power of the air,” and they “walk according to the course of this world,” and serve divers lusts and pleasures.† Their hearts

* Ephes. ii. 12.

† Ephes. ii. 2, 3.

are “enmity against God.” They have no communion with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, nor any desire after the character and privileges of the First-born. Instead of this, under the dominion of the flesh, with its affections and lusts, they contemn things spiritual, and like Esau, for momentary and base gratifications, make sale of the heavenly birthright. How fearful is such a condition! How inconceivably dreadful the future misery to which it inevitably conducts! They voluntarily renounce the inheritance of the saints, as they have no desire for their fellowship; and they are excluded from the prerogatives of children. Instead of the superlative love of God to his adopted ones, they experience His hatred and wrath; and, excluded from the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for the blessed of the Lord, they are consigned to the curse of eternal reprobation. The redeemed are the sons of God and heirs of glory; others who obtain not the grace of adoption, are children of the Evil One—a “generation of vipers” who cannot escape the wrath to come. As there are only two classes in the world—the Family of God and the Seed of the Serpent—and each displays here the character that pertains to it and progresses

to its final destiny, it deeply concerns us to labour to ascertain to which of these we belong. Indifference on a subject so momentous is the worst species of moral infatuation, and uncertainty respecting it is inconsistent with spiritual comfort and assured hope. With all earnest concern, we should flee from the wrath to come. Forsaking our father's house and our own people, we should hearken to and obey the Divine command, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." *

2. It exhibits *the glory and blessedness of the saints*, and requires from us a *frame of spirit and habit of life in accordance with it*. Not only are they called from darkness to light—rescued from the power of Satan, and born of God—united to Christ and justified by faith; but they have obtained "power to become the sons of God." This high distinction justifies the Apostle's emphatic exclamation—"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be;

* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." * In whatever light we contemplate this gracious relation and privilege, the glory and blessedness of the saints appear excellent and wonderful. He who adopts them into His family is the "blessed and only Potentate," "the King of kings and Lord of lords." † They are "children of the Highest." ‡ The moving cause of their adoption was nothing in them—not creature-merit of any kind, but God's gratuitous, sovereign, incomprehensible love. The adopted, instead of having in themselves any claim on the Divine favour, are, "by nature, children of wrath, even as others," sinful, guilty, and rebellious. The price by which their adoption was procured, is far above "the great sum" whereby Roman citizenship was obtained, infinitely beyond all material riches. It was paid in the humiliation and sufferings of Him who was "in the form of God," and who became obedient to the death of the Cross for their ransom. They are redeemed by His precious blood; and that they might receive "the adoption of sons," the Redeemer was made of a woman, and made

* 1 John iii. 1, 2. † 1 Tim. vi. 15.

‡ Luke vi. 35.

under the law—became as “a worm and no man,” and was even made sin and a curse for us.

How manifold and glorious are the *prerogatives* which, as the fruit of redeeming love, and as the consequence of their adoption, the children of God enjoy! They have the most honourable *names* and *titles*. They are “sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty,” born of God, and the brethren of Christ. In their state and condition they are related by regeneration to the Son of God, as He is related to the eternal Father, though in a different mode. He is the Eternal Son, the Only-begotten of the Father; they, by regeneration, are made partakers of the Divine nature.* They share in Christ’s official dignity as Prophet, Priest, and King of the covenant. Spiritually enlightened themselves, they become instruments of communicating the Divine will to others. They are a “royal priesthood,” a “holy nation,” and a “peculiar people.” In possessions and immunities, all that the Father and Son have is theirs.† Redeemed from the curse, and from the bondage and tutelage of the law, they are brought into the enlarged and glorious liberty of the sons of God. All

* 2 Peter i. 4.

† 1 Cor. iii. 22.

creatures—intelligent and irrational, animate and inanimate—are rendered subservient to their best interests. Angels minister to them ; and all things, good and bad, friendly and hostile, work together for their good. The love and care of their heavenly Father provides for them, and confers on them all spiritual blessings. Sin shall not have dominion over them. In the end, all corruption shall be completely subdued and purged away. In their failings and conflicts, He spares them as a man his son that serveth him. In straits and sorrows, He relieves and comforts them ; in doubts, He enlightens and directs them. He heals their backslidings, preserves their feet from falling, and loves them freely. In respect to *temporal* things, He makes provision for the supply of their wants before they are tried with them. He appoints their lot in life, and determines all that is needful for bodily sustenance and comfort. Never does he leave them destitute. In the sanctified enjoyment of all the creatures, the earth is given them in possession. Afflictions and adversities are to them the chastisements of a loving Father, and tokens of covenant-love. They are not punished with the world, as they cannot perish with it. He does not willingly afflict nor

grieve them. * In all troubles and distresses, He pities them as a father his children. He hears their sighs and groans. He bottles their tears. He stands by their bed and turns it in their sickness ; and He walks with them when they pass through the fire and water. Their death is precious in His sight, and He leads them through death to life eternal. As the sum of all these blessed privileges, the saints are fully assimilated to the Only-begotten Son, and become heirs of God in Trinity, their covenant-God and Portion. They are “conformed to the image of His Son.” Their risen bodies shall be “fashioned like His glorious body.” At His future appearance they shall be fully like Him, seeing Him as He is. And, throughout eternity, this shall be the measure of their inconceivable felicity—they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. To cherish a frame of spirit befitting this relation and these high privileges, is eminently required of those who are separated from the world and brought into the family of God. This disposition of heart, which the Holy Spirit alone can impart, will lead us habitually to contemplate and admire the greatness of Divine love, and the riches of that grace which

* Lamentations iii. 33.

confers upon unworthy, undeserving, and guilty creatures the adoption of sons. It will impel us to "show forth His praises" who hath brought us "into His marvellous light," and has called us to "virtue and glory." We should congratulate ourselves that we are the children of God, and should rejoice in Him, even now with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. In all things we are required to walk worthy of God, who has called us to His kingdom and glory, reflecting His moral likeness, that others may be led to glorify our Father in heaven.

3. It furnishes the *clearest and most decisive marks for self-examination*. On many, and the most weighty grounds, the great personal inquiry should be made whether we are the children of God; and it claims an early and distinct settlement. Numbers who call God their Father are yet children of the devil. Great is the glory and blessedness of adoption; and on the other hand, great is the misery of those who are destitute of this grace. Moreover, we may certainly know that we are the sons of God; and without some measure of this certainty, we cannot truly address God as our Father, or pray to Him with assured confidence. Yet such assurance cannot be attained

without serious search and all diligence. For these reasons, it is required that we should hear and obey the Divine injunction—“Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownelves. Know ye not your ownelves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.”* The *marks* of sonship are plainly stated in the Word, and though they are numerous and diversified, and capable of different applications, according to the state and varying spiritual frames of believers, yet, through diligent self-trial and the agency of the Spirit, they may be so ascertained by conscious experience as to issue in assured confidence and joyful hope. The distinctive tokens of sonship are such as these:—*Living faith*, by which we appropriate God as our Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Saviour; *Filial love and obedience*, earnest *spiritual desire* after communion with God, and His gracious presence; the *seal and earnest of the Spirit*, which, in different degrees and at divers times is imparted to all the sons of God; *complacency and delight* in fellow-saints, and *filial trust in and access to God as a Father*, to which the Spirit gives utterance, enabling to cry—Abba, Father. If children,

* 2 Corinthians xiii. 5.

we shall have, moreover, the testimony of the Spirit witnessing with our spirits to our sonship. This testimony is no vain imagination or mere excitement of human passion, but the genuine internal record and utterance of God who cannot lie, speaking in the hearts which He has made His holy habitation and temple. Wherever it is given, the indwelling Spirit disposes and enables His subjects to live to God. He “convinces,” on the one hand, “of sin,” and leads to forsake it; and on the other, He “convinces of righteousness,” and leads to *walk in the Spirit*, in the path of holy obedience. By this Spirit, we crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; and mortifying the deeds of the body, we are enabled to abound in the fruits of righteousness.* A due consideration of the obstacles and obstructions which hinder us from discovering the certainty of our sonship, will, not unfrequently, furnish some comfortable evidences of our sonship. A holy dread of sin, fear of apostacy, hypocrisy, and spiritual desertion, and reverential awe of the Divine Majesty—these are inseparable from the Spirit’s leading the sons of God. The heart and spirit are confirmed in the belief of our own adoption through Divine *promises*, by the

* Galatians v. 19—26.

power of God, which keeps through faith unto salvation; and by the “*Spirit of grace and supplication*,” which ever prompts, at all times, and in all duties, difficulties, and trials, to cry, “Abba, Father.”

4. It supplies *the strongest motives to seek the blessing of sonship*. We have the fullest assurance that God is willing to take sinners into this honourable relation, and to confer upon them all its unspeakable privileges. He addresses them in terms of moving pity and tender mercy. “Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?” When He asks, “How shall I put thee among the children?” He Himself points out the way—“Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me.”* Revealing Himself as ready to adopt enemies and rebels into His family, He makes known the *means* by which they may infallibly obtain this dignity. “Come out from among them and be ye separate.” The way is, moreover, *easy*. It is by faith, embracing Christ as He is freely offered to us in the gospel, and through power imparted from Himself. † Thus may sinners, lost and perishing, at once attain the state and privilege of adopted children, and escape for ever the misery of them that remain

* Jer. iii. 19.

† John i. 12.

far from God and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The privilege of sonship, which was matter of the Divine purpose from eternity, and to obtain which the ransom-price was paid, becomes ours in spiritual regeneration, which is wholly supernatural and gracious. By an active living faith we appropriate the Son of God, and are united to Him. Through this vital union we become the brethren and spouse of Christ, and share in one common relation, and in the same blessed privileges. God in covenant is His Father and ours. If we would show that we value the adoption of sons and would realize its precious blessing, we must earnestly, and with holy desire of heart, seek after all *the means* by which faith is excited, exercised, confirmed, and increased. Such are the reading and preaching of the word, the use of the sacraments, acts of penitence, and continual prayer and supplication. While it is ever to be remembered that ordinances are only *means of grace and salvation*, and that they should not be rested in as *ends*, it is to be believed, at the same time, that being Divinely appointed, they are adapted in infinite wisdom to the production of the desired result. By the blessing from on high, which is promised in connection

with any of these means, persons may be brought out from the world, rescued from the power of the Destroyer, enrolled in the family of God, and become heirs of the heavenly inheritance. When such is the rich grace that confers the blessing of sonship, and such the means divinely provided and revealed whereby it is conveyed, how earnestly should we seek this grace! How diligently ought we to use these means! “After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” * “Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time, have I heard thee; and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages. That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth, to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.” †

5. It leads to the *performance of all the offices of sons*. The natural relationship involves in it honour, reverence, love, and obedience to earthly parents; and in the ancient practice of adoption, the adopted owned a debt

* 1 Cor. i. 21.

† Isaiah xlix. 8, 9.

of gratitude and devoted obedience to his benefactor. The spiritual relation requires that we should be earnestly intent on the faithful discharge of all filial offices toward our heavenly Father. Whenever we become members of the family of God, we are constrained to manifest the highest honour and veneration toward Him who has placed us among the children. This honour will be displayed in fervent zeal for His glory, and jealousy of whatever would dishonour or offend Him. We owe Him filial fear, obedience, and submission—the devout invocation of His name, and full confidence in His paternal care and compassion. We are effectually taught to be “imitators of God as dear children,”* and to seek continually to be holy as He is holy, and “perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.” As the Only-begotten Son of God has procured for us, through His redemptive work, all the blessing, and is not ashamed to call us brethren,—as in His filiation lies the foundation of our adoption—as He confers upon us both the birth-right and the blessing of the First-born, and we are constituted fellow-heirs with Him; we are under the highest obligation to give Him all love, honour, and obedience. His name should

* *Ephesians v. 1*—So is the meaning of the original term.

ever be to us as “ointment poured forth ;” and as blessed in Him, we should call Him blessed with the high praises of our mouth, and the supreme homage of our hearts and lives. To the Holy Spirit—the great Agent of our calling, regeneration and adoption—the seal and earnest of our sonship—we owe all reverence, honour, and dutiful submission. We should cherish His motions, follow His leading, and diffuse around the savour of His graces. We should bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and, surrendering ourselves to His holy influence, we should live as temples of the Holy Ghost, and a habitation of God through the Spirit. To fellow-saints of the household of faith—our brethren in Christ—we should manifest the tenderest charity and complacential delight. We owe them all offices of love and friendship, and are called habitually as members of the same body—in vital union with the One Glorious Head—to bear one another’s burdens, and in heartfelt sympathy to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep.

The children of God, in the diversified duties which result from the relation in which they stand to their heavenly Father, to Christ the Elder Brother, and to the company of the redeemed, are especially required—

1. *To labour for the good of the Church.* The Church is the Elect Spouse of Christ—the “mother” of all believers. They are born in Zion. Under the shade of “the Apple Tree,” their mother brought them forth; “there she brought them forth that bare them.”* The Church is the grand instrument for making known God’s light and salvation, and for blessing the nations. To her, the children of God on earth are indebted for all privileges and blessing. When called out of the world, they are brought to Zion. Their new spiritual life was communicated in connection with the ordinances of the Church; and through these they grow in holiness, and are nourished up to life eternal. Their advancing spiritual knowledge—their growth in grace—the maturity of their character, and even the blessing upon their temporal lot and stations, are through the Church of Christ. “The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion; and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.”† Those who thus receive the greatest benefits through the Church and her ordinances, are surely under the highest obligations to seek her good alway. The spiritual prosperity of Zion is a blessing to all her true members. A season of

* Song viii. 3.

† Psalm cxxviii. 5.

gracious revival brings quickening, refreshment, and joy to all within the church, as well as to others that are awakened and attracted to her fellowship. The children of God are bound to promote the purity of the church—to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and to labour devotedly to “strengthen her stakes, and lengthen her cords,” and to “stretch forth the curtains of her habitation.”* The church is the designed instrument of her own enlargement. Ever should it be borne in mind that it is not by adventitious and foreign aid, but by the holy lives and self-denying and prayerful efforts of her believing members that her fellowship is blessed, her boundaries enlarged, and the grand objects of her organization and mission are to be accomplished. The sons that she has brought forth are to be her first and most effectual help; and when a time of revival and enlarged blessing comes, she is represented as “a mother of sons full of joy,” exclaiming—“Who hath begotten me these? These, where have they been?”† The Saviour, when He displayed His authority and glory in purging the Temple, declared—“The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.” The like holy emotion must characterize the children whom God

* Isaiah liv. 2.

† Isaiah xlix. 21.

hath given Him. This is at once a sure mark of their sonship, and a chief part of the service which the faithful are required to render for the promotion of the Divine glory in the earth. "Go, my Son, work this day in my vineyard." "They shall prosper that love thee." "For my brethren, and companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."*

2. They are to make *efforts for the promotion of the Truth*. The gracious liberty of the sons of God is from the Son, and through the *truth*.† The word of truth wrought their deliverance from ignorance and the bondage of sin. It is the grand means of their sanctification, and through it they have fellowship with the saints, strong consolation, and a joyful hope. The diffusion of truth in the earth dispels the darkness of ignorance, error, and idolatry that envelopes the nations. The victories of the truth are the triumph of Christ over His own and His people's enemies; and His dominion established in the earth is the reign of truth and righteousness. The abundant blessing of the latter days comes in intimate connection with obedience to Divine precepts. "Speak ye every man truth to his neighbour: execute the

* Mat. xxi. 28; Psalm cxxii. 8, 9. † John viii. 32, 36.

judgment of truth and peace in your gates ; love the truth and peace.”* Those who have experienced the saving power of the truth as it is in Jesus cannot but be “zealous for the truth in the earth.” It is the source of all peace, and hope, and joy to themselves—their richest and most valued treasure ; and hence they cannot but earnestly desire that others may know it and enjoy its precious benefits. The “banner” which is given them they hold fast and “display because of the truth.”† By fervent prayer, they seek that the word of the Lord may have “free course and be glorified.” And by personal, individual, and united exertions they labour that ignorance, idolatry, and error—all “the wicked way of lies”—should be banished from the earth, and that the empire of truth and holiness be universally established.‡

3. The children of God are the *appointed instruments of the world's conversion*. The world was created *by* and *for* Christ. The grand design of Infinite wisdom and love from eternity—often declared in the sure word of prophecy—was that “all ends of the earth” should “see God's salvation”—that “all kindreds of the nations” should do homage to the enthroned Redeemer, and that “the whole

* Zech. viii. 16, 19.

† Psalm lx. 4.

‡ Isaiah ix. 7.

earth should be filled with His glory." To effect this blessed consummation, all movements and events in providence are rendered subservient. All agencies, friendly and hostile, are made to work out the accomplishment of the Divine purpose. Wars and revolutions throughout the nations remove obstacles to the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. The Gentiles bring their riches and glory to Zion. "The Kings of Tarshish and of the isles bring presents," and gifts are offered by "Sheba's and Seba's King." "The flocks of Kedar shall be gathered" into the church of Christ; "the rams of Nebaioth shall minister" unto her. "They shall come up with acceptance" on God's altar, and by them He "will glorify the house of His glory."*

But whatever means are furnished in providence for the world's conversion, or brought by the sovereign power of the Redeemer from those who own not His supreme authority, it is undeniable that the grand instrumentality for effecting this great purpose is that of those who, as children of God, have His kingdom of peace, and righteousness, and joy within them. They are called to make known His renowned fame, and to proclaim His salvation to the

* Isaiah lx. 7.

ends of the earth. The grand principle of Christian missions is *faith* in the person, atonement and universal Headship of Christ; and their spirit is *love*—supreme to God in Christ, and the love of benevolence to all men. None are conscious of the exercise of this principle, and of the constraining influence of this spirit, but those who, believing on Christ, have become the children of God, and who have been taught by the Spirit to live not to themselves, but to Him who died and rose again.

What has been termed the “Era of modern missions” is yet in its comparative infancy. Slow has been their progress, and little their success, when compared either with the church’s obligations, the marked indications of the Divine purpose for the world’s conversion, and the numerous facilities that have been presented in providence for the prosecution of this great work. Do we inquire the causes? Among the chief are the limited measure of the Spirit’s influence upon the church, and the want of a converted and devoted instrumentality for the evangelization of the nations. Soon as the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, promised for the latter day, shall be given, the isles shall wait for Messiah’s law; nations shall be born in a day; the idols shall be abolished; and

“the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”* In the days of Apostolic Christianity—the season that immediately succeeded the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit—the tidings of the Gospel spread rapidly from land to land; great was the company that proclaimed salvation, and multitudes believed and were added to the church. The primitive Christians realized the dignity and obligations of their sonship. When called to strenuous efforts and embittered sufferings, the conscious sense of their spiritual relation and privileges enabled them ever to glory in the Cross of Christ; and their ardent love to the Saviour impelled them to labour continually, and make cheerful sacrifices that they might bring the world into willing subjection to the dominion of the Redeemer. When a like devoted instrumentality shall be raised up, and the same spirit shall generally take possession of the church, there will be a real and rapid progress made in the great work of the world’s conversion. Numerous lives will be freely offered on the altar of Christian missions for consecrated effort; worldly substance will be largely dedicated—fervent united prayer will be poured out for the

* Habbakuk ii. 14.

coming of the Kingdom of Christ, and all subsidiary means suitable for producing the desired effect will be supplied. The sons of God will manifest intense concern that their Father's name be universally hallowed. Those who have become partakers of the Saviour's grace will yield themselves as willing labourers for advancing His renowned fame. The Jews converted, and restored to the family, will be the heralds of the Redeemer's cross to others, and their ingathering shall be the means of extensive and blessed revival to the church and the world—"as life from the dead." With the prospect so bright and glorious of the world's future conversion, should not the children of God consider solemnly their manifold obligations, and act as becomes their high vocation? Should they not esteem it their high honour and privilege to consecrate themselves to the great work of bringing the world into willing subjection to Christ, and of establishing His kingdom in the earth?

This demands of us *fervent prayer*—*personal, sustained, self-denying effort*—the *liberal dedication of worldly substance* to the cause of Christ, and the *full consecration of influence* to the great work of the world's conversion. That all nations may call the Saviour blessed, and

the whole earth be filled with His glory, it is predicted—"To Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised."* The servants of Christ, feeling that they owe to Him everything, in consecrating themselves to His work, dedicate, at the same time, their substance for the promotion of His glory. They "abound" in the grace of liberality. They are brought to know the words of the Lord Jesus, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." They recognize all their store of worldly things as coming from God, and esteem it at once their duty and privilege—of His own to give Him. Among the first and chief of their petitions, and that which influences all others, they daily pray—"Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done as in heaven, so on earth." Blessings of the highest value to themselves they seek in prayer, only as means for the accomplishment of the great end of the nations being brought to obedience to Christ, and of the whole earth being filled with His glory. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon the earth—Thy saving health among all nations."†

* Psalm lxxii. 15.

† Psalm lxvii. 1, 2.

6. It supplies *all spiritual consolation, and the assured hope of final salvation.* The Spirit who regenerates the children of God is the promised Comforter, given to dwell in them and abide with them for ever. The faith by which they obtain power to become the sons of God yields “strong consolation,” as they flee for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them. Their relation to the Divine family is eminently fitted to impart to them all spiritual comfort. Their heavenly Father is “the God of all consolation” and “Hope;” and He, in answer to prayer, fills them “with all joy and peace in believing, that they may abound in hope, according to the power of the Holy Ghost.”* An interest in the Father’s pity and unchangeable love—the absolute and unconditional promises of the Covenant, their relation to Christ the Elder Brother, and the agency of the Holy Spirit in applying the purchased redemption—in dwelling in them, and sealing them to the day of redemption—these are all fitted, in an eminent degree, to inspire believers with assured confidence, to comfort their hearts in trouble and affliction, and to fill them with a blessed and joyful hope. Afflictions are sent in the dispensation of the Cove-

* Romans xv. 13.

nant, which is ordered in all things and sure. They are the discipline appointed for correction and instruction—the sure token of the Father's love, and the means of perfecting the renewed character and conferring a meetness for the heavenly inheritance. In the darkest night of weeping, the children of God have reason to rejoice, in that the Father dealeth with them as sons. Nothing can possibly separate them from His love. Their afflictions serve to draw forth His paternal pity, and to move His bowels to compassion. Instead of forsaking or casting off in the day of trouble, when they cry from the depths, He hastens to their relief, and He works for them oftentimes speedy and glorious deliverance. The time of trial and sorrow is not unfrequently that in which He gives fuller discoveries of His love, and in which they have the clearer testimony to their sonship. The inheritance reserved for them in heaven is not only kept by the power of God, but when for a season they are “in heaviness through manifold temptation,” the “trial of their faith being more precious than gold that perisheth, is found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* Here, too, is their designed and suitable preparation for the future

* 1 Peter i. 7.

heavenly felicity. Present afflictions, which are “but light and momentary,” “work out a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory,” while they look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal.* To the child of God it is ever all-sustaining and joyful that all that can possibly befall him—his severest afflictions, his sharpest conflicts, his heaviest trials, are ordered in sovereign wisdom and love, so as to promote in the best manner the Divine glory and his own good for time and eternity. His prevailing desire is, that God, in all things, may be glorified; and this He is assured will be effected by means of all that he is called to do and suffer. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” †

Finally, The *blessed Hope* to which the children of God look forward, rests on a firm foundation, and as “an anchor within the veil,” is “sure and steadfast.” It reposes on the person and work of the Mediator, on His unfailling promises, His intercession in heaven, His sovereign dominion over the invisible world, and His absolute authority over the

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

† Romans viii. 28.

universe. The objects of this hope are the attainment of perfect holiness, their admission to heaven at death, the glorious resurrection of their bodies, and their enjoyment of everlasting bliss. These, in connection with the establishment of the kingdom of Christ and their sharing with Him in the dignity of His exaltation, and the glory of His everlasting kingdom, form the grand matters of believers' hope. This hope, begotten in them by the resurrection of Christ, at the time of their adoption, is *living, good, such as never to make ashamed, and joy-inspiring*. According as we cherish the spirit of adoption and "walk as dear children," it becomes more vigorous, and expands and shines more brightly to the perfect day. When our allotted work is completed, and conflicts and trials are ended, and our time of long waiting and expectation has come to a close, then will be fully realized all the glorious objects of the believers' blessed hope. "At the evening time it shall be light." "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness; I shall see Thy face in righteousness." To them who have fought the good fight and finished the course, and kept the faith, the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give "the Crown of righteousness." In that day it shall

be said by all the holy, happy family of God, and by each individual, as they are brought fully home to their Father's house—"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him; and He will save us. This is the Lord, we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." *

* Zech. xiv. 7; Psalm xvii. 15; 2 Timothy iv. 8—10;
Isaiah xxv. 9.

APPENDIX.

I.—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

Instead of the view of the Divine Fatherhood, which is presented in the Doctrinal Standards of the Reformed Churches, and which we have illustrated in this work, a number of philosophic theologians in these and other countries have assumed the doctrine of the *Universal Fatherhood of God* as the basis of their systems. This they regard as removing objections made by inquiring minds against certain parts of the scheme of Christianity, and as recommending the salvation which they exhibit to universal acceptance. Such writers as *Wilson* in the “*Essays and Reviews*,” and *Maurice* and *Robertson* of Brighton, maintain that God is in the fullest sense the Father of all—that all men are alike His children—that His dealings with them are educational, designed to correct what in them is defective or evil, and to improve their character—and that, after a probation, more or less lengthened, of suffering, all His wandering children, even the most rebellious and depraved, shall be brought back to a Father’s bosom and admitted to felicity in His house for ever. *Wilson* speaks of the future Universal Restoration at the close of the Christian dispensation, and of that which it is its grand design to effect, in these terms—“When the Christian Church, in all its branches, shall have fulfilled its sublunary office, and its Founder shall have surrendered His Kingdom to the Great Father, all, both small and great, shall find a refuge in the bosom of the Universal Parent, to repose, or be quickened into higher life, in the ages to come, according to His will.”

Maurice holds that Christ was the archetype of all humanity when the worlds were made, and therefore that all men stand in the relation of sons toward God—not by virtue of their simple connexion with Adam, but because

of their common relation to Christ. He teaches expressly that God is *merely* the Father of all men in Christ, the Son. Mankind are His children, not by adoption, or by grace, but by nature. Their sonship, too, can never be disannulled, or done away. They can never be for a moment separated from the Son. Their being is *of* Him and *in* Him, and can neither be, nor be conceived of, apart from Him. Being thus necessarily and essentially one with the Son, and in Him united to the Father, no atonement, in a proper sense of that word, can be needed to bring nigh those who can never be far off; and no judicial condemnation can be pronounced on those who must ever be identified with the Son."* In one of the most vivid and eloquent of the sermons of *Robertson* of Brighton, when maintaining, in his peculiar way, the doctrine of the Universal Fatherhood of God, he teaches that "the Elder Son" in the parable of the Prodigal Son is a real Christian, perplexed with God's mysterious doings—one of those happy persons who have been filled with the Holy Ghost from their mother's womb, and who, on the whole (with imperfections, of course,) remained God's servant all his life. For this is His own account of Himself, which the Father does not contradict. It is not surprising that *Mr Robertson*, with his loose rationalistic sentiments, should give such an exposition; but it certainly does appear remarkable that *Professor Crawford*, in his excellent work on the "Fatherhood of God," should endorse an interpretation, which the context plainly forbids.

The Universal Fatherhood of God, advocated by these writers, is substantially the doctrine of Unitarians, and was in part taught by some of the early Pelagian writers. The arguments adduced in favour of it are partly taken from analogy misapplied, and partly from figurative expressions of Scripture. In the former case, the name Father, taken from human relations, when applied to God, is made to contain all the ideas which are usually attached to the paternal character among men. Hence love and mercy so predominate, that all idea of penal punishment inflicted, through the demands of justice, upon rebellious sinners, is excluded. The mercy of God is considered as triumphing over justice, and the common view of the ignorant and ungodly is substantially adopted

* *Maurice's Unity of the New Testament*—p. 56, 540.

by these philosophic theologians—namely, that God is too merciful to punish sinners with final exclusion from heaven, and that they will in the end, through the Divine clemency, be admitted to everlasting happiness, whatever were their characters and lives on earth. The reasoning employed in this case is a striking instance of what *Whately* shows on “Fallacies” in his *Logic*, the influence of analogical terms, in leading persons into erroneous views in theology, and this, he adds, often happens, more from want of caution, than from any deliberate intention to deceive. A notable instance of this we have in the Lectures of *Rev. John Scott Porter* on the Atonement, in which he prefixes to several of them Scriptural texts that speak of God in His Fatherly character. These have no proper bearing on the subject discussed; but they are adduced for the purpose of setting aside the idea of penal suffering for sin inflicted by God on His Son.

The other method to which these writers resort for proving the Universal Fatherhood of God is quoting a number of passages chiefly from the Old Testament, in which God is spoken of as the Father of man in general—of Israel when backsliding and rebellious, and of the world lying in wickedness. It would furnish a sufficient answer to this argument to show that the term Father is frequently used in the Scriptures in a figurative sense. It is applied to a Teacher—his pupils being styled sons (1 Sam. ii. 12; 2 Kings ii. 12., xxii. 14; Isaiah xxii. 21). At times it is used for a Deity worshipped—the worshippers being called sons or daughters. God is called the Father of Israel, as being the Founder and Protector of the nation (Deut. xxxii. 18; Exod. iv. 22, 23; Isaiah xliii. 6; Jer. xxxi. 9). The name Father again is used as synonymous with “Maker,” “Creator,” (Jer. iii. 27; Psalm lxviii. 5). In these cases, and others that might be adduced, it is palpably opposed to all right principles of Biblical interpretation, and of sound reasoning, to take a term which is used figuratively, and to employ it to express, in a strict literal sense, proper paternity, as is done by the advocates of the Universal Fatherhood of God. The doctrine which these theologians assume as the basis of their system strips God of some of his essential perfections—is wholly opposed to the doctrine of original sin—denies the atonement of Christ in any proper sense of the term, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. It is, besides, brought forward by its leading abettors to sup-

port their favourite dogma of universal restoration. However plausible it may appear in modern speculation, it is alike opposed to sound philosophy, and the whole scheme of Divine revelation; and is subversive of the grand fundamental principles of the scheme of redemption by grace and through the atonement of Christ.

Several of the views presented in this note are taken from a work on the "*Fatherhood of God, and its relation to the Person and work of Christ, and the Operations of the Holy Ghost*," by C. H. H. Wright, Dublin.

II.—ON THE SPIRIT'S WITNESS.

In *Manton's* "Discourses on the Lord's Prayer," there are various views of the witness of the Spirit to the saints' sonship, presented with the clearness and fulness which distinguish the writings of that eminent Puritan. In answer to the question—"What is the Spirit's Witness?" *Manton* remarks:—

"1. The Spirit beareth witness to our spirit, by laying down such marks as we, by our own spiritual sense and renewed conscience, feel to be right within ourselves. This is the main thing called the "Witness of the Spirit."

"2. He worketh such graces as are peculiar to God's children, and are evidences of our interest in the favour of God; and, therefore, it is called the "Manifestation of the Spirit"—(2 Thess. ii. 13); and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost,"—(Titus iii. 5). As John knew Christ to be the Son of God by the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him—(John i. 32), so, by the Spirit's work and inhabitation, we know whether we are the children of God or not; whether we dwell in God and God in us, because of His Spirit that He hath given us; that is, because of those graces wrought in us. And this is called "the seal" of the Spirit; for the Holy Ghost, stamping the impress of God upon the soul, working in us an answerable likeness to Christ, is said to be the seal: then we have God's impress upon us.

"3. The Spirit goes further: He helps us to feel and discover those acts in ourselves. There is often a stupid

deadness in the conscience, so that we are not always sensible of our spiritual acts. Hagar saw not the fountain near her until God opened her eyes; so we may not see the work of the Spirit without the light of the Spirit. We cannot see grace in the midst of so much weakness and imperfection. There is a misgiving of conscience, therefore the spirit of sanctification is a "Spirit of revelation."—(Eph. i. 17). The author of grace is the best revealer and interpreter of it; He works, and He gives us a sight of it. As a workman that made a thing can best warrant it to the buyer, he knows the goodness and strength of it, and how it is framed and made; so the Holy Ghost, who works grace, reveals and discovers this grace to us.

"4. The Spirit helps us to compare ourselves with the rule, and, accordingly, to judge of our sincerity: The Spirit opens our understanding that we may be able to discover the intent and scope of the scripture. "In thy light shall we see light." We are apt to misapply the rule so as to judge of our own actions.—(Rom. ix. 1). "I lie not, the Holy Ghost bearing me witness"—says the Apostle Paul, when speaking of some eminent thing wrought in him. We are apt to lie, and forge, and misapply rules, comforts, and privileges; but by means of the Holy Ghost bearing witness with our spirits, we come to have a certainty. There are so many circuits and turnings in the heart of man that we are not competent judges of what is wrought in us. Therefore to the Spirit is usually ascribed the searching of the heart.—(Ps. cxxxix. 7). "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?"—(Acts v. 4). "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The Holy Ghost is particularly spoken of rather than any other person of the Godhead, because it is His personal operation to abide in the hearts of His people, and to search and try the reins.

"5. As the Spirit helps us to compare that which is wrought with the rule, the impression or thing sealed with the stamp, or the thing sealed, so He helps us to conclude rightly of our estate. For many times, when the premises are clear, the conclusion may be suspended either out of self-love, in case of condemnation, or out of legal fear and jealousy in case of self-acquittal. Therefore the conclusion is of the Holy Ghost.—(John iv. 13). "Hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and Him in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." There is a

great deal required to do to bring us to heaven with comfort. There needs a person of the Godhead to satisfy us, as well as to satisfy God, and help us to determine concerning our condition.

“6. He enlivens and heightens our apprehensions in all those particulars, and so fills us with comfort, and raiseth our joy upon the feeling of the sense of the favour of God ; for all this is the fruit of His operation. Therefore it is said, Rom. v. 5, “The love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” Those unspeakable glimpses of God’s favour, and sweet manifestations of God’s love in the conscience which we have, are given by the Holy Ghost. There is not one act of the soul but the Holy Ghost has a stroke in it for our comfort. In every degree all comes from God. So that if you would know what the witness of the Spirit is—consider what are the marks in Scripture? what graces are wrought in your hearts? How doth the Spirit help you to discern those graces—to compare them with the rule—to make accordingly in these things a determination of our condition? and what joy and peace have you therefrom wrought in your hearts by the Holy Ghost? For an immediate testimony of the Spirit, the Scripture knows of no such thing. All other is but delusion besides this.”

Manton further shows that there are certain *fruits* and *effects* which are the *sensible witness* of the Spirit to the soul. Of the fruits of the Spirit which evidence our sonship, he notices

“1. *Prayer, by a kind of naturalness or delight in this duty of holy commerce with God*, (Rom. viii. 15 ; Gal. iv. 6. ; Zech. xii. 10). Whenever the Spirit of God is dispensed, the heart of that man will be often with God. The “Spirit of grace” will put him upon supplication ; he will be often acquainting God with his desires, wants, fears.

“2. *They will be mainly carried out to their inheritance in Heaven.* They who are the children of God look after a child’s portion, they will look for an estate in heaven, and cannot be satisfied with present things. Worldly men have their reward.—(Matt. vi. 2). If they may have plenty, honour, worldly ease, and delights here, they never look after heaven. A servant has his reward from quarter to quarter, but a child waits until the inheritance comes. So when we are begotten to a lively

hope, when there is a heavenly-mindedness in us, this is a fruit of the Holy Ghost in the heart, whereby we may know that we are the sons of God.—(Rom. viii. 23).

“3. By a *child-like reverence and dread of God, when we are afraid to offend God.* When a child of God is assailed with temptation, his heart recoils, and he reasons thus—“How can I do this wickedness and sin against God? I dare not, my Father has forbidden me.” There is an awe of the heavenly Father upon him.—(1 Peter i. 17).—*Manton's Complete Works*, vol. i., p. 51—54.

LUTHER ON THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

“This crying of the Spirit is nothing else than a mighty, strong, unwavering, trustful looking with the whole heart to God as a beloved Father by us, as His dear children. And by the child-like spirit there are described the power of the kingdom of Christ, and the proper work, and the true and lofty worship which are wrought in the believer by the Holy Spirit, to wit, the hearty calling upon God, and the consolation whereby the heart is delivered from terror and the fear of sin, and is made satisfied. Where the faith of Christ is, there the Holy Spirit works in the heart this consolation, and sure, child-like confidence. The witness of the Holy Spirit is just this, that by His operation, our heart is possessed of consolation, confidence, and child-like prayer. It is not of ourselves, nor by the law, that we are able to esteem ourselves the children of God; but it is the witness of the Holy Spirit, who in our weakness testifies to this in face of the law and of the feeling of our unworthiness, and makes us certain of it. This testimony takes place, accordingly, in such a way that we also feel and are sensible of the power of the Holy Spirit, as He works in us through the Word, and our experience accords with the word or preaching; for this thou must always feel to be the case with thee, when thou, in need and anxiety, receivest comfort from the Gospel, and overcomest doubt and alarm, that thy heart can firmly conclude that thou hast a gracious God.”—*Luther*, vol. xii, p. 1044—1046 (Walch).

BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH.

The following sweet poem is given in one of the concluding chapters of "*Earnest Hours*," by William S. Plumer, D.D., L.L.D., Professor of Theology, Columbia, South Carolina. It is from the pen of an unknown author. We append it chiefly on account of its child-like, devotional spirit, and as expressing, in appropriate language, the spiritual desires of the children of God as they approach their heavenly home.

Behold, a royal Bridegroom
 Hath called me for his bride!
 I joyfully make ready
 And hasten to his side.
 He is a royal Bridegroom,
 But I am very poor!
 Of low estate, He chose me
 To show His love the more;
 For He hath purchased for me
 Such goodly rich array—
 Oh! surely never Bridegroom
 Gave gifts like these away.

When first upon the mountains,
 I in the vale below,
 Beheld him waiting for me,
 Heard His command to go,
 I, poorest in the valley,
 Oh! how could I prepare
 To meet His royal presence?
 How could I make me fair?
 Ah! in His love He sent me
 A garment clean and white,
 And promised broidered raiment
 All glorious to His sight:
 And then He gave me glimpses
 Of the jewels for my hair,
 And the ornaments most precious
 For his chosen bride to wear.

First, in my tears I washed me—
 They could not make me clean;
 A Fountain then He showed me,
 Strange, until then unseen!

So close I'd lived beside it
 For many weary years,
 Yet passing by the fountain
 Had bathed me in my tears.
 Oh! love, oh! grace, that showed it,
 Revealed its cleansing power!
 How could I choose, but hasten
 To meet Him from that hour?

I said, delay no longer ;
 He surely will provide
 All for the toilsome journey
 Up the steep mountain's side.
 He sought me in the valley—
 He knows my utmost need ;
 He is a royal Bridegroom,
 I shall be rich indeed.
 Rich in His pardoning mercies,
 Bounties that never cease—
 Rich in His loving kindness,
 Rich in His joy and peace.
 So then I took the raiment,
 And the jewels that He sent,
 And, gazing on His beauty,
 Up the hillside I went.
 And still, with feeble footsteps,
 And turning oft astray,
 I go to meet the Bridegroom,
 Though stumbling by the way.

I soil my royal garments
 With earth whene'er I fall,
 I break and mar my ornaments,
 But He will know them all.
 For it was He who gave them ;
 Will He forget His own ?
 Ah ! for the love He bore me
 He called ! Will He disown ?

He sent His Guide to guide me ;
 He knew how blind, how frail,
 The children of the valley—
 He knew my love would fail.
 He knew that mists above me
 Would hide Him from my sight ;
 And in darkness groping
 Would wander from the right.

I know that I must follow slow
Even when I fain would soar ;
That step by step thus upward
My Guide must go before.
Keep close, dear Guide, and lead me—
I cannot go aright ;
Through all that doth beset me
Keep, keep me close in sight.

'Tis but a little longer ;
Methinks the end I see ;
Oh ! matchless love and mercy,
The Bridegroom waits for me—
Waits to present me faultless
Before His Father's throne —
His comeliness my beauty,
His righteousness my own.'"

FINIS.



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