Psalms - Commentaries by James Lampden Harris

The Secret of God, Secret of God, The: 5

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(Concluded from p. 243.)

1.—It appears that the attempt to make all scriptural declarations of glory to concentrate in one has left the church with a very vague and undefined hope of its real glory and almost annihilated that which is its present glory. “There are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial.” True that all glory radiates from Jesus, Who is the Head of earthly as well as heavenly glory. But to understand the church's present position and conduct, it is necessary to distinguish as to what her real calling is. Now as the church is called unto the glory of God, so is she called to be an imitator of God. (Eph. 5:1.) “To live godlily in this present world” is to exhibit the character of God in it, not as that character was displayed heretofore, but as it is now displayed in grace: God is dealing with the world in grace, and the church is to do the same. The only place where God is exercising judgment is among His own people. Alas! how completely is everything subverted: grace to the world, righteousness to the church is God's plan. His saints have reversed the order; harsh judgment on the world, and smooth speaking among themselves, have been a stumbling block in the way of the world, and settled the church in a state of self-complacency.

2.—I would remark that the only nationality of Christian ethics is that they are the practice of those who are in the world but not of the world, in other words of heavenly men on the earth. Wherefore, says the apostle to the Colossians, “if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world, &c?” He would not have them so forgetful of their calling that Jesus Christ had given Himself for their sins, “that He might deliver them out of this present evil world, according to the will of God their Father,” as to think for a moment that they were living in the world. Their calling was to conformity with Jesus; He lived by the living Father. What was He to the world? Nothing indeed more simplifies Christian practice than realizing our proper portion as not of the world but of God. And there is no precept, however hard to the flesh, but what we shall find to exhibit to us the lineaments of the Divine character towards ourselves: the measure we are required to mete to others is that which God has measured to us. “How is the gold become dim? How is the fine gold changed?” To what has not the name of Christian been prostituted? For surely it is a prostitution of its dignity to apply it to the world's service in any other way than grace. “I speak as unto wise men: judge ye what I say.” Is it fitting for heaven-born men to be worldly legislators and politicians? Does this prove that they are of God, or of the world? If the world hear them, is it not because “they are of the world and speak of the world?”

3.—It is most important to perceive the distinct character of the present dispensation, that it is not an improvement of the old, a new piece put on an old garment, but the mystery hidden from previous ages and generations, now brought to light, in reference to the many predictions of the world's blessing. Discrimination here is most needful, because the discovery of the peculiarity of this dispensation immediately shows that blessing cannot be brought about under it. Righteousness, not grace, is the principle to order the world. “A King shall reign in righteousness;” and he that reigns says, “I will not know a wicked person: whoso privily slandereth his neighbor him will I cat off, him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer...He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight; I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord” (Psa. 101). It is therefore morally impossible that general earthly blessing can be secured under the present dispensation, which is one of bearing with evil, instead of punishing it; and therefore so long as the gospel continues to be preached as the testimony to God's grace, the earth's blessing must be deferred. That blessing will not, cannot, be, till God's “judgments are made manifest.” Contempt cast on “the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering,” ushers in “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

4. —I would notice the fallacy of drawing any argument for the union of church and state, from analogy to Israel of old. Let it be admitted for a moment, that the principle of such a union was to be found there, there was only one principle in action, i. e. righteousness. God was then showing His wrath, and making His power known. He had taken onto Himself “a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors” (Deut. 4:34). Such a union therefore was then possible, because God's avowed principle of dealing with man, was righteousness, and His people were then ostensibly under the righteousness of the law; His own people were the instruments of vengeance on His enemies; and their enemies round about them. But surely it is not so now. God's principle towards the world has changed. He is not making “His power and His wrath known,” but “the riches of His goodness and forbearance.” And His own people are called upon to exhibit His own character. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, long-suffering, forbearance,” &c. qualifications by no means suited to order the world. This can only be done by Him who is a “Revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” The attempt has been made to apply Christianity to rule, and the end has been corruption in the church, and insubordination in the state: “the rent is become worse.”

Lastly, I would apply what has been said to one branch of Christian conduct, in which, for lack of discrimination, we have lamentably failed—I mean subjection to the powers that be. To these the Christian is required to yield implicit subjection; and when it comes to the alternative, to obey them or God, then his obedience to God will throw him into suffering from them. Obedience and suffering are the portion of the heavenly man while in this world. Now it has been assumed, hastily assumed, that, because obedience to the powers that be is so strictly charged upon Christians, and that those powers are “ordained of God,” they must necessarily be Christian. Hence Christian privileges have been mixed with civil rights, and Christians have been looking to the powers to reciprocate to them protection and support for their obedience. There is hardly a more glaring instance of the way in which self-love and a desire of ease will make us forget the simplest facts than in the case before us. The powers to which the Christians were called on to show implicit obedience were heathen emperors and magistrates, their most bitter persecutors; and yet they were ordained of God. Nebuchadnezzar, into whose hands God committed such largeness of power, was as much ordained of God as our Edward VI, and a Christian's obedience to a Nero was on the same principle as to Justinian. In fact we have limited God to our notions of propriety; we will hardly permit Him to use the instruments He chooses for holding the world in some degree of order, even now; and therefore we take the ordering of it into our own hands. God paid Nebuchadnezzar for his services that he served against Tire, by

giving him the land of Egypt (Ezek. 29:18-20); and so God now honors those civil rulers in His providence who honor Him.

But this has nothing to do with grace. Cyrus was God's shepherd (Isa. 44:28), yet for a widely different purpose and a widely different reward from a pastor of His church. The principle of obedience to the civil magistrate is one which is entirely independent of their character and of circumstances. In the powers that be, the Christian recognizes God's ordering and yields subjection, not because he is a citizen of this or that country, but because he is a citizen of heaven. Old things have passed away from him; what things he accounted gain before, he now esteems loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Savior; and it may safely be affirmed that a Christian born as to the flesh in this country, but carried by circumstance into Turkey, would, as implicitly and as to God, obey the ruling power in that country as he would the king here. He is brought into subjection to God, and therefore owns God in all His ordinances. Nor is it unimportant to notice, that it is not said that the powers that be are ordained of Christ, but of God; not of Christ as the anointed Man. The time shall be when they will be so ordained. When that shall be made known in act, to which Jesus has now the title (as it is written, “I will make him my first-born higher than the kings of the earth,” Psa. 89:27, “Prince of the kings of the earth,” “Lord of Lords,” and “King of Kings”), then shall He, as King, reign in righteousness, and the Princes shall rule in judgment. But till He, as the anointed Man, reigns, His people cannot be called to rule—their calling is to suffer.

Beloved brethren, “avenge not yourselves,” “be patient till the coming of the Lord.” True, the world is in a dark and fearful confusion; but we cannot right it by intermeddling with it. But we may remove one of the stumbling blocks out of its way, by showing that, through faith in Him Who overcame its we overcome it also; and that we are not in fear now as others, but with that before us which makes our flesh to tremble, and rottenness to enter our bones— “seeing on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming to pass on the earth,” we can rest in the day of trouble, we can “lift up our heads, because our redemption draweth nigh.” J. L. H.

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The Secret of God, Secret of God, The: 4

(Continued from p. 227.)

I would now briefly advert to the distinctness of the glory, into fellowship with which the saints are brought, having nothing at all analogous to it previous to its revelation. It appears to me of importance to remark that the glory of the church is distinctive and characteristic; that it was not directly revealed, previously to the coming down of the Holy Ghost. “None of the princes of this world knew it:” it was what “eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man to conceive.” It is best seen by contrasting it with the proper Jewish expectation of Messiah. Now it is most clear that they looked upon their Messiah as the Redeemer to deliver them and their land; to restore it to fruitfulness, to make them glorious1 as a people in the eyes of all among whom they had been despised; to make them2 also the channel of blessing to others; and all this when Jehovah should be their King “Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously” (Isa. 24:23). Besides all this, there was the real moral glory, “Thy people shall be all righteous,” a people in whose hearts the Spirit of God dwelt. “A new heart also will I give onto you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will give you an heart of flesh and I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and do them, and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers” (Ezek 26:26-28).

Now both in this place and in Jer. 31, where the new covenant3 with the house of Israel is stated at large, its connection with earthly blessing, and the glory of Jerusalem, and the land is most definitely marked; and it is only because we have read those accounts with pre-occupied minds that their strict application to Israel should ever have been questioned. Our Lord evidently alludes to this in His conversation with Nicodemus, “Marvel not that I said unto you, ye (Jews) must be born again;” their earthly blessing was only to be secured by God giving them His Spirit. And when Zacharias under the Holy Ghost, prophesied, it was evidently to the glory of Israel under Messiah. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed4 His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1).

Now the mystery revealed of the church is its oneness with Christ. The Messiah, though of, was distinct from, Israel: the nation was not to be brought into oneness with Him, but He was to be over the nation, to fulfill the good pleasure of God to it. A king and a people are distinct, though they have a common interest, for a king is over his people. On the other hand Christ is never said to be King over His church, but the Head of it as His own body, “Head to His church over all things"; the Bridegroom, and the church His bride: language which while it implies identity, at the same time expresses that distinctness which gives Him the pre-eminence. But the essential characteristic of the church is that its glory is heavenly. Those who believe in Jesus are made one with Him, not as “the Son of David after the flesh,” but as declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.” “The hope set before them is that which entereth into that within the vail, whither the Forerunner is for us entered.” Heaven is now opened, and in it is the resting-place of the church in Christ Jesus.

“To be accepted in the Beloved” to be brought into that complete oneness with Him, so that the love wherewith the Father loved Him, with the same He loves those who by His Spirit are thus made one with Him. To have everything which could be predicted of Him, predicted of the church, this was the mystery, the revelation of which made all old things to pass away, all the long cherished hopes of an Israelite were immediately given up by one who was thus brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son. What a word is that— “Fellowship” between the Creator and the creature, that they should have a common interest the one in the other! It would indeed have remained a hidden mystery, but the Incarnation of the Only-begotten shows how this can be. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should called the sons of God.” “Now are we sons of God,” though what we shall be hath not yet been manifested. It never could have entered into the mind of an Israelite, that such a glory was contemplated, as that any should be so completely identified with Jehovah Jesus,

the God-man, as to have their vile body fashioned like unto His glorious body. But this was the eternal purpose of God, this was in His mind from before the foundation of the world— “Whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.” The Father not only prepared a body for Jesus to suffer in, but likewise a body mystical, in which He should be glorified; for He is to be glorified in His saints. His glory is not only personally to be exhibited, but to be exhibited in and through them. He is not only to bless by His personal presence, but His saints are the channel of blessing to others, as was originally promised to Abraham, “thou shalt be a blessing.” So now the church is the channel of blessing, even in its wilderness state; out of it alone go the living waters. “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Jesus is the well of life, but the stream is dispensed through the church, and what blessedness shall there be when the world to come is no longer under angels, but under Jesus and His saints; the stream of life immediately flowing from Jesus through them, in an unhindered course to others. They shall be a blessing, as they are called to inherit a blessing; they shall be kings and priests unto God, and they shall reign over the earth as kings, and make known (and who so well able as those who know what grace is?) good to others.

“God hath called us into His own kingdom and glory;” “He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is said to Israel, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,” not that they obtain the glory of the Lord. In a word, their glory is distinct from the Lord's glory; that glory is something without them, but the glory of the church is identical with that of the Lord; the church is the vessel filled with glory, the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all. This was a something so far beyond thought, that well might the apprehension of it make old things to pass away.

Again, be it remembered, that the present blessing and glory of the church is distinctly heavenly; Jesus is now in heaven, and His people can only be in Spirit where He is. It seems nothing novel to us to talk of heaven as our place, and of being in heaven, as our glory; yet what does this mean in the mouths of most but that heaven is to be enjoyed after earthly enjoyment has failed? That earth is the place for the enjoyment of the body; and that heaven will receive our departed spirits? But Jesus is “the Savior of the body,” “the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” It was the brightness of the glory of Jesus the Son of Man, which filled Stephen with holy rapture; it was unto that likeness he looked to awake and be satisfied. But the calling of the church is now heavenly, its place now of rest is “in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” Believers now let pass old things, because “their citizenship is in heaven;” “they are no more of the world, even as Jesus is no more of the world.” “As He is, so are they in this world;” as He is the heavenly Man, so are they heavenly men; as He is the beloved Son, so are they sons beloved; as He is heir of all things, so are they heirs of all things. This is their standing, though they be locally in this world. This is indeed the new creation unheard of, unknown before, which places in such pre-eminence the least in the kingdom of heaven. They are heavenly—one with Christ the quickening Spirit, one with Him Who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Here has been the mistake and confusion; heaven has been made the future instead of present blessing of the church. Hence believers have been Christians in hope, but Jews in practice. All hope of earthly blessing ceased with the rejection of Him in Whom alone the earth could be blessed, by those through whom the blessing was to be communicated: “the earth shall hear Jezreel.” From that moment, as was most significantly taught in darkness overspreading the earth, and the vail of the temple being rent, earth was, closed as to blessing from it and “heaven opened.” Those who will be blessed now must follow Jesus the only giver of blessing into heaven, “whither the Forerunner is for us entered;” until He comes from the right hand of the Father, blessing from the earth is barred. What an interesting moment is the present, “the kingdom of heaven opened!” Oh! if men knew but the gift of God, and the present blessing held out to them, how would they “press into it,” how would “they take it by force.” Testimony might be multiplied as to the distinct character and glory of the present dispensation, as being entirely novel, and in no feature corresponding with anything that had preceded. In a word, Christ and the church was the hidden mystery, the secret of God, until revealed by the Spirit coming down from Jesus glorified, not only to testify of it, but also to constitute it. As to what remains, I would apply the truth practically.

The Secret of God, Secret of God, The: 3

(Continued from p. 211.)

I would now state the more direct testimony of the same apostle in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” The preceding verses state what God's good pleasure had been, even the secret of God in His mind from all eternity, not only to have a people on the earth in whom He would be glorified, but sons in heaven; with the Son of His love joint-heirs of all the glory He had given Him. The stability both of that in heaven as well as that on earth could only be in Christ. But the great wonder was that in the introducing of this novel and transcendent glory, it was not confined to those “whose were the promises,” but coming in a way of direct sovereignty on the part of God, and for the express purpose of displaying in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace, “that the Gentiles might praise God for His mercy.” The apostle therefore places Jews and Gentiles entirely on the same level as to this, “In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we (Jews) should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in, Christ; in Whom ye also (Gentiles) after that ye had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance (as common to both) until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”

There was a twofold secret of God now made known. That any should have been chosen to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, was a thing quite novel to those whose proper expectation was Messiah over them, as the Son of David in earthly glory. But there was this besides, that it was to be preached unto the Gentiles, and that they were called into participation of it. Accordingly we find the apostle resuming the subject, chap. 3., “If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward (Gentiles), how that by revelation He made known onto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel; that I should preach among the Gentiles the untraceable1 riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”

And here the mischief of confounding all things, and limiting God to that which occupies our mind, is very apparent. The church has at the same time forgotten her distinctive glory, and learned to be high-minded: to judge from the thoughts of most Christians, one would think that the Jews were kept distinct, and in their present state, to afford them evidence of God's favor to themselves. How little is it remembered, that the mystery made known, was, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ. But there is this, most important to be noticed, that the mystery, then revealed to the apostles by the Spirit, had not in other ages been made known to the sons of men, but from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. Now of “the restitution of all things God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets, since the world began;” so that it cannot be the same with the mystery now made known, and clearly proves that this mystery had not been the subject of prophetic testimony. “Restitution” necessarily implies a previous state, even that in which God had pronounced all things to be very good; and again shall God rest in them when brought back by Him, the Redeemer, even Christ Jesus. But the subject of this mystery had no previous existence, except in the purpose of God, and hence it is always dated by the Holy Spirit, as anterior to creation; “according as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4); “according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ: Who hath abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:9). “In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due time manifested His word through preaching” (Titus 1:2). This proves its complete independence of, and distinctness from, anything that had been known since the world began. Things might have been types of it, or, as the fullness of time approached, there might have been intimations of it; but it was not connected at all in character with those things. It is not a speculative matter, but one of great practical importance; as surely the bulk of scriptural testimony fully demonstrates. In this Epistle for instance, wherein we find the fullness of the church set forth, we find the Spirit in the apostle so speaking as to show us that this with Christ was the great mystery now made known. It is distinctly expressed in chap. 5., “this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church,” and again (chap. 6:19), “and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.” The great mystery then, or secret in the divine mind, now divulged, besides Christ the Head in heavenly glory over all things, is the church, the body of Christ, “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” It is “the church of the first-born [ones], which are written in heaven."2 Now unless its distinct glory, as blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, is seen, its character and service cannot he known. Heavenly glory was that which was not revealed to the saints of old; how could it be until His appearance? even of the Son of man Who is in heaven? “The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath He given to the children of men.”

True, the patriarchs looked for a heavenly city, and confessed themselves, strangers and pilgrims on earth; so likewise David. But whatever the Spirit of Christ in them did testify, was but obscurely; “they searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which should follow, unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Peter 1:10). Abraham, the father of us all, had promises of seed numerous as the stars of heaven, and as the dust of the earth, and doubtless the one to be highly exalted above the other. But the church, in oneness of Spirit and of glory with the risen Lord, into which the saints are now brought, was not known till Jesus was glorified and the Holy Ghost had come. Hence we find the almost universal tenor of prophetic testimony is to earthly glory, which could be apprehended before that Jesus was glorified, although only secured in and by Him. Now the effect of taking promises of earthly glory, and applying them to heavenly, has been to lose sight of the great purpose of God “to reconcile all things to Himself, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth,” by the blood of the cross (Col. 1:20): and “to gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth” (Eph. 1:10), thus placing the stability of both on a sure basis. But this is not all; for the church, taking that to herself which does not distinctly belong to her, has lost sight of what does, and hence has been exhibiting a Jewish character, rather than representing the fullness of Christ.

But before entering at any length into this, there are a few more testimonies to the point before us to be noticed. “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:25-27). Again, (Col. 2:2-4), “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ; wherein (i.e., in the mystery, margin) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Now here we have, first, the originality of that which was in the mystery, that it had been previously hidden from ages and generations. 2.—That there are riches of glory in it. 3.—All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are laid up in it. Well therefore might he ask the Colossians to pray that God would open a door of utterance “to speak the mystery of Christ.”

The passage in 1 Tim. 3:16 has been referred to for the point then in hand; but I would again notice that the fact of Incarnation was not a Jewish expectation, however the promise of Immanuel may appear to us to have properly raised it. For we find that it was a matter of distinct revelation to Peter. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;” “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven” “God manifested in the flesh” was the great secret; He had spoken to them in divers ways before, but now He comes so near as to speak by His Son. This is the basis of everything: the moment the mystery of Christ is revealed, then, as led by the Spirit, are we capable of looking backward or forward into the counsels of God. With the soul resting on the great fact of God manifested in the flesh, as spiritual we may judge all things, see the several bearings of God's precious revelations, and learn the important truth of the instability of every creature out of God—in a word, learn “Christ the power of God and wisdom of God.”

The Secret of God, Secret of God, The: 2

(Continued from page 195.)

The commission given to the apostles before His death is widely different from that after His resurrection. “Go not into the way of the Gentiles (nations); and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But when all the power in heaven and earth was given to Him, then the commission takes in the universal range, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations.” It was no longer matter of testimony to Israel only. Jesus was made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of God unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; it was now grace to sinners. But this large commission was not then

acted on. Even after His resurrection, those who were conversant with Him during His sojourn on earth, “to whom He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,” even then their minds were only opened to a Jewish hope. “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” This was their proper hope as Israelites, that all the promises of earthly glory should be made good to Israel in the resurrection of Messiah. The everlasting covenant, “even the sure mercies of David,” was secured by the resurrection, as the apostle testifies; and as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, “I will give you the sure mercies of David” (Acts 13:34). He had now shown His power over death and the world; and so far as earthly glory was concerned, it might then have been asserted. In order to that there was no need for Jesus to have ascended into heaven. He could have called forth Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, from their graves, and made good the promises of God to them, in faith of which they had died.

In their expectation the disciples were not wrong; but they had not yet entered into the intermediate dispensation— “the hidden mystery” of God. They had forgotten that it was expedient for them that He should go away; for all power in heaven as well as earth was given to Him, and thus was to be proved by His ascension.1 Not even on the descent of the Holy Ghost, (although they were “endued with power from on high,” and were thus brought into the understanding of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, in their own personal experience of union with the risen Jesus, as Man having all power in heaven as well as earth) were they led to the discovery “that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs with them in this.” In order to this, a fresh revelation was needed; another “opening of heaven,” and direct communication to him who had had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and had opened it to the Jews (Acts 2), now likewise to open it to the Gentiles. The vision recorded in Acts 10 is the display of God's cleansing, in a sovereign manner, and taking up into heaven that which Peter called unclean. “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” And this was his vindication for going unto the Gentiles. “Forasmuch as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God” (Acts 11:17.) “The mystery of godliness,” therefore, in this part at least, was now clearly revealed, “preached unto the Gentiles.”

But the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles (Col. 1:27) was not yet fully developed. For this another agent was specially raised up, not merely as the witness of resurrection life, but of ascension glory—even the apostle of the Gentiles. He received no commission from Jesus on the earth, but from Jesus “received up in glory.” The thing to which he was specially to witness was the glory to which Christ was exalted, and unto which the saints quickened by the Spirit were also called. The other apostles “bear witness because they had been with Him from the beginning” (John 14:27). “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one [be ordained to] be a witness with us of His resurrection.” They were witnesses to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. But Paul was witness to something beyond this fact. “The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth; for thou shalt be His witness of what thou hast seen and heard” (Acts 22:11, 15). And when he would assert the authority of his commission in the strongest way, he notices its distinction from that of the others:Paul an apostle (not of men, nor by man, but) by Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead. It was Jesus Who appeared when in the way; and there shone around about him “a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun,” so that he fell to the earth. Peter, James, and John were eye-witnesses of His majesty at the transfiguration; but Paul, as subsequently John, of His majesty after His ascension. This was what he had seen, and of which he was to witness, according to the word of the Lord, Who raised him from the earth to which he had fallen. “Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee” (Acts 26:16).

“Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” God has never adopted any remedies, but His works have been all arranged according to the counsel of His own wisdom. True, His works may appear to our short-sightedness remedial, because He will show that His purpose alone can stand by the failure of the creature tinder the highest possible advantages. But there is a fullness of time for the development of that which is in His mind, and His own eternal counsel is the last manifestation. All the blessing and glory was planned and secured in Christ Jesus before the world began. First of all, earthly blessing fails, and then those who are outwardly called into the kingdom of heaven fail; but in the end the stability of both in Christ Jesus is to be shown. Hence the apostle speaks of himself and others, “Let a man so account of as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;” not the one without the other; not simply preachers of the gospel, but those who would be able to set forth the bearing of God's dispensations.

It is remarkable how men may be misguided by a word. It is a just rule that the meaning of a word is not to be judged of by its currency at any time, but by the sense in which the writer used it. Now the word “mystery” conveys to our natural minds an idea quite distinct from that in which the Spirit of God uses it. The mysteries2 of God are not the secrets known in His own breast, but His secrets disclosed. What was known unto Him before the foundation of the world is now made known to us. For example, it was a secret in God's own bosom, from the beginning of the world, that all His earthly arrangements were made in reference to Israel. But that purpose was revealed to and by Moses. “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut. xxxii. 8). True, such a statement may appear mysterious to the world, in the popular sense; but to faith it is the announcement of a wonderful fact, involving the whole history of the world. True, most trim, that there are mysteries in God (for we know but in part); but it is not with these that we have to do, but with those which He has revealed. Because so few have been faithful stewards of the mysteries3 of God, does the church lie in the state in which it is, having confounded things that differ; and, instead of being guided into all truth, is quite content to think that a single truth is enough for it to know, and that all God's truth is necessarily crowded into that which ministers to its self-complacency.

Whilst the grace of the Gentile dispensation was a secret only made known on the work of Christ being finished, its unparalleled glory was that “which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man to conceive,” till God revealed it by His Spirit. It was not the glory which forms the chief subject of direct prophecy, for that is earthly glory; it may glance at the other allusively, but Jewish expectation was not very wrong. It is not by violently wresting language, and giving it a meaning quite different from the literal, which would necessarily be general and vague, that we shall be most fully enabled to enter into the glory into which the faithful are now brought by the resurrection of Jesus, but by learning that the subject was entirely new, unthought and unheard of before.

The scriptural testimony to this is very abundant; and it appears to me important, in every point of view, to sec that the present dispensation is completely sui generis-not an improvement of the preceding, or an introduction to the coming one, but so entirely isolated that its directory of conduct would only apply to itself, that I would note some of the most striking scriptures on this most interesting point.

The language of our Lord (Matt. 13) has already been alluded to; but it is important on this point, as showing that the things which were secret before were now revealed. “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; for verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” In Mark 4:11 there is a little variation, interesting in this point, as pointing to the kingdom itself as having been heretofore a secret thing— “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.” But as the Lord Himself intimated to His disciples that they were not in the capacity of entering into the things of which He was both the Subject and the Communicator, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; and He will show you things to come.” We must therefore look to the testimony of the Spirit through the apostles. And here I would notice that very remarkable testimony to the novelty and distinctness of this present dispensation in Rom. 16:25, 26. “Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.”

Again (1 Cor. 2:6-10), “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God.” “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God: that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” It would be necessary to transcribe the whole chapters iii., iv., and v. of the 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, as bearing on the point. It will be sufficient at present to notice the marked contrast between the former and present dispensation. The ministration of death, written and engraven on stones was glorious; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? “If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” “Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.” This is sufficient to show that there is real contrast rather between the former and the present dispensations—that they are, in fact, as opposite as death and life.

(To be continued.)

The Secret of God, Secret of God, The: 1

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant” (Psa. 25:14).

Among other means by which the word of God, the only standard of truth, has been effectually hindered by man, in the office assigned to it by God, one has been the habit of generalizing God's truth and presenting to the mind certain propositions, as if they contained the whole of His revealed will. Hence has arisen a great impatience of searching the scriptures. We presume very soon that we are in possession of all necessary truth which the word of God contains, because we confine all necessary truth to that which respects individual salvation; and we revere the Bible, rather because it administers to our necessities as fallen sinners, than because it reveals God and His glory. It is for this reason that we find so many real Christians in deplorable ignorance of the word; it has not been searched into as containing, in every part of its revelation, some object of faith or hope, intended to be morally influential upon their souls. They have not sought to it as those whose privilege it is to be interested in all the counsels of their heavenly Father; and they have often read it as if all the truths contained in it were necessarily to be comprehended under those which have occupied their own minds.

It is indeed very sorrowful to witness how often the most important conclusions are attempted to be supported by scripture, wrested from its context in the most violent manner, so that a threatening of judgment is sometimes produced as a promise of mercy. It is not my object to expose this, but to point out two evils which have resulted from it: 1st.—the inability in most Christians, of meeting error which Satan always mingles with much truth, from their being “unskillful in the word of righteousness;” 2nd.—that our present very low state in a great measure arises from the want of that definite apprehension of the glory of our calling, which the word of God presents to our view. In fact whilst, in the language of ordinary life, most words convey to the mind some distinct idea, those of scripture are held so vaguely and loosely, as often to convey no real meaning at all. It is thus that Satan has fearfully succeeded in lulling men into security, when the most express declarations of God fail of touching the conscience, even in His own people. It is thus that the great and fearful crisis is hastening on “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved: and for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in un righteousness.”

It is by the word, through the Spirit, that we can alone become acquainted with, or established, in the truth. And as God has “magnified His word, above all His name,” and called it “the sword of the Spirit” (Psa. 138:2), it is in implicit subjection to that authority, that I would attempt to develop that secret which was in the mind of God from all eternity; which was first in His mind, and of which He gave the earliest typical intimation, but which was not made known till after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, Who leadeth into all truth. It is nothing less than “all truth” which is our portion. God is light, the brightness of His glory has been expressed to us in Jesus; there remains nothing more of revelation by the word, although nearly everything of actual manifestation is yet to be.

Moses truly was commissioned to declare much, but yet he knew he had not declared all, there were secrets in the divine mind which himself and others of the worthies, holy men of old, “desired to see and saw not, and to hear and heard not “; but it was the prophet like unto Moses that was to be received, as he into whose mouth God would put His words, that he might speak unto them all that He should command. He alone was able to declare God (John 1:18). Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Hence the difference of the language of Moses and Paul. The former, led to look into a long vista in the fortunes of His people, lost in the contemplation of the fearful judgment coming upon them, says, “the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children” (Deut. 29:29). But that which He had kept secret from Moses, He had revealed by His Spirit unto Paul, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” “I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is

happened unto Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:25-26). Moses was indeed taught that His people which had corrupted themselves, would be brought into a condition of such estrangement from God, "that He would move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, that He would provoke them to anger with a foolish nation" (Deut. 32:21). The Holy Ghost, by Paul, shows the purpose of God in their temporary rejection; even that by their fall might be "the riches of the world "; by their diminishing "the riches of the Gentiles "; by their casting away "the reconciling of the world "; in other words, the introduction of that dispensation of marvelous grace under which we are. True it is that both its grace and glory are little considered by us "sinners of the Gentiles." In order to see either distinctly, we must place ourselves in the situation of the favored people of God; we must judge through their reasonable prejudices instead of our own fearful high-mindedness and self-complacency. The introduction of "the eternal purpose of God," even the making known unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, was an event for which the minds of God's people were not prepared. It was a something entirely new as to revelation, although first of all in the mind of God: it had been figured in Eden, in the giving to Adam, for a help meet for him, the woman taken from his side whilst he slept; "this is a (or the) great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His church." This great mystery was very gradually unfolded indeed. The personal ministry of the Lord was with very few exceptions; confined to Israel, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But His ministry to them was chiefly in testimony against evil, and, all the while He was testifying unto them as the sent of God and last witness to them, He treated the nation as apostate, and frequently intimated the change in dispensation which was about to be introduced.

Among the first notices of this, we may remark the sermon on the Mount; every line of which went against a strictly Jewish feeling. I mean the feeling of one who considered himself as under the law, and therefore that law (i.e., the assertion of right) was the rule between Himself and others. Law, properly speaking, knows nothing of mercy; the assertor of it must necessarily take the place of one who has not swerved from the rule of right himself, and therefore with others who have transgressed that rule has the title to deal in the way of retributive justice. "The people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority." It was His own authority as the Lawgiver, set against that which was said to them of old. And unless even now we see distinctly, how completely the genius of the present dispensation is diverse from the former, we are necessitated to charge God foolishly, and to set God speaking by Moses against God speaking by His Son; or to do that which is now so commonly done, to confound and therefore to neutralize both. The principle is "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). So now, the kingdom being changed from an earthly to a heavenly one, the law is of necessity changed also. Whilst God dealt with a people under a dispensation of righteousness of law, it is plain that their earthly blessing (and the law as given by Moses knew no other) depended on their obedience to it, "for he who despised it died without mercy:" this was the tenure of their blessing, "if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people, for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". Whilst this was the case, God made His own principle of conduct applicable to His people. He was dealing with them ostensibly in law, and therefore He sanctioned that same principle, even law as between man and man. But when God changed His principle of dealing with man from law to grace, then was a new principle of man's conduct to man necessarily introduced also. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ "; and He by whom grace came could say, not as disannulling or falsifying what went before (for surely not one jot or tittle shall pass away, till all be fulfilled), but as introducing the great mystery of the grace of God, "It was said to them of old, but I say unto you." Our calling is not now to prospective blessing, or continuance of blessing under conditions performed. "But God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace; which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." And therefore our conduct to others must be regulated by the principle of God's conduct to us. The principle of God's own kingdom, even the kingdom of heaven, which is grace, is the only one allowed to the children of the kingdom. So that which might be right and fitting to those of old, would be wrong and sinful in a disciple of Him Who only is to be called Master. Hence we discover the reason why Christians so naturally cling to law as their principle of action, since it allows their dealing towards others on a principle which went to secure earthly blessing, whilst grace applies only to heavenly.

The next notice of this in the Lord's ministry is that remarkable one in the case of the centurion— "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel; and I say unto you, Many shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, &c., in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness." Again the surprising statement the Lord made respecting John, His own forerunner, (filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, greater than any born of women,) that the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he, closing with the solemn warning, "He that hath ears to ear let him hear." It was a plain intimation of the introduction of something widely different from that in which they stood. The declaration of the blessing that rested upon them (Matt. 13:6)—because that unto them "it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," which was not made known to others—was a succeeding step in leading their expectations onward. A subsequent mark of approval of the faith of any Gentile (Matt. 15:22-28) on an occasion which most significantly marked the transfer of that which the children despised and loathed, to others who would gladly receive it, must have raised in their minds the question, "Is He the God of the Jews only?" Is He not also of the Gentiles?

These and many such like kinds tended to prepare their minds for that which they could not then bear, because the groundwork on which it was based—His own sufferings and death—was at that time only prophetically stated, and had not actually taken place. It was when the Gentiles came to inquire concerning Him (John 12:21) that Jesus Himself says, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified;" —and then "I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all unto Me; this He said signifying what death He should die." So long as he was personally ministering on earth, He would be only exposed to rejection. Now the Messiah on the earth was strictly and properly the Jewish expectation. But here is one very different held up to them. The Son of Man must be lifted up! but who is this Son of Man? It was the complete subversion of every fondly cherished hope on their part, as Jews, but it is the only ground of blessing to us as Gentiles. It is in the cross that God is shown as no respecter of persons. The cross is the attractive point to all, because all are brought in guilty before God, both Jew and Gentile. The introduction of this dispensation of grace is on the avowed principle of the universal ruin of the human race. Moral qualification is out of the question: "There is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Take the highest supposed qualification, natural or moral, the principle of grace is nullified, if it is attempted to approach God otherwise than as lost: and the lowest comes in on the same plea. God, by the cross, has set aside the barrier (of His own erecting) of access to Him. "And the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live by them." "Christ hath redeemed us (Jews) from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we (Jews) might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The difficulty in the mind of the Jew, was, Did not their rejection implicate the faithfulness of God? was not the word of God made of none effect? Not in any wise; the Messiah, as concerning the flesh was theirs. He fulfilled in His person and work, all His Jewish responsibilities. "He died for that nation." He underwent the curse of the

law for them, but not for that nation only, but that He also should gather together in one (even in the cross) the children of God that were scattered abroad. Here is the Gentile dispensation; but let not the Gentile deny the proper Jewish expectation, and the work of Christ for them, pre-eminently as the Redeemer of their forfeited possession, lest he invalidate the faithfulness of God which is the alone security for his own blessing. Faith “sets to its seal that God is true “; but if God fulfills not His earthly promises to the literal Israel in Messiah, then the gifts and callings of God can be repented of. In fact God's dealing with the Jew, is the great outward palpable demonstration of His sovereignty and of His election.

Believe and Live, Light at Eventide: The Entrance of Thy Words Giveth Light

“The entrance of Thy words giveth light.” Psa. 119:130

“Draw the curtain back a little, Annie dear, that I may see the sun set, and bring your chair nearer to me, and read something—something that will give me comfort.” And the sick girl sighed wearily, and turned restlessly on her couch, now watching with a troubled look her sister’s movements, as she hastened to fulfill her requests, now fixing her large, lustrous eyes on the deep bay window of her room, through which the sun, setting with unusual splendor for a winter’s afternoon, was plainly visible.

Yet it was not of the sunset that the young. sufferer dreamed, nor of any earthly light, as, presently, she softly murmured, “At evening time it shall be light... at evening time it shall be light;” then, with deep feeling, “O Annie, Annie, it is evening time with me now, but it is not light, it is not light!”

Her sister drew closer still, and took the little wasted, burning hand, which rested outside the coverlid, in both of hers, and, as she looked lovingly on the troubled face of the one so dear to her, her own reflected the trouble of it.

For a moment neither spoke, but hand clasped hand more tightly; then the sick girl broke the silence once more.

“Annie, tell me, tell me truly, if you were as I am, if you were dying, would you be afraid?... Yon need not try to contradict me, dear, I know now that I am dying... I heard every word Dr.— said yesterday... Do not be grieved, my pet sister, it is better I should know, and but for that I should not have guessed it even, for I am not so very ill?” Her eyes had a questioning look, as though she would fain have asked, could she have made a mistake, in spite of the certainty of her previous tone.

Sorrowfully Annie bowed her head; she had no words. The death-knell to all their hopes for that bright young life had been given the night before, when their kind physician, who had known her all her life, and who loved her like his own child, had said, “It is only a question of a week or two at the longest — not that even, if the disease continues to make the same rapid progress.”

This was his judgment, and they had listened to it with the agony only those can understand who have thus hearkened, once at any rate in their lifetime, to words that tell them that the life for which they would gladly lay down their own is ebbing surely and rapidly away; that no love of theirs, no tender care, can stay the loosing of the “silver cord” which binds the beloved one to earth, but that soon, very soon, the parting which looks so terrible must come.

A half-cheeked sob had been Annie’s only answer to her sister’s last words. Each was thinking of the other. Then, as a flood of crimson and golden light poured into the room, the young sufferer returned to her question.

“Would you be afraid, Annie? Tell me.”

“I do not know, Nellie, dear; it is so hard to say beforehand. I do not think I should, and,” she whispered, “you have Jesus, and Jesus will be with you and carry you through.”

“But I am not SURE, and, oh, remember, Annie, it is forever, and forever, and forever. I must make no mistakes now. What can I do to be sure?” and, trembling with emotion, her face flushed with excitement, she raised herself slightly on her elbow, and gazed into her sister’s face.

“But, Nellie, darling, we came to Jesus, you and I both, did we not? and we read together of His love, and His willingness to receive us, in His own Word. You remember the day when we found out we were sinners and needed a Savior, and we came to Jesus. I have never doubted since, and I did not think you had.”

“I was never sure, as you were, Annie, and last night, when I heard the doctor say I must die, and die soon, I was terribly afraid. I used to be happy sometimes, when we were singing hymns together, and when —’s letters came, with the verses of Scripture to meet my dark doubts. I sometimes thought I saw it all for a moment, but the doubts came back, and now am so afraid, and I cannot find comfort.”

“Look to Jesus, Nellie, dear,” her sister tremblingly said, hardly knowing, in her deep love, and sorrow, and anxiety, what to say.

“Yes, but, Annie, He might forget me I’ve known so little about Him, and I have not served Him ... I do not know Him enough to die with, Annie... He might let me go... It is like a big, dark river in front of me, and I am afraid to go down into its deep black waters alone.”

The words were spoken almost convulsively, and the slight frame quivered, as though in mortal agonies. Eternity, in all its reality, was before her, everything she had clung to on earth was slipping from her grasp, and there was not the certainty in her soul that underneath her were the Everlasting Arms.

Have you, my reader, ever for one moment, in the darkness and silence of the night, with no human eye near, faced eternity alone with God, without the peace-giving knowledge that your life was hid with Christ in God, that His life, His joy, His home were yours? If you have thus faced it, in all its solemn reality, you will understand something of this young girl’s agony of soul. I say something of it, for probably you have never yet been in the border-land between time and eternity, with the certainty that there were only a few more setting suns, and then, for you, time would be no longer, and eternity would have begun.

These two young sisters, of whom the dying girl was the elder, had, but a very short time previously, been awakened to a sense of there lost condition, and there need of a Savior, through reading a paper in the pages of “God’s Glad Tidings.” Annie, the younger, had, in simple faith, at once appropriated Jesus as her Savior—His death, His blood-shedding, as the ‘atonement for her sins. She had no questions, no doubts. At the very moment when she discovered her need, the One who could meet that `need was presented to her, and she received Him; and trustfully had citing to Him.

With Nellie it had been different. Though alive to the fact of her need, she had, as yet, never laid bare her soul before Jesus, and let Him meet it all. There had been reserves in her heart, doubts and questionings in her mind; and now with death before her, as she said, she did “not know him enough to die with.”

For a moment, as Nellie finished speaking, her sister leaned her head upon her hand, quietly asking the Lord Jesus she so simply trusted, to come in and lighten the darkness in her sister’s soul. Then she said, “Nellie, Jesus does not want you to go down into the dark waters alone: He will go with you. I know Him well enough to know He will never forget you, never forsake you, if you trust Him. I wish I knew how to tell you better, but I know there is a verse in the Bible that says He will never let anyone go that has come to Him, if only I knew just where to find it.”

Tile dying girl had sunk back on her pillow exhausted, but now she once more raised herself, and said eagerly, “Find it, and show it to me in the Bible itself, Annie, for I cannot believe anything else now! Oh, if it only said He would never let me go!” and the burning flush on her fair young cheek deepened alarmingly.

Afraid of the consequences of such intense excitement, Annie said, soothingly, “Will you not lie still a little while now, and try to be quiet, and tomorrow I will find it, and read it to you.”

“Tomorrow!” answered Nellie, “I may not be here tomorrow, and I might be in hell. ‘It may be very sudden at the last, and she may go at any moment,’” she added, quoting the doctor’s very words. Then, after a moment’s pause, “‘This is not half so bad for me, Annie, as lying thinking of it alone, as I have been all the time, though you did not know it. I cannot rest till I am sure that Jesus will have me, and not let me go.”

Annie felt the truth of her words, and, opening her Bible, searched carefully for the verses she wanted; but she was as yet young in the faith, and knew very little of the Scriptures, and page after page of the precious book was turned over, and anxiously but unsuccessfully examined, while her sister watched her with almost impatient eagerness.

The short January afternoon was rapidly closing in; the last gleam of sunlight was dying away, and Annie was bending low with her little Bible, that the bright firelight might shine on its pages, when a knock came at the bedroom door, and a servant entered with the contents of the evening post-bag.

There were several letters and parcels, but one only, a small pamphlet tied round with a piece of green string, seemed to have any interest for the dying girl, and as soon as the servant had closed the door, after lighting the shaded lamp and drawing in the curtains, she said, quickly and anxiously, “Perhaps God has a message for me in this, Annie. He sent us one before through it; open it for me now.”

Surely the Lord in His pitying love for that poor anxious, weary heart, sent that silent messenger at that very moment, and in even a more seemingly trivial thing still connected with it, His heart assuredly planned, His hand guided.

The pamphlet was the number for January 1876 of “God’s Glad Tidings,” containing the deeply touching story of the conversion and “going home” of “The Young Doctor.” The paper wrapper that had been tied round the little book was folded in at the thirteenth page, by accident doubtless on the part of the sender—by design surely on His part who numbers the very hairs of our head; so that as Annie, at her sister’s anxious appeal, tore the wrapper away, the thirteenth page lay open before her, and the first words that met her eye were, “ Listen to His own words, ‘My sheep know my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any (man or devil) pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.’ (John 10:27-29.) There, will that do?” In loving wonder and praise she read the paragraph through, with its question at the end, which was just her own heart’s question to her sister.

“There, Nellie!” she said, “there are the very verses I was trying to find; God has sent them to you Himself straight. Now, you will believe them.”

Awe, and wonder, and hope, and a dawning sense of relief struggled together on that dying face. “Give me the book, Annie,” she whispered softly, and my Testament, and put the lamp by me, and leave me a little while; you need not fear, dear one, I promise you to ring if I feel worse, or when I am ready for you.” Annie rose and obeyed her directions, only waiting to coax her sister to take part of a glass of fresh milk that had just been brought up.

An hour passed, and Nellie’s bell did not ring, and Annie scarcely dared to intrude, but when another hour had nearly gone by, she crept anxiously to the door, and opened it softly. There was no sound. She moved noiselessly into the room, almost dreading to look towards the bed. But her fears were groundless; the sight that met her eye filled her heart with gladness. Nellie was sleeping sweetly, a half smile on her slightly parted lips, and a look of untroubled peace on her fair young face such as Annie had never seen there before. The little pamphlet, with its precious verses from God’s own Word, was lying open just where the full light from the lamp shone upon it, close by her side, while one hand still clasped her New Testament, opened at the tenth chapter of John’s Gospel, as though she had searched for herself and found the words in her own Bible, and in the rest of soul they had given, the body had found rest also. Quietly Annie sat down and watched her till at last she began to fear lest her beloved sister would never again awaken, and rose anxiously to call their mother and others of the family, praying all the time—oh, so earnestly—for just one word, one assuring word, from her own lips, to tell her for certain fiat the look of rest on her face was the rest that Jesus gives to every weary one who comes to Him.

The Lord gave her, as He delights to do, far more than she asked Him for.

The movement, slight though it was, had awakened Nellie. She opened her eyes, and seeing her sister, said, with a bright beaming smile, “O Annie, I seem almost to have been in heaven. ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ So He came to save me, for that means every sinner, and it is nothing at all to do with my holding on to Him or serving Him well, or even knowing Him well, though I would like to, for He

says, ‘I know them,’ so He knows me well, all my badness too, and yet He says, ‘Neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’... That must mean that I cannot even take myself out of His hand... How good He is! Yes, that will do, even to die with.”

Tears of deep, holy joy filled the eyes of both, and songs of thanksgiving arose from their hearts. Presently Annie asked, “Did you see it at once, dear?”

“No, not at once, When you read those verses I felt there might be something for me; I was sure it was the Lord who had sent that message just then, and I wanted to be alone with Him to have it settled. Then something, I suppose it was Satan, whispered, ‘Yes, He holds His own sheep, of course, but suppose you are not of His sheep at all?’ Then I was as badly off as ever, and even worse, for my hopes had been raised. Then, in my agony, I turned over the pages to see who it was had had this same fear in dying as I, and my eye caught these words a page or two further back, ‘This is a faithful saving, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ Oh, how sweet that word sinners was! ... ‘If I am not one of his sheep I am a sinner,’ I said aloud, Jesus came to save sinners. Even Satan cannot cheat me of that name, a sinner, nor deny His right to save me... and those He saves He holds fast.’... I wonder I did not see it before, but ,... O Annie, what relief it is for peace to come after such agony!”

A smile of almost more than earthly beauty lift up her face, and again her eyes closed, and, though not sleeping, she lay quite still, as though absorbed in her new-found joy.

For some weeks after this Nellie lingered. It seemed as though the entering in of God’s Words had given not only light to her soul at evening time, but even strength to her body, as for a time the very joy of her heart kept above pain and weakness.

One day, when she had been speaking of Jesus very earnestly to a young friend, her mother entered, and seeing her look so bright and animated, said, “Why, Nellie, I believe we shall have you well again, after all, my child.”

“Yes, mother dear, as has made me whole,” she answered; “not as you mean, though,” she added; “I am going to the land where the inhabitants shall no more say ‘I am sick,’ but, better still, I am going to Jesus.”

Nellie could not keep the treasure she had found to herself: her heart was filled with the burning desire to be the means of imparting it to others—to be the channel of communication between a giving God and needy hearts, even though they recognized not their need.

Life was a reality to her, death was a reality, eternity was a reality, and, above all, Christ was a reality, and she longed that others whom she knew and loved, might not wait till a death-bed to have everything thus made real.

“My one regret now in dying,” she said one any to her youngest sister, “is that even eternity cannot give us the honor of being on Jesus’ side when all the world is against Him, of pleasing Him by being loyal and true; but you still have time, Annie dear, to be true to, and to be out and out for Jesus; and to win His ‘She hath tone what she could.’ I shall rejoice to hear Him say this of you in that day.”

Taught by the Holy Spirit, whose delight is to take of the things of Jesus and to show them to us, she learned much in those few short weeks, Whenever it was possible she craved to have the Word of God read to her, or to read it for herself. “I want to know as much as I can of Jesus before I go to Him,” she would say to her sister, who was the sharer of all her thoughts, and to whom this was a time of real profit; for Nellie was the teacher now, instead of the learner, not that she took that place, only there was a constant bubbling up of the living waters wherewith Jesus had filled her soul, which refreshed and strengthened all who came near her.

When the last week in January came to a close, and February set in, it was evident, even to those who tried to blind themselves to the fact, “that Nellie was sinking fast. Her sufferings were intense, so intense that even Annie, who clung to her sister with more than ordinary sisterly love, could no longer desire to keep her here. Yet the young sufferer bore all so uncomplainingly, very unlike the lively, high-spirited Nellie of a few months back, who, though an almost universal favorite, and loving and generous even to a fault, could yet brook little patiently, that crossed her thoughts and will. Very unlike, too, the weary, restless, miserable Nellie of a few weeks back. But who can teach like Jesus?

“How can you bear it, my child?” was her mother’s almost heart-broken expression one day, when the pain had been even more than usual.

“He gave Himself for me,” was the soft reply, “Himself, Himself!”

Many times during those weeks she asked to hear again the record of that death-bed which had been the means of bringing peace to her. “God’s message to me,” as she called it.

It was still early in February when the end came. Those who loved and watched her had feared it would be terrible suffering at the last, but gently, peacefully, Jesus Himself put her to sleep.

The sun was setting with almost as brilliant coloring as on that January afternoon just five weeks since, when, in bitter agony, Nellie had told out to her sister the terror and dismay of her soul. She seemed to remember it, for, turning her eyes towards the glowing west, she murmured softly, “Evening time... and Jesus is... the light... The city... had... no need of—.” She stopped, a radiant smile of intense satisfaction lit up her face, there was a slight movement, a half-drawn sigh, and Nellie’s freed spirit was in the presence of Him who is the light of heaven, and who had been the light of her young heart in the otherwise dark hours of suffering and death. “Absent from the body, present with the Lord,” she was tasting what it is to be with Jesus “in Paradise.” And now may I ask you who have read Nellie’s simple story, do you know this Jesus “enough to die with”?

Knowing about Him is not enough; talking about Him, or singing hymns about Him is not enough. To meet death peacefully I must know that on Calvary’s cross He fully glorified God, and entirely put away my sins, every one of them, so that I stand in God’s sight without sin on me; and to meet death joyfully I want to know more still, even the person of the One to whom I am going, want to know Him, not only as the rest for my conscience against this terrible charge of sin, but as the satisfying portion for my heart. I need this to be true of me: —

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